

Honolulu Pearl Harbor

Almost the whole of
Pearl Harbor

, the principal base for the US Pacific fleet (just over one hour west of Waikiki, beyond the airport, on TheBus #20), is off limits to visitors. However, the surprise Japanese attack of December 7, 1941, which an official US enquiry called "the greatest military and naval disaster in our nation's history," is commemorated by a simple white memorial set above the wreck of the battleship USS Arizona , still discernible in the clear blue waters. More than 1100 of its crew - who had earned the right to sleep in late that Sunday morning by coming second in a military band competition - are entombed there.

Free tours of the memorial operate between 8am and 3pm each day, but it can be two or three hours after you pick up your numbered ticket at the Pearl Harbor visitor center (daily 7.30am-5pm; tel 808/422-0561) before you're called to board the ferry that will take you there. Many of the 1.5 million annual visitors are Japanese; a surprisingly even-handed twenty-minute film pays tribute to "one of the most brilliantly planned and executed attacks in naval history," and books and charts are on sale telling the Japanese side of the story.

The USS Arizona

memorial was partly financed by Elvis Presley's 1961 Honolulu concert, his first show after leaving the army.

The huge
USS Missouri

, which survived the attack and was used four years later for the ceremony in Tokyo Harbor that ended World War II, is now moored alongside the Arizona

. Guided visits include the actual surrender site as well as sweeping views of the harbor from the Missouri

's bridge (daily 9am-5pm; \$14).