



# Valley Isle

EXCURSIONS



## **Background:**

At Valley Isle Excursions (VIE), environmental and social responsibility always go hand-in-hand. Over the last year they have increased the number of guests per day who see and learn about the diverse culture of Hawaii during their sustainable tour of Maui by about 50%. VIE's drivers spend 10-12 hours per tour putting Maui's best on display while interacting with up to 24 guests and still maintaining our personal 12:1 guest to guide ratio. Their continuous daily review of Maui's most precious areas increasingly illustrates the need for us all to act sustainably and to support the communities in which the tours feature, the road to Hana, Iao Valley, Upcountry Maui and Haleakala National Park.

Recent accolades and achievements include:

- ✚ The 2016 Sustainable Tour Operator of the Year Award from the Hawaii Ecotourism Association.
- ✚ Chosen in 2017 by the National Park Service as 1 of 4 tour operators allowed to provide tours into the park for the next 10 years, due to our commitment to education, experience and the environment.

Starting at the base yard office and extending out across the island, VIE supports many environmental initiatives, educational and cultural programs through hands-on work, donations and employee support

## **Maui Tour Office and Base yard:**

Onsite maintenance of the fleet of custom cruisers providing transportation for both 12 and 24 passengers provides the ability to manage all aspects of usage and disposal of materials. Utmost care is given while the mechanics make sure the vehicles are in top condition and ready for driving Maui's roads, going from 0 to 10,000 feet, every day.

The building was specially designed to reduce electrical and water usage, maximizing the efficiency and safety of the entire operation.

- ✚ Hours of operations at the base yard has increased by 100% while electrical usage has only increased by 9%.
- ✚ Changes in their water usage and washing practices with a larger number of vehicles in the fleet allowed us to continue to save 20% of the water when compared to our baseline and fewer vehicles.
- ✚ Our in-house designed custom bottle draining system removes waste and maximizes every drop of oil, making very clean bottles that can be recycled. All used oil and materials are picked up for recycling by Maui Petroleum. Spill kits are easily accessible and employees are well trained in its use. (They have also included spill mats for use within the National Park in the event of an emergency.)
- ✚ The main ice machine used for tour coolers has been re-engineered to super-cool the water prior to being made into ice, greatly reducing electrical costs.

- ✚ All vegetation surrounding the building and property are native with low-water requirements. After each tour, melted cooler ice water is used for all irrigation needs.
- ✚ Location and angle of the sun was incorporated into the design to allow the building to be mostly air-cooled. In closed areas, setting air-conditioning thermostats up to 72 degrees, using fresh air via open windows and installing sunshades on all windows has provided an additional 15% savings in electrical costs, or about \$400 each month.
- ✚ Every drain leading to the ocean is properly marked. Vehicles are cleaned on-site with minimal water and use only reef-safe, eco-friendly ingredients. Toilets and faucets are setup with low-flow devices. Good water usage practices have provided another \$620 in water savings monthly.
- ✚ Since starting a cardboard and paper recycling program it has decreased trash usage by more than 50%. Saving \$460 a month in refuge fees.
- ✚ Most of its accounts payable and billing is now completely digital. This has caused paper and ink usage to drop by almost 70 percent generating almost \$2,000 in monthly savings. All remaining paper product usage in the office is made with 30% or more recycled materials.
- ✚ Solar powered dual-purpose outside security LED lights brighten the area for up to 20 min when motion is detected. This saves on usage and bulbs while providing a safe area for the drivers to operate during pre-dawn or after-dark tasks, never forgetting to turn off a light.
- ✚ Electrical appliances such as battery chargers for tools and cell phones are set to turn “off” during low demand periods saving as much as 8% per month on electrical costs.
- ✚ Active support of ecotourism and reef-safe nonprofits, legislative bills and county measures.
  - Major supporter of Hawaiian Ecotourism Association and BeReefSafe.com initiatives to educate Hawaii’s visitors, and the rest of the world, on the dangers of the chemicals in some sunscreens to coral.

#### **Out on the road:**

VIE is the first land-based tour company on Maui to be Hawaii Ecotourism Certified. Being a member on the U.S. Green Building Council and the only Hawaii based International Ecotourism Society member shows their commitment to environmental sustainability. Much of the costs and material usage is for providing for the tour itself. Eco-friendly practices extend to that area which helps reduce or eliminate fuel and water waste.

- ✚ Driver training on fuel conservation program has saved 3% in fuel costs or approximately \$1200 a month.
- ✚ All drinking containers, bottles and cans have been recycled since 2006 when Hi5 came into existence. 100% of the containers provided to guests are brought back to the base yard for recycling. It is picked up by a family to redeem for children’s school supplies and clothes. (VIE is unaware of how much funds the family has recovered from doing this.)

- ✚ Real cutlery and plates are used during the tour as well as at least 30% recycled paper products like drinking cups, hand towels and toilet paper.
- ✚ On tour, the picnic lunch in Hana is GMO-free and the chicken served has been grown using organic feeding practices.
- ✚ The continental breakfast features even more locally sourced jellies, jams, fruits and other products whenever possible to support local economy and further reduce shipping costs.
- ✚ The private buffet breakfast served and prepared at a local restaurant supports farms and families in Hawaii. Real glasses, cutlery, cups and more are used.
- ✚ Additionally, because VIE was chosen for only one of four Haleakala National Park permits. We increased the size of some of our tour busses to 24 passengers but still maintain our intimate 12:1 guest to guide ratio - and are taking even more cars off the already busy roads while lowering fuel costs.
- ✚ As a community service, all of VIE's guides are Certified Interpretive Professionals so when people ask a question about Hawaiian culture, whether it's about living in ancient times or today, they'll get a correct answer every time. This helps to paint an accurate picture of what life is and was like in Hawaii while creating a deeper understanding of how Hawaiians are so dependent and connected to the land and sea. VIE believe it is truly important if we are to preserve Hawaii for future generations and think every tour company should do this. There is no way of knowing the value of this, until what we consider now to be the distant future, becomes our present moment.

#### **Upcoming Environmental Goals and Initiatives:**

VIE is always working towards improving the quality of the tour and sustainability of its operations. In the coming months and years, their goals include:

- ✚ Installation of solar and wind generators.
- ✚ Further reduction in paper and plastic usage.
- ✚ Striving to be as close to 100% digital as possible.
- ✚ Bulk shipping and increased recycled product options thru demand partnerships.
- ✚ Creating new initiatives as the opportunities arise in order to support the ecosystems and culture of Hawaii.