



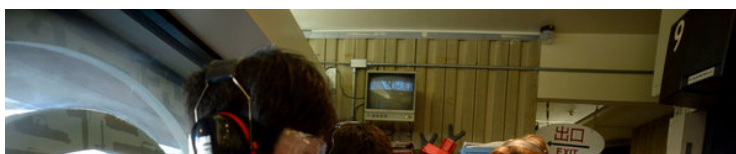
HONOLULU — Kenji and Hiromasa Ozawa, a father and son vacationing on the island of Oahu, spent Christmas morning hiking up Diamond Head, a volcanic cone here with sweeping views of Waikiki Beach.

Their next stop: The [Royal Hawaiian Shooting Club](#) — an indoor shooting range in an upscale shopping center just above Cartier and Hermès stores — where they fired off several dozen rounds between them.

“We love shooting guns, I love shooting guns,” said Kenji Ozawa, 52, who was visiting from Chiba, Japan. “It’s a very exciting experience.”

Japan has among the most restrictive gun laws in the world, especially compared with those of the United States. Japan’s 1958 Firearms and Swords Control Law prohibits its citizens from owning most firearms; some guns — like shotguns for hunting, air guns and guns for competition — are allowed, but the Japanese still must undergo a series of comprehensive tests, as well as thorough background checks.

So for some Japanese tourists like the Ozawas, an ideal Hawaiian getaway includes sun, surf — and semiautomatics.





“We can’t fire guns in Japan; we are prohibited from having them,” the elder Mr. Ozawa said, before summarizing the Second Amendment’s right to bear arms and adding: “This is the America I know.”

Though the Japanese do not necessarily travel to Hawaii, a roughly seven-hour flight, for the sole purpose of hitting Waikiki’s gun clubs, those with an interest in, say, Berettas, often treat shooting a bit like surfing — an amusing attraction while visiting the United States.

“In most countries mass media does make guns desirable, and that’s the same in Japan,” said Philip Alpers, a professor at the University of Sydney School of Public Health and a specialist in firearm injury prevention. Hawaii, he said, is “right at sort of the satellite hub of what exists of Japan’s gun culture.”

Taka Maruyama, 52, of Tokyo, was leaving the [SWAT Gun Club](#) here on a recent Tuesday with two of his sons and explained, “We just come here for swimming and golf and shooting.” Gesturing at his son Tomo, 17, who was proudly holding a paper target riddled with bullets near the bull’s-eye, Mr. Maruyama laughed and said: “Every time he visits somewhere, he shoots. He’s a professional shooter.”

There are at least four private gun clubs within a half-mile of one another on this Honolulu strip dotted with hotels and touristy shops, and a public shooting range sits at the southeast tip of the island. The clubs advertise with posters (in English and Japanese) in the upscale malls here, and they hire men to pass out fliers (also in English and Japanese) along the busy sidewalks of Waikiki.

Jeff Tarumi, the range manager at the Royal Hawaiian Shooting Club, estimates that 90 percent of his customers are foreign, with the majority from Japan. He said that all of the club’s employees are required to speak at least a little Japanese.

“Believe it or not, knowledge of guns is not as important, because you can train them on the job, but you have to speak Japanese,” Mr. Tarumi said. “The U.S. market is a little harder, because people come in here and say, ‘Well, I can shoot for free in my backyard.’ ”

The clubs, in which visitors can shoot everything from AK-47s to 9-millimeter Glocks, prove especially alluring to Japanese tourists, who often have seen guns in movies and on television, but cannot actually shoot them at home.

David B. Kopel, the author of “The Samurai, the Mountie, and the Cowboy: Should America Adopt the Gun Controls of Other Democracies?” said, “The only law-abiding citizens in Japan who own guns are very highly motivated sportsmen.”

In 2012, nearly 1.5 million Japanese visited Hawaii, making them third in total visitor expenditures and visitor days, according to an annual report by the [Hawaii Tourism Authority](#).

“How many people would come to Hawaii and end up going to the gun clubs? Tens of thousands,” said Harvey F. Gerwig, president of the [Hawaii Rifle](#)

[Association](#). “It’s a huge draw.”

Hawaii is hardly the Wild West of firearms. The state has stricter gun regulations than many of its mainland counterparts, and was given a B+ for its gun laws by the [Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#). The gun clubs all provide eye and ear protection, along with instructors trained in gun safety. They will not allow people who have been drinking onto shooting ranges.

But especially compared with Japan, visiting gun clubs here is still relatively easy, and the Japanese are not the only ones adding an hour or two at the shooting range to their vacation itineraries. Tourists from other countries with more stringent gun regulations — like Australia, Canada and New Zealand — can also be found in Waikiki’s gun clubs, where basic packages run as low as \$25. A midrange option at the Hawaii Gun Club — a total of five guns with 52 shots — costs about \$70.

Last week, Marcia Murphy, 58, and Bethany Parr, 38, a mother and daughter vacationing in Hawaii from Australia, had treated themselves to manicures and pedicures before heading to the Royal Hawaiian Shooting Club. (“Tacti-cute,” said an instructor of their painted nails, a word play on tactical weapons.)

“I’ve never ever touched a gun in my life before,” Ms. Murphy said, still exhilarated after learning that she was a deft sharpshooter for a novice.

Ms. Parr was equally enthusiastic. “It was a total high,” she said.

The two had shot six guns, and done quite well, though Ms. Murphy had hit slightly more of her targets than Ms. Parr.

Turning to her daughter, Ms. Murphy could not help gloating. “I’m going to rub it in, dear,” she said with a smile.

Mr. Ozawa was similarly complimentary. “We are enjoying America,” he said.



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