

Planetary Wellbeing

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Prevent Plastic Pollution on Hawaii's Beaches

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There may be no more vivid way to confirm that the entire planet is one connected system than to examine the movement of plastic packaging waste along ocean currents. [Hawaii vacations](#) are famous for their beaches, but these pristine places are quickly becoming polluted with tons of plastic debris that is carried there from land, passing ships, and factories. This plastic waste poses dozens of threats to wildlife both on land and at sea and reduces the tourist attraction of this fabulous state.

Captain Charles Moore who recently toured Kamilo Beach on the Big Island in Hawaii, which has been dubbed the dirtiest beach in the world, explained the situation extremely well in an [BBC interview](#): "The idea that plastics are throw-away materials, used once and tossed, that was a concept developed to use the vast productivity generated by our economic system during WWII to keep it moving, keep it going. Before it came to a close, it was decided that we would generate a throw-away society. This is in part responsible for what you see here." Kamilo Beach traps garbage swept in from the Pacific Ocean currents in vast quantities every single day.

One-use packaging is a complete waste of resources and hazard to the health of our wild spaces. There is no reason why we cannot reduce packaging waste consumed in our everyday lives. Choosing a no-plastic lifestyle is just one way you can reduce the contribution you make to the [plastic beaches forming all over the world, including Kamilo](#).

Quick Guide: Plastic Beaches in Hawaii ^[i] ^[ii]

- **Majority plastic:** The majority of the waste that washes up on Kamilo Beach is plastic – 90% in fact.
- **Increased plastic litter:** Overall, litter on beaches has increased 77% since 1994, but plastic has increased a whopping 121% over the same time period. Some beaches have 5,000 plastic fibers per liter of sand.
- **Ship and navy waste:** Every single day, ships and navies dump 600,000 plastic containers overboard!
- **Invisible problem:** Part of the challenge of plastic waste at sea is that 70% of it is below the surface of the water. This has lulled tourists and politicians into thinking the problem is smaller than it actually is.
- **Plastic's long life:** Plastics that are thrown into the landscape or end up in the sea take hundreds of years to break down. As the waves on our beaches ebb and flow, they bury the plastic waste that will stay there for hundreds of years rather than biodegrading.
- **Killing wildlife:** Plastic beach debris – from peanut butter jars to the rings from your six-pack of beer – poses choking and suffocating hazards to wildlife, including bears, lions, porcupines, and birds. Wildlife at sea face the same challenges.

Take Action! Reduce Packaging Waste

1. **Eat fresh:** Of the "reduce, reuse, recycle" mantra, reduce is the most important! So instead of buying prepared foods packaged in plastic and cardboard, cook your own meals made from fresh foods that you hand pick from the grocer or the farmer's market.
2. **Take your own containers and bags:** Every time you go to the market, be sure to take your own produce bags, grocery bags, and reusable containers so that you can pack your foods in washable containers.
3. **Stop buying packaged beverages:** Sodas, beer, water, fruit juices, and sports drinks are all packages in either aluminum, plastic, or glass. Instead of wasting money and resources on these, pack your own stainless steel or glass water bottle that you can fill yourself with your favorite beverage.
4. **Use reusable containers for leftovers:** When you've got leftover food from supper, pack it into the fridge in glass or stainless steel containers that can be washed.
5. **Skip the plastic wrap:** Whether cooking a casserole, preparing a salad for a bbq, or putting away half of a tomato, skip the plastic wrap on the top – get containers with tight-fitting lids instead.
6. **Say no to straws:** We consume millions of these every year, but as a one-use item, they're a complete waste. Sip from the cup or bring your own reusable straw instead.
7. **Join the fight against marine debris:** Support organizations like the [Ocean Conservancy](#) and [Oceana](#) who are working with legislators to enact policies that prevent ships and consumers from dumping trash in the oceans. And tell your politicians that you support such laws!
8. **Fight for trash free cruises:** if you're going on a cruise, try to select a company that makes an effort to reduce waste and

recycle as much as possible. And tell them you care about ocean trash by leaving comment cards and talking to the ship captains to make your voice heard.

9. **Help with the clean-up:** Join [Take 3](#) by committing to pick up at least three pieces of plastic trash every time you leave a beach to help clean it up.

Dig Deeper: Plastic Waste on Our Beaches

- Follow [Tim Silverwood's](#) journey as he [explores the impact of discarded plastics](#) on the network of currents in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre (the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch).
- Tour around the [Tropic of Cancer](#) (virtually, of course) with conservationist Sam Gon and BBC reporter Simon Reeve as they explore the environment around the planet, including Kamilo Beach.

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