

Travel

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HONOLULU

Hotel Renew

THE BASICS

A block from the beach in Waikiki, the Hotel Renew is not your usual Honolulu hotel. Opened in 2008 in the former Ocean Tower hotel, the nine-floor Renew is a modern, quietly sophisticated and inexpensive 72-room boutique hotel. Its style is Japanese-influenced and New Age, but without attitude or pretension. Friendliness reigns.

LOCATION

The hotel is at the eastern end of Waikiki, a block from Kapiolani Park. The frenzy of mid-Waikiki, with its abundance of hotels, restaurants, souvenir stores and upscale shops, is about 10 minutes away on foot, far enough for the Renew to feel like an oasis.

THE ROOM

The room feels like an oasis, too. Ours wasn't large and it had no balcony, but it was eminently comfortable, with more than enough space for two. The décor was soothing — gray, black and white, with close-up color photos of flowers. Japanese-style sliding wood screens can close off the window, but if the room has a view of the shining Pacific, why would you want to? The king platform bed was plush and comfortable. Switches by the door to control room lighting, which was subdued, read "night," "bright" and "just right," which sounds cutesy but isn't. Lighting switches are also by the pillows. There were a modern desk, a lounge chair, a large TV and a small refrigerator; no mini-bar or coffee maker. Much of Waikiki can get noisy when it's dark, but little if any street sound penetrated our window.

THE BATHROOM

Not large, but plenty of space, with the same New Age feel. Bathrooms have tubs with shower heads. Our tub was on the small side, best used for a shower. The large mirror over the sink is lighted. Toiletries are from Face of Stockholm.

AMENITIES

The Renew is a simple hotel — with no spa, fitness room or pool. Then again, who needs a pool with the Pacific so near, and the public beach provides a slice of ocean with a breakwa-

ter that keeps the waves gentle.

Beach towels, mats, boogie boards and chairs are available for use at no extra charge, and the hotel has free Wi-Fi. Rates include continental breakfast — fresh fruit, juice, yogurt, cereal, tea, coffee and pastries — served in the lobby bar. That area for breakfast seats only about 20, so occasionally the scene can resemble a morning line at Starbucks, the only time complete serenity doesn't reign. The lobby itself is small, though there's a hypnotic Noguchi-esque water stone in the middle, with colorful floating flowers. It swiftly introduces you to the theme of relaxation.

ROOM SERVICE

There isn't any, but this is Waikiki, with restaurants galore — many of which deliver. (A "Honolulu — We Deliver" menu is in the night table drawer.) A convenience store is across the street, and a Wolfgang Puck Express down the block. Otherwise, service was friendly and personal. One morning, the shuttle the hotel arranged for me and my wife to take to Pearl Harbor and its U.S.S. Arizona Memorial was 20 minutes late. The hotel manager sent us a letter of apology, even though the hotel was in no way responsible.



MARCO GARCIA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

View from a room of the Renew on Waikiki.

BOTTOM LINE

If you like small, well-designed personal hotels, with helpful employees, where you don't feel anonymous, the Renew is for you. Rates vary, depending on the season. Doubles with a king bed and an ocean view start at \$180; a similar city view room is \$155.

Hotel Renew, 129 Paoakalani Avenue; (808) 687-7700; hotelrenew.com.

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