Hawaii

A GUIDE TO THE ISLANDS
Contents

About Hawaii 3

Planning Your Hawaii Trip 4

• How To Get Here 4
• Money 6
• Planning Your Trip Online 7

Eclectic Hawaii - Like No Other 8

Brief History of Hawaii 12

Which Hawaii Island to Visit? 19

• Oahu 20
• Maui 22
• Hawaii (The Big Island) 24
• Kauai 26

Hawaii Weather and Climate Patterns 28

Hawaii Geology and Geography 31

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Hawaii Travel Information

There are six major Hawaiian Islands for you to choose from when planning your Hawaii trip or vacation. They are, in order of popularity, Oahu, Maui, the Big Island of Hawaii, Kauai, Molokai and Lanai. We go into detail about the four most popular within this travel guide to help you plan your trip. Each of the islands is different with its own “personality” - they each respectively represent the splendor of Hawaii in an exceptional and memorable way. The Hawaiian islands have a little bit of it all, from tropical rainforests to white, black, pepper, red, and green sand beaches. From stunning waterfalls, lush valleys, sea cliffs and tranquil mountains, to one very active volcano and even snow on the highest peaks!

Hawaii travel activities are abundant ranging from land, ocean and air tours to surfing, hiking, scuba diving, bird watching and snorkeling. There are historic sites and a variety of cultural shows throughout the islands. Shopping is plentiful and there are limitless options to enjoy the finest cuisines from around the world. Visit a historic Hawaiian luau, tour historic places like Pearl Harbor and sacred Heiau’s (ancient temples), bike down Haleakala, discover Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, drive the famous Road to Hana or enjoy a kayak journey along the incredible Na Pali Coast.

Additionally, our Hawaii-Guide.com website was created by experts who have an in-depth knowledge of Hawaii and want to share the islands with you. We hope you enjoy both using this travel guide and surfing our website when planning your own trip or vacation to the Hawaiian Islands!
For the most part your options are pretty limited on how you get to Hawai’i. You can come by boat or by air, and that’s just about it. Either method of transportation is fine, but we personally prefer to arrive by air. A long cruise can ‘spoil’ the joys of arriving on Hawai’i’s shores by simply taking too long. There is something to be said about that built up anticipation of just waiting to step foot on the island.

That’s why we recommend flying as the best travel method. You can leave home and arrive in paradise on the same day, and even for travelers on the far east coast of the mainland, it’s only a 12-14 hour flight. OK, so that’s not exactly a short flight, but it beats coming by boat. Besides, that plane ride gives you a chance to peruse your travel books and plans to refresh your memory before you arrive. Just don’t expect to jump off the plane and start ‘doing it all’ after you arrive.

That said, for some of you this next paragraph is going to be redundant and obvious, but for others it will be good information to have.

Perhaps you’ve flown on long trips before and perhaps you haven’t. We’re going to assume most folks have likely never flown on a flight over 5-7 hours before and we’re also going to assume that most visitors utilizing this travel guide or our website are from the mainland United States. If you’re traveling from even further east, like Europe, then you’ll need to adjust our advice as needed to accommodate you. If you’re traveling from the west, like Australia, then take our advice in reverse.

When traveling from the west your jet-lag will be worse coming than going. But most visitors are coming from the east, and whether you’re coming from sunny California or chilly New York the shortest amount of time you’ll be on a plane is about five to six hours. If you’re flying from New York, Boston, or most any other town on the east coast you can expect to add another four to five hours to that number. In general, planes will have to fly into headwinds on their way west toward the islands, and thus you will notice your flight to the islands taking longer than your trip back home. Most visitors who are heading to the islands of Hawaii or Kauai may have to first make a stop in Honolulu, as there are few flights that fly directly into Kona, Hilo, or Lihue airport. If you’re flying to Molokai or Lanai, you can definitely count on a stop in Honolulu or Kahului on Maui. Many flights do fly directly into Kahului on Maui if you’re visiting that island.

Regardless of how long it takes you to arrive, the fact of the matter is you likely will experience some jet lag arriving, even from the east, so take it easy that first day and get some rest. Depending on when you visit you’ll gain between two to six hours (Hawai’i does not observe daylight saving time) if coming from the US mainland. Our advice to travelers is always the same, attempt to keep your schedule close to what you had back home.
Other websites, travel guides and guidebooks will tell you to covert yourself to Hawai‘i time as soon as possible, but we won’t. Here’s why:

If you’re coming from the east coast in the spring, as an example, you’re going to gain six hours during your flight. So if you leave at 6 a.m. and arrive at 4 p.m., you’ve actually been awake a lot longer than it sounds. Back home it’s actually 10 p.m. when you arrive in Hawai‘i, so you’ve already had a full day. We believe that by keeping to your regular schedule you can avoid the worst cases of jet lag, plus you’ll have a leg up on most other travelers. If you can continue to get to bed early after sunset in Hawai‘i, say around 8-10 p.m. Hawai‘i time, then you can get up a lot earlier than most visitors and hit the road far ahead of the crowds. For an east coast traveler, even a wake-up call of 5 a.m. in Hawai‘i is the equivalent to 11 a.m. back home. It is our opinion you should use this to your advantage. When all is said and done it will also make your journey back home a lot easier too. Losing three to six hours heading home to the west is a lot harder than most people think.

Regardless of how you arrive in Hawai‘i, take it easy the first day you arrive. A good night’s rest and a good meal after a long day’s journey will refresh you for the rest of your vacation. Also, leave the fast-paced mainland behind you, relax to Hawai‘i’s lifestyle now.
MONEY

Let’s be honest, traveling to Hawaii isn’t cheap. Almost any mode of transportation to arrive on these beautiful shores is going to cost a pretty penny. Booking a room here isn’t the deal some folks are used to when they travel (though you can find bargains if you look), occupancy is almost always high, and thus so are the prices. And the cost of importing all the goods to these islands is passed on to you by merchants, especially at the grocery store and gas station. The only real break you’ll catch is with a rental car, competition is fierce, and the prices reflect it.

As a traveler to Hawai’i you will likely come under one of two conditions, the budget traveler or the traveler looking to live the high life. Believe it or not, Hawai’i may be just about the only place you can choose one style over another and leave with the same experience. Most people who have tried both lifestyles have reported having just as good a time either way. So whether you conscientiously save money in Hawai’i by seeking out great deals or alternatively spend loads of money on resorts, tours, and fine dining, you’ll likely leave with the same great experience.

That’s the magic of Hawai’i - the real gift is what’s around you, the natural beauty of the island, the people, and the friendly atmosphere. Sure you can buy great things, participate in amazing activities, and eat in first class restaurants while here, and we certainly encourage travelers to live life in Hawai’i to the max. On the same token, we also encourage everyone to enjoy the best part of Hawai’i, the part that’s free to everyone... the spirit of Aloha.

Ultimately, our point is you don’t have to spend a fortune on Hawai’i to have a good time. Our website, this travel guide and our physical guidebooks are primarily designed for those on a budget who want to get away from their hotels and condos to see the great outdoors, participate in fun activities that won’t break the bank, and experience life on Hawai’i like a local would.

Our last suggestion regarding money is to pay for most of your bills and purchases in Hawai’i with credit, debit, or check. Traveling with cash, even in Hawaii, is usually never a good idea. There are countless stories told about folks who have lost their money and thus lost their fun. On a recent trip around the islands we ran into one poor soul who had lost his wallet containing all his money on a beach. You can cancel checks and plastic cards, but you can’t replace your cash. This isn’t to say you shouldn’t bring any cash, but as a general rule of thumb we would suggest purchasing most things with an alternative payment form. If nothing else, it keeps record of if for future review (which may or may not be a good thing - ‘Those earrings cost how much?’)
PLANNING YOUR TRIP ONLINE

Whether you are a fan of the internet or not it is arguably one of the greatest tools available in the world today. Entire companies are built upon it, as was our own originally for over four years, and it has become a great asset for travel planners everywhere.

Online travel companies like Expedia.com, Travelocity.com, Orbitz.com, etc offer travelers the chance to book every aspect of their vacation in the privacy and comfort of their own homes. Your flight, rental car, and accommodations can all be booked together to save you even more money. Plus, you can mix and match various combinations of flights and rooms to create the perfect deal for you.

Our favorite online company to book through is Expedia. We’ve used them for countless trips and every time been pleased with their services. While a rarity to have to call and talk with customer support, even that was a pleasant experience, and we were helped courteously and quickly. Expedia now also offers additional ‘activity packages’ during your checkout, including the option to be greeted with a lei at island airports. While always wise to compare prices, we have found that most of their ‘activity packages’ are reasonably priced in comparison to other companies.

If you’re looking for more information on our favorite activities, please be sure to visit our website, at Hawaii-Guide.com, and view our ‘Top Activities’ and ‘Must See and Do’ section on each island.
Hawaii is a land of diversity, a land of much beauty and of many contradictions. Mother Nature pulled out all the stops when forming this place. And the life that has since inhabited these green gems is as diverse as the entire world itself. From lush rainforests to barren deserts, Hawaii is as eclectic a place as you’ll ever visit. A favorite get-away for people around the world, Hawai‘i has become famous for its miles of beaches, erupting volcanoes, lush rainforests, and exotic flora and fauna. Let’s take a look at what makes Hawaii like no place else on earth.
OLDER THAN TIME / YOUNGER THAN YOU

All good things take time. Hawai‘i’s existence is no different. The islands likely began their journey upward from the seafloor some 70 million years ago, before even the dinosaurs met their end. These islands have been springing up from the sea in assembly line fashion, moving to the north and west on the earth’s crust over time, eventually sinking below the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. But as old as the islands are, many hundreds of acres on the island of Hawai‘i are likely younger than you are. So young in fact that even if you were born today some of the earth there would be newer than you still. And in another 50,000 years or so a new volcano will likely pop above the waves. Two dozen miles off the southeast coast of the Big Island of Hawaii, Lo‘ihi continues its ascent to become the next Hawaiian island.

LOST WORLD / NEW WORLD

When Michael Crichton wrote his book famously entitled, “The Lost World,” many people had flashbacks to ‘Jurassic Park.’ If you ever watched the show “LOST” on ABC, you might call it a “lost world.” Perhaps this is all more than just ironic. The ‘Jurassic Park’ movies were, of course, filmed on Kauai, and “LOST” was filmed on Oahu. Such visions of a lost world were very real just a short time ago. Hawaii was the true “lost world” until around 2000 years ago.

While much of the planet was inhabited by peoples far and wide, Hawai‘i stood alone in the middle of the pacific for millions of years. Hawaii is approximately 2,000 miles from the nearest continent. Some 65-million square miles of open water surround the islands without interruption.

Even after the original settlers from the Pacific discovered and inhabited Hawaii, it wasn’t another 1700 years that “modern” man would discover the islands. Captain James Cook stumbled upon the islands in 1778. The rest, as they say, is history.
HOT AND COLD, WET AND DRY

Considering there are 13 climate zones in the world, you’d probably assume Hawaii fell into a single category or two; something in the tropics perhaps? Try 11 - that’s not a typo - ELEVEN!

No place on earth is quite as diverse as Hawaii when it comes to climate and weather on such a small geographical area. From barren lava desert on the leeward side of select islands to lush rainforest directly on the other, you’d think you were in two separate parts of the world. Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa on the Big Island of Hawaii, and even Haleakala on Maui can been seen with a white snowy cap during several months in the winter. Down below the water is a warm 76 degrees. There aren’t a lot of places you can surf and ski in the same day.

Consider also that select locations receive but a few inches of rain a year, as in 10 inches or less. Other parts of the islands receive upwards of 440 inches of rain a year. In Wai’ale’ale Crater on the island of Kauai, an average yearly rainfall of 440-470 inches is not uncommon - making it arguably the wettest spot on earth year-round. Hilo, the second largest city in the state, located on East Hawaii, is the wettest city in the United States. Just over 30 miles away, on the western flank of Kilauea exists the Ka’u Desert.

BIG AND YET SO SMALL

At one end of the chain the mountains reach nearly 14,000 feet above sea level, their peaks often capturing snow during the winter. On the other end of the chain, some 1,600 miles away, many of the oldest Hawaiian Islands barely scratch the surface of the waves that relentlessly pound away at their ever shrinking shores. Even Kauai, the oldest of the main Hawaiian Islands, likely used to reach up to 5,000 foot higher into the clouds then even Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea do today. But five million years of wave action, wind, and erosion have reduced it to a peak of only 5,200 feet at Kawaikini. Over time the Hawaiian Islands will all suffer the same fate and sink beneath the blue ocean once again.

In total area, the seven major islands rank in at number 43 amongst the United States, one of the smallest. When considering only land area, they’re a smaller 47th. But if one considers all of the Hawaiian Islands stretching 1,600 miles out into the Pacific, all legally part of the state of Hawaii, and if you include their territorial waters, you might be surprised that you’d have an area more than TWICE the size of Alaska. Move over Alaska, California, and Texas, you’re not so big anymore.
TWO FISH AND SOME BREAD

It's hard to take a little bit of anything and turn it into a lot. But Hawaii isn't playing by the same rules. Here there are some 6,000 birds, plants, sea creatures, and insects found nowhere else on earth. They are endemic to Hawaii and have evolved here and only here. From a few hundred seeds flown in by the birds, blown in by wind, and carried by the currents - Hawaii has bloomed with extraordinary flora. The fauna evolved too, especially the birds, creating some of the most amazing honey creepers found in the entire world. Many are rare or endangered today - many more have already gone extinct. It is important that visitors and locals alike band together to protect these priceless forms of nature. Since the arrival of man, thousands of exotic plant and animal species have been introduced, and many are invasively taking over the true natives.
The following is a brief history of the islands of Hawaii. We hope it helps provide our guests with a better understanding of the islands and the people that live upon them.
**BIRDS & SEEDS**

Thousand of miles from the nearest continent the volcanic mountains stood somber and alone in the Pacific, void of nearly all life. Lifeless they would remain if not for the birds, the currents, and the wind. Seeds were carried by the tides that washed across the shores. Storms brought more seeds with their howling winds and rains. The birds, like the small golden plover, brought the rest.

Eventually the Hawaiian islands would be covered with extensive forest habitats, shrubbery, and grasslands. Soil and precipitation differences around the islands would cater to all kinds of plant-life. In time, the foreign species would become unique to all the world, found only in Hawai‘i. Today, we call them endemic Hawaiian species like the Nene (Hawaiian goose) and silversword (which is a relative of the sunflower believe it or not). You will find them no where else on the planet. These species had thousands, if not millions, of years to develop into unique flora and fauna. And for thousands and thousands of years they were undisturbed by the ways of humans. Today, many of these species are not so lucky. The ‘Akiapola‘au (photo seen above) is just one example of a species that is fading fast. Most experts predict that their numbers have dwindled to between 1,000-1,500. They can be found only on the Big Island. We were very lucky to see one as recently as 2006.

**POLYNESIAN ARRIVAL**

Today most anthropologists will tell you that the original settlement of the Hawaiian islands was by Polynesians from the Marquesas Islands around 300-500 AD. This group of early settlers is today believed to be where the legend of the menehune originates. A second wave of settlement followed during the 9th and 10th centuries from Tahiti, radically changing the islands and the culture that existed there.

They came in their double-hulled canoes, some 3,500 miles south of the Big Island. Using the wind and paddle they navigated themselves in uncharted waters to the peaks of this foreign land. Arriving as early as 2,000 years ago, the Polynesians came in waves of migration bringing most everything with them they’d need to survive on the shores of Hawai‘i. Banana and coconut trees, dogs, hogs, rats, and chickens came with them from thousands of miles away.
Their knowledge of the sea also provided ample seafood. Weaving, wood and stone-carving allowed them to grow crops and farm. Their population would flourish here, and by the time Europeans first made contact in 1778, their numbers were estimated at approximately 800,000 to one million. Once established, the Hawaiians had no further need to obtain supplies from their old homelands, and thus underwent centuries of isolation in what is still today the most isolated spot on the planet.

The Polynesians governed themselves by a set of rules, a kapu system with chiefs and ali’i (royalty). Their culture was strict and abundant in both mythology and lore. Their religious system was very deeply tied to nature, and there were hundreds upon thousands of gods in the system. Four main gods were especially important to the Hawaiians: Ku, Kane, Kanaloa, and Lono.

One of their most powerful deities, Pele, made her continuous presence known on the Big Island. Her home was, and still is, Kilauea’s Caldera, and her frequent eruptions are a constant reminder of her existence. She is a goddess of fire who changes form at will. A beautiful woman one minute a fireball the next, Pele is known for here fiery temper. Even today many residents hope to appease Madame Pele by placing offerings on the rim of her home. As recently as 1990-2013, Pele made her temperament known by destroying over 200 homes along the southeast shoreline.

The Polynesians were stewards of both land and sea, guardians of all that existed here. They were careful to never over-fish the reefs or streams and to never abuse the aina (land) which so graciously supported them. They skillfully diverted water into irrigation channels to flood their taro fields, so that their staple food of poi could be produced and eaten by generation upon generation. Today these canals still criss-cross the island and taro still grows in beautiful valleys. Two of these valleys were some of the most prosperous in Hawai‘i Pololu and Waipi‘o, both on the northeastern Kohala coast of the Big Island. Waipi‘o even today is still known for its taro fields.

**EUROPEAN ARRIVAL**

KamehamehaWith the sighting of great white sails on the horizon, the likes of which the Hawaiians had never seen, the islands were forever changed. Captain James Cook, one of the world’s most recognized British navigators, sailed into Waimea Bay on the island of Kaua‘i first in 1778, and then onto the Big Island at Kealakekua Bay in early 1779.

At the time of Cook’s arrival on the Big Island some 10,000 or more Hawaiians were in the midst of their makahiki celebration, a celebration that honored the god Lono. Cook arriving on his ship with white sails (similar to that of the god Lono’s flag) was likely mistaken as the god Lono and treated accordingly. During his two week stay on the Big Island, he was honored in ceremony upon ceremony. Cook and the Hawaiians entertained each other mutually with their own inventions before the famous navigator set sail away from the islands. Shortly there-after, the makahiki celebration ended, and the bay was made kapu (off-limits).
Meanwhile, a storm off-shore had damaged one of Cook’s ships. Naturally he returned to the bay expecting the same hospitality he’d received before. But many of the Hawaiians had grown tired of the sailors’ presence in the bay, and despite the fraternization that took place, one of Cook’s smaller boats was stolen. It should have ended there, but Cook instead decided to go ashore and kidnap Chief Kalaniopu’u until his boat was returned. Intentional or not, Cook was stabbed in a skirmish which left him dead at the hands of Hawaiian warriors.

Today, a white monument stands erected at the northern end of the bay where Cook met his demise, a solemn reminder of this event. This is the only piece of land in the Hawaiian chain that remains British soil. Today the area has become most popular for its snorkeling and kayaking.

Cook’s presence forever changed the islands. Chiefs were always at war with one another in Hawai’i. Never had a single ruler controlled all the islands. But a young chief by the name of Kamehameha, a native of Kohala on the Big Island, had taken note of the Westerners weapons and set out to conquer all the islands in the Hawaiian chain: to be their first king. By 1791, he had defeated his cousin and arch-rival on the Big Island, and by 1795, he had conquered Maui, Moloka’i, Lana’i, and O’ahu. In 1810, the chief that ruled Kaua’i, seeing all that had happened with Kamehameha and his warriors island by island, pledged his loyalty to Kamehameha. With that act, Kamehameha (seen here) fulfilled the prophecy that he would become the first King of Hawai’i.

Kamehameha ruled with a tight grip. He wished to prepare the islands for increasing contact with the west - sailors, whalers, and entrepreneurs. Unfortunately Kamehameha could not prepare the islands for what would affect them the most, venereal disease. Over the next century the Hawaiian population was decimated by the likes of influenza, typhoid fever, and measles. Estimates say the population decreased by as much as 80%.

It was greed that would next change the islands. Riches were to be made of the forests of Hawai’i with the sweet smelling sandalwood, a huge commodity in the orient. Guns, boats, and even canons made their way into Hawaiian life, and for the first time the concept of owning land came into existence. In 1819, when Kamehameha died, so did the remainder of Hawaiian life. A short time later Kamehameha II, at the behest of Kamehameha I’s wife, Ka’ahumanu, broke the kapu system that had ruled the islands for generations. A year later, the missionaries arrived from Boston.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

In early April of 1820, the first Christian missionaries stepped off their ship from Boston to, yet again, forever change the islands. In the wake of the kapu system being destroyed, many argue the Hawaiians were a people without a religion. Ka’ahumanu and Kamehameha II both quickly became converts of Christianity. The missionaries, recognizing what had just happened in the islands, were quick to destroy many ancient alters and heiau (temples), and quickly replace them with churches (many of which still stand). Today the largest religious groups remain Roman Catholics and Protestants.
Even Pele herself was defied when Kapiolani, high chieftess to the Big Island of Hawai‘i, decreed that Jehovah was her god. When Pele remained quiet, the Hawaiian people believed, and many converted. A similar event took place in the mid-1970’s, where again Pele was denounced, and in a twist of irony the volcano erupted afterwards.

However, the missionaries brought a skill to the islands that would put Hawai‘i on the map as far as the rest of the world was concerned, reading and writing. Hawai‘i eventually soared to have the highest literacy rates in the United States. There had been no previous written language in Hawai‘i until the missionaries’ arrival. Everything was passed down by word of mouth. It was for this reason the Hawaiians could recite nearly the entire Bible from memory, an astonishing feat to the missionaries that taught them.

It was the children of the missionaries’ families that would ultimately make the greatest change in Hawai‘i. Ideally the families would have returned home as they were supposed to have done but instead stayed on the island and began a practice no Hawaiian had ever heard of, owning land.

Western law also made its way into Hawaiian life. The Hawaiian Constitution came into existence by 1840, along with a supreme court and a parliament. Land issues continued to be a large focus in the coming years. By 1848, land was divided into thirds - one for the royalty, one for the government, and one for the common people. Two years later foreigners could buy land outright, and that they did.

Led by the missionaries’ descendant’s, a great agricultural boom occurred in Hawai‘i in the early 20th century, bringing more and more immigrants from Japan, China, and the Philippines to work in the growing fields of sugarcane, pineapple, and other large crops. Hawai‘i became a melting pot of world cultures, faiths, and customs, which forged a new identity that still holds true today.

Oil discovered in the heartland of America lead to the end of the whaling era, though whales had been so depleted in the waters off Hawai‘i that the industry barely existed. Sugar was the new king of the islands, and would continue to be well on into the twentieth century. Today the industry is all but dead in the state as a whole, and the economic impact of its absence is still felt in many areas.
END OF THE KINGDOM

With the multitude of foreign changes occurring in Hawai'i the conflict between royalty and the outsiders was bound to grow. With the U.S. military already showing a strong presence in the region (especially Pearl Harbor), it was only a matter of time before what happened, did. U.S. businessmen convinced the military that they were still U.S. citizens, and thus must be protected as such. When the businessmen seized control of the islands and took power away from Liliuokalani (the existing Queen), the military felt obligated to protect the Americans. The Republic of Hawai'i was formed. In 1898, the U.S. finally annexed Hawai'i as a territory. Sixty-one years later the voters of Hawai'i approved statehood. The Big Island, Maui (including Moloka'i and Lana'i), O'ahu, and Kau'i all became one of four counties in the 50th state of the union. Today much debate continues over what happened at the end of the 19th century.
MODERN TIMES (ON THE BIG ISLAND)

The racial, religious, and cultural background of Hawai‘i has changed drastically over that time. Over the last few decades, the Hawai‘i of old has reemerged bringing a great sense of pride to the remaining native Hawaiians. The hula, chant, and old ways are being reborn. The change from an agricultural hearth to a tourist destination has also now exposed Hawai‘i to people the world over. A state with a population of only 1.2 million has experienced tourism numbers floating around 7 million in recent years. The influence has been both positive and negative from various points of view. Today, most of the state’s residents reside on the island of Oahu, some 60% in Honolulu alone which is the 11th largest city in the United States.

A few other quick tidbits of information regarding Hawai‘i’s culture. If you hear the term “Hawaiian” it is in reference to someone’s race only, not where they are. Hawaiian implies they have pure Hawaiian blood in their veins. Locals are typically folks who were born and raised here, but are not necessarily pure Hawaiians. A kama‘aina is someone who has lived here a while but typically was not born here. Lastly, the term haole is used for all persons who are white, born here or not.
Like a lot of visitors to Hawaii, you’re probably wondering, which Hawaii island to visit is the best for you and your travel party? The islands are so diverse, that selecting the right island really is an important decision. And once you’ve started visiting the islands, coming back to a different island can often feel like a totally different place with a whole new set of experiences, sights, and attractions. Having been to all the major islands, we’ve already formed some bias on which we favor. But we’ll put our bias aside for a while and objectively tell you about the beautiful islands in the Hawaiian chain so you too can pick the island that’s just right for you. In due time, we’re sure you’ll pick your own favorites.

The guide below will hopefully help you narrow your choices down a bit as we go over the most to least visited major islands, Oahu, Maui, Hawaii (The Big Island), and Kauai. We’ve omitted Lanai and Molokai from this list since together they only account for 200,000 visitors annually.
Oahu
The Gathering Place
Home to the state capitol of Honolulu and the majority of Hawaii’s population, Oahu is a vibrant mix of natural and cultural wonders with the entertainment and amenities of the 21st century. Check out the waves on the famous North Shore, relive American history at the memorials and museums of Pearl Harbor, or soak up the sun and take a surfing lesson on Waikiki Beach.

Oahu is the most visited of all the Hawaiian Islands, at nearly 4.7 million visitors annually. Oahu is primarily defined by the state capital of Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, and the famous beach known as Waikiki. These areas attract tourists by thousands daily. Oahu boasts a fantastic climate, inexpensive accommodations, a large variety of shopping options, and world renowned beaches - it’s fair to say the island entices visitors from around the world. Though this may be the one fault of the island, as many are discouraged by the large crowds of Oahu and thus dismiss the island, instead visiting one of the other, less visited, islands in the chain. But Oahu is much more than Honolulu or Waikiki - it may well be the most beautiful of all the major islands. You simply have to know where to go to experience the beauty that is Oahu.

The eastern coast of Oahu is hemmed in by a gorgeous mountain range and boasts three of the islands best beaches. Surprisingly, you’ll find no major accommodations here; just a few vacation homes along the quaint towns that dot the coast. The eastern region offers many visitors an escape from the bustling Waikiki scene while still offering the proximity to the shopping and activities of the nearby city just a half hour drive away.

The famous north shore of Oahu is a surfer’s paradise, especially in the winter months when the surf is up. About an hours drive from Honolulu, this region has a surprisingly unpopulated feel to it. Many miles of beaches stretch along this portion of Oahu, making it a popular haven for those looking to relax in the sun.

The western, northwestern, and central regions are where most of the island’s residents live. For the most part, there isn’t much here for the typical island visitors - just a few scattered beaches.

**OAHU HIGHLIGHTS:**

- **Waikiki Beach** - Iconic gathering place for visitors from around the world.
- **Pearl Harbor** - Explore the historic sites recounting the Pearl Harbor attack.
- **Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve** - One of Hawaii’s premier snorkeling sites.
- **Nuuanu Pali Lookout** - Historic spot with fantastic mountain views.
- **North Shore** - Legendary birthplace of big wave surfing.
Maui
The Valley Isle
The second largest island is home to what some believe are the best beaches in the world. If you’re looking to watch for whales, the waters off of Maui are one of the best places in the world to do so. Wake up early to catch the sunrise at Haleakala, stroll through the historic Lahaina town, or drive the majestic Road to Hana for spectacular scenery.

Maui is the second most visited island with around 2.4 million visitors each year. Tourism greatly affects the nature of Maui and it boasts a very wide assortment of resorts, hotels, condos, and private rentals available across the island.

Often called, “The Playground of the Wealthy” Maui definitely caters to those looking for more expensive accommodations, but not the crowds of Oahu. But don’t fret if top notch accommodations aren’t in your plans - Maui caters to all types, including the budget conscious. The island has a reputation of being a playground for all tourists, not just the super rich.

The island of Maui features an abundance of beaches, especially along the west coast. Sun is abundant here too, as the volcanoes in the center of the island block the majority of precipitation from ever reaching the leeward side of the island. While portions of Maui’s west coast often dry and barren, the eastern portions of the island are a lush and green paradise boasting waterfalls in numerous valleys. Many visitors enjoy the Hana Highway (aka The Road to Hana) as it winds its way along the cost to the sleepy town of Hana in the bay.

The center of the island is where Maui earns its nickname, “The Valley Isle.” The isthmus stretching from Haleakala to the West Maui Mountains is likely where you’ll begin your journey, at the airport.

**MAUI HIGHLIGHTS:**

- **Lahaina Town** - Whale watch, shop and dine in this historic hot spot.
- **Makena Beach State Park (Big Beach)** - One of Maui’s largest beaches.
- **Iao Valley State Park** - Historic site home to the iconic Iao Needle.
- **Haleakala National Park** - Scenic home to Maui’s highest peak.
- **Hana Highway** - Famous for the scenery, twists, and turns on the way to Hana town.
Big Island
of Hawai'i - The Orchid Isle
Larger than all of the other islands combined, the island of Hawaii, or Hawaii’s Big Island, encompasses 11 of the world’s 13 climactic zones - from white sand beaches to snow capped mountains. See waterfalls, rain forests and botanical gardens near Hilo, explore the historic Pu’uKohola Heiau north of Kona, or view Kilauea, one of the world’s most active volcanoes, in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

The Big Island of Hawaii is the third most popular choice amongst visitors, with over 1.6 million travelers annually. The vast majority of the Big Island’s visitors stay in the Kailua-Kona area with its fantastic weather, abundant shopping, and vast array of dining options. It also sponsors a wide assortment of accommodations from high end resorts to condominiums. The ocean off the Kona coast is clear and great for both snorkeling and diving. To the north of Kona is the ‘Gold Coast’ of Kohala. While drier and more barren than Kona, the region offers amazing beaches, great weather conditions, and several luxury accommodations to choose from.

On the other side of the island you’ll discover Hilo and the Puna region. These are good locations to stay if you’re interested in exploring Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. This part of the island receives an abundance of rainfall that creates the verdant surroundings, lush and green. Accommodations are harder to find, but a few hotels, small Inn’s and private rentals can be found, especially in the Volcano town area. The volcano area, which is located at a crisp 4,000ft above sea level, is dotted with a wide assortment of homes, bed and breakfasts and small cottages for renting. This area too serves as a great place to stay if you’re mostly interested in exploring the HVNP.

And speaking of the park, most visitors would be wise to forget anything they’ve seen or heard about the volcano long before they visit the island. The erupting volcano photos, the videos, and all the hype about lava everywhere are just that... hype; at least at present. The media and the park create unrealistic expectations as they try to draw in the public. Most visitors will be surprised that Kilauea is nothing more than a smoking caldera with no visible lava, though we’ll admit that all may change at any time, especially given the last few years of activity at the summit since an explosion there in 2008. In fact, as of this writing, a large portion of the Crater Rim Drive remains closed. Typically though, the only way to get up close and personal with the volcano is to take a helicopter tour that will take you over the current eruption location. Occasionally visitors may also be lucky enough to catch a surface pahoehoe lava flow near the end of the Chain of Crater’s road; but all of these things can change in an instant. Most of the lava/magma is flowing underground to the ocean. Those who have an appreciation for geography or geology will love the park though. Despite Kilauea being the most active volcano on the planet, the volcanoes of Hawaii are nothing like their cousins on the west coast (Mt. St. Helens or Mt. Rainier). They are not explosive and pose little threat to visitors on the island; and lava flow move at a turtle like speed that you could out walk if necessary, no running required. To fully appreciate and explore the park you’ll want to give yourself at least one full day, preferably two if possible. There are many great hikes within the park and several stops which offer informative displays about the history of the region. Also be wary of VOG (a volcanic smog) when visiting the park.

BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII HIGHLIGHTS:

Historic Kailua-Kona Town - Historic seaside hot spot.

Waipio Valley - Hawaii’s largest isolated inhabited valley

Downtown Hilo - Discover local treasures in the island’s capital city.

Ka Lae (South Point) - The southern most point in the United States

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park - The world’s most active volcano
Kauai
The Garden Isle
The oldest and northernmost island in the Hawaiian Island chain is graced with dramatic, natural beauty. Explore the trails of Kokee State Park, see Waimea Canyon, “The Grand Canyon of the Pacific,” or take time to relax in one of the many beautiful gardens of the Garden Isle, like Limahuli Garden.

Kauai is the fourth most visited island, at 1.3 million visitors annually. The island is easily identified by its amazing scenery and relaxed persona. The island, arguably we'll admit, also boasts more coastline filled with beaches than any other island in the chain. Kauai is full of sparsely visited and secluded beaches all around the island; you’re sure to find one that’s just right for you.

The north shore of Kauai features some dramatic and beautiful mountain scenery along with a variety of hidden beaches. The area also has an incredible selection of shopping and dining available for visitors. While the winter months will mean more rain for the northern part of the island, it's still one of the most popular places on the island. Hanalei Bay is a popular location for water activities and has perhaps what are the best beaches in all of Hawaii along her crescent shores.

Kauai’s south shore is popular due to it’s abundance of sunny weather, even during the wet winter months. Poipu and Lawai offer a wide array of accommodations, fine dining, and shopping. On the east coast (also known as the Coconut Coast) Kapaa offers a nice selection of affordable rentals and more shopping than most other areas. While Kauai has the small town feel to it, many larger store brands can still be found on the island - Costco, K-Mart, and Wal-mart all are present here.

Kauai’s west coast is more barren and dry than the rest of the island, and accommodations are fewer and far between here. However one of the main attractions on the island is present here, the Waimea Canyon. Mark Twain dubbed it, “The Grand Canyon of the Pacific.” At ten miles long, it’s an amazing sight to be seen on an island the size of Kauai. The true splendor of the region, and the neighboring Kokee State Park, can only truly be appreciated by taking one of the many trails that crisscross the parks.

**Kauai Highlights:**

- **Wailua Falls** - Kauai’s most popular waterfall
- **Kalalau Trail** - Spectacular coastal trail on Kauai’s north coast.
- **Poipu Beach** - Voted one of America’s best beaches.
- **Waimea Canyon** - Nicknamed the “Grand Canyon of the Pacific.”
Hawaii Weather and Climate Patterns

While it’s always going to be close to impossible to predict the weather months or even weeks ahead of your vacation, you can look at past Hawaii weather and climatic variables to determine what is likely to occur. Below we’ll go over some of the most common concerns about Hawai’i weather. If nothing else, you’ll have a general idea of what to expect. As always, be sure to check local weather through the TV stations during your stay for day-to-day updates. We also recommend you avoid the Weather Channel’s web site that we feel cannot accurately forecast the many micro-climates within Hawaii; they’ll say it’s going to rain every day. Even if that’s true, it’s usually in short bursts, not all-day downpours.
The best thing about Hawai‘i’s weather is that it is very localized. You may be driving along the island and be in a rain storm one minute and in bright sun the next. This variety of weather allows you to fully experience Hawai‘i and its sun-drenched beaches, misty rainbow-filled valleys, pristine waterfalls, cool highlands, and lush mountains.

Hawaii, like all the other major Hawaiian islands, is affected by the trade winds. These winds blow NE to ENE and are typically more prevalent in the winter months. These trade winds bring cool air to the islands from the north, often resulting in precipitation along mauka and windward areas. At times, these winds can die down and practically reverse so that a south wind blows over the islands, resulting in very hot and muggy conditions. These winds are called Kona winds.

One mistake a lot of people make when they visit Hawai‘i is assuming there is a wet and/or dry season like back home, but it’s not quite that simple. Granted, there are two distinct times of year and weather patterns due to the trade winds, but there is no defined “rainy season.” The general point to be made is, you can’t just say it’s rainy in the winter and dry in the summer. We’ve seen it bone dry in the winter, and had flooding in the summer; each enough times to derail most short-term trends. Still, we can look at the long term trends and get a general idea of what to expect. Let’s take a look. On average, the summer months are the driest and sunniest, but they are also the most humid and warmest. The winter months usually bring more rain to the windward side of the islands, north and east, but prolonged rainstorms are uncommon.

The southern coasts of each island are the driest parts year round. Also, consider that Hawai‘i is geographically and topographically one of the most diverse places you’ll ever find. The weather from one side of an island to the other varies greatly over distance and the topography present. Since weather can be so unpredictable in Hawai‘i, keeping a small poncho with you during hikes or other outdoor activities might be a good idea. Unless you hike into any valleys, where clouds can build up and stick around a while, you’re likely only to experience rain in short spells.
HAWAI’I TEMPERATURES:

Hawai’i is fortunate in that it has a mild and pleasant temperature throughout the year, the largest complaint likely being the humidity for those not used to it. There is hardly any difference between night and day temperatures year round. The occasional storm or the trade winds are the exception to the rule, but even then temperatures don’t vary by much. The average high and low in the summer are around 85 and 71 respectively, while the average high and low in the winter are 78 and 62 respectively.

The temperature estimates only apply near sea level, please keep in mind that elevation changes will alter the temperatures. With every 1,000 foot climb in elevation, the temperature, on average, drops another 3.5 degrees. We strongly urge visitors to take note that certain islands have topography that changes often, as does elevation. If you plan to visit the summit’s of Haleakala on Maui or Mauna Kea on the Big Island, you’ll also need to prepare accordingly as temperatures between 10,000-14,000 feet can be downright cold even in the summer months. We advise against winter travel to the summits on the Big Island, as blizzards are not uncommon there.

Ultimately our message is simple. Keep the topography and elevation of where you are traveling in mind and prepare accordingly. Even if you do not plan to visit the summit areas on Maui or the Big Island (or visit either of these islands at all), a light jacket might be useful in other areas around the island you’re visiting where elevation is above three to four thousand feet. Jackets or light sweaters are also useful for any dawn/dusk hiking at higher elevations, like Koke’e on Kauai or Hawai’i Volcanoes Park on the Big Island.

If it’s the ocean temperatures you’re wondering about, rest assured you’ll find warm temperatures year round. Ocean temperatures remain pretty comfortable throughout the year ranging from 80 degrees in the summer to a milder 74 in the winter.

EL NINO AND LA NINA:

These two weather systems/events both have an impact on the islands. During El Nino winters, the islands are typically drier. Whereas in La Nina years, rainfall in Hawaii has tended to be near to above normal during the winter months. The rainy season has also lasted longer into the spring during La Nina years. Hawaii may receive above normal rainfall not only during the normally wet period of January through March but, during a strong La Nina period, the excess wetness may continue through May in many locations.
So you want to know what makes a Hawaiian island? Great, you’re in the right place. While every island has its own story, and we’ll touch on that, only one is a living example of a Hawaiian Island in the works - the Big Island. It’s the perfect specimen to examine and use as an example. That said, let’s take a look at the geology of the only island you can still see physically growing by day.
The ‘Hot Spot’

So what exactly is this ‘hot spot’ you hear so much about, and how does it form these beautiful islands? The answer to this question is fairly simple. The Hawaiian Islands are situated near the middle of the “Pacific Plate” on top of a ‘hot spot.’ This Pacific Plate is almost always moving northwestward at a rate of several centimeters per year, about the same rate as your fingernails grow. This constant northwestward movement of the Pacific Plate over a local volcanic “hot spot,” or plume, has produced a series of islands, one after another in assembly line fashion. The result is a chain of volcanic islands (Hawaiian archipelago) that consists of eight major islands and 124 islets stretching from the Big Island of Hawai’i along a northwest line for 1,500 miles toward Japan and the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. In total, the islands spread across an area of 6,459 square miles. The link above shows one perspective of this chain of islands. This link shows another view of the Hawaii archipelago.

The Big Island of Hawai’i is currently the largest landmass in the Hawaiian island chain. The eight major islands at the western end of the chain are, from west to east, Ni’ihau, Kauai’i, O’ahu, Moloka’i, Lana’i, Kaho’olawe, Maui, and the Big Island of Hawai’i.

Hawai’i, also the youngest island in this chain, began over a million years ago as five separate volcanoes on the ocean floor. As the five volcanoes erupted time and time again (not necessarily simultaneously but rather sequentially), they created thin new sheets of lava spread upon the old, building and building until the volcanic heads emerged from the sea. These mountains often would have flows that overlapped the other mountain’s flows, and eventually the five peaks would become the single island we see today (note the diagram on the next page). First the Kohala Mountains formed as they sat over the ‘hot spot’ in the plate. But as the plate shifted, so did the location of the rising magma, moving to Mauna Kea, Hualalai, Mauna Loa, and eventually Kilauea. Even now there is a new seamount, named Lo’ihi, which is also forming off the southeast coast of the Big Island. In another 50,000 years or so, it too may become the next Hawaiian island, or it may even join to become the sixth peak of the Big Island. Currently, only the volcanic remnants of Kohala are completely extinct, never to erupt again. The rest of the volcanoes on the Big Island aren’t quite done yet. Consider this a history lesson that’s still evolving.
So what exactly is this ‘hot spot’ you hear so much about, and how does it form these beautiful islands? Mauna Loa, the Big Island’s largest volcano makes up approximately 51% of the island, and most people still have a surprisingly hard time finding it when they are here. Mauna Loa means ‘Long Mountain’ and is given this name due to its large shield shape. This shape makes it difficult to distinguish Mauna Loa as an actual mountain.

The name ‘shield volcano,’ which is what all the islands in Hawai‘i are, comes from a perceived resemblance to the shape of a warrior’s shield. Molten lava rises from a hot spot in the earth’s crust, erupts through various vents and rifts on the surface, and proceeds to move down the gentle slopes toward the ocean, building up layer upon layer over millions of years. Kilauea Volcano, the world’s most active volcano and home to the fire-goddess, Pele, resides on the eastern slopes of Mauna Loa. At one time many believed Kilauea to be a vent of Mauna Loa, but today we know it has its own magma chamber and is completely separate from its larger cousin next door. Mauna Kea is the other major volcano on the island making up about 25% of the island’s total landmass. Mauna Kea is significantly easier to spot than Mauna Loa, often recognized in winter months by its snowy cap, hence the name Mauna Kea - meaning ‘White Mountain.’ Reaching a total elevation of some 33,000 feet from the sea floor, of which only 13,780 (approx.) feet exist above sea level, the mountain is the highest point in the Pacific Ocean and the world’s tallest mountain from base to summit.

The Big Island’s other volcanic mountains are Hualalai in Kailua-Kona on the west side of the island and Kohala on the northwest tip of the island. Kohala is the oldest mountain on the island and shows much more geological wear than its younger counterparts. The amazing sea cliffs found in Kohala today were likely caused by a giant landslide some 200,000 years ago.

Mauna Kea and Hualalai are both considered dormant, like Haleakala on Maui. Chances are they will erupt again in the long-term future, though most likely to no significant degree (volume wise) as the hot spot no longer exists beneath them. Generally speaking, the only eruptions that occur beneath these dormant mountains are due to their subsidence into the ocean floor, usually a few thousand feet over time, which then heats and “pushes” any remaining magma up to the surface in the form of an eruption.

Unfortunately, while these eruptions lack volume, they can be somewhat violent and even explosive. Mauna Kea owes its steep slopes to an explosive type of eruption in the recent geologic past. Explosive eruptions often produce widespread ash deposits, which help build a steeper sided volcano like those found in the western United States. Today the physical differences between Mauna Kea (fairly steep sided due to ‘recent’ explosive eruptions) and Mauna Loa (still in its shield-forming stage) are very distinct. In its prime, Mauna Kea likely reached a few thousand feet higher than it does today. As previously noted, Mauna Kea remains the tallest mountain, from top to bottom, on the planet. From base to summit it towers some 33,000 feet. That’s taller than Mount Everest. Plus if you consider what’s subsided (sunk) into the ocean floor, which the USGS does take into account for mountain height, then the mountain is 56,000 feet tall. That’s just incredible!
Mauna Loa and Kilauea are both considered active volcanoes. Mauna Loa last erupted in 1984, and is likely to erupt fairly significantly again in the near future. Since 1843, the beginning of well-documented historical data, Mauna Loa has erupted 33 times. Geologically speaking that makes it a very active volcano. Mauna Loa is by far the bulk (51%) of the Big Island and remains the world’s largest (in mass) volcano. Currently, Kilauea makes all the news and steals the show, but one day in the future Mauna Loa will remind us why it’s the biggest volcano on the island. Mauna Loa can erupt significant amounts of lava in a very short time frame, dwarfing Kilauea.

Kilauea, once believed to be merely a side satellite vent of Mauna Loa but now recognized as its own distinct volcano, is the world’s most active volcano, erupting continuously since 1983. Between January 1983, and June 2008, when our Big Island book was last updated, over 600 acres of land were added to the island by lava flows from Kilauea volcano. This growth has not been without cost however. Several towns have been destroyed by Kilauea: Kapoho (1960), Kalapana (1990), and Kaimu (1990). Today the remnants of these towns struggle to survive on the flanks of the world’s most active volcano. In some aspects these towns are all but abandoned except by a few.

As previously mentioned, just 18 miles off Hawai’i’s southeast coast is the undersea volcano known as Lo’ihi. Lo’ihi is an actively erupting seamount that lies approximately 3,178 feet below the surface of the ocean. If and when Lo’ihi breaks above the waves, it will likely join with Kilauea (which, in theory, will be much larger by that time) and become the sixth peak in what is now Hawai’i’s largest island. Don’t book your hotel room just yet though: it’s a good 50,000 years or more in the making.

As you drive around the island you can’t help but notice the various lava formations and lava fields that crisscross the island. If you pay especially close attention you’re likely to observe there are two distinctly different types of lava flows. Around the Kona area you’ll quickly notice how clunky and jagged the lava is. In most of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, especially at the end of Chain of Craters Road, you’ll notice the lava is very smooth, pillowy, and even ropy. These two unique flow types owe their origins to two distinctly different types of lava flows, Pahoehoe and A’a.

The word Pahoehoe (pronounced Pa-hoi-hoi) rolls off the tongue in the same fashion that it flows out of the volcano. It is smooth, and as the surface cools it forms ropy swirls and smooth hills. Pahoehoe flows slowly and steadily forward using bulbous toes to lead the way. As the toe (lobe) cools, it creates a thin layer. The hot lava continues to advance by breaking through the layer. The unique cracking sound of the cooled crust popping off often bewilders first time visitors. The surface texture of pahoehoe flows can vary greatly. The viscous nature of pahoehoe makes it the perfect medium to create a variety of designs in the cooled lava.
The other type of lava is called ‘A’a. ‘A’a (pronounced “ah-ah”) is the rough and tumble sister of pahoehoe. It rolls forth in clumps of broken lava called clinkers. The clinkers continue to pile up until the lava has cooled leaving a sharp, brittle pile of lava rock. It is difficult to find sure footing on the rubbly surface. The term ‘a’a is actually said to have come from the ancient Hawaiians who would exclaim ‘ah ah’ as they walked over it with their bare feet. While the top of the flow may just look like a pile of rocks, underneath is a dense lava core which drives it onward. The crumbly surface clinkers are able to hitch a ride on top of the dense lava for awhile, but eventually they topple off the end and are rolled over. This process creates layers of fragments on the top and bottom of the advancing flow. It’s almost like a glacier of fire.

Most of the lava that erupts in the islands begins its life as pahoehoe. Along its journey a variety of factors can make it change into ‘a’a. The thickness of the lava and the resistance of the path it takes can make this change occur. The thicker the pahoehoe flow, the less resistance is required to turn it into ‘a’a because it is moving so slowly. Conversely, the thinner and more free flowing the pahoehoe flow, the harder it is to encounter the amount of resistance required to turn it into ‘a’a. Once a pahoehoe flow has transitioned to ‘a’a, there is no going back. Pahoehoe can turn into ‘a’a, but ‘a’a can never turn into pahoehoe.

Two other famous volcanic by-product are Pele’s hair and tears. Both formed in fountaining eruptions, Pele’s hair are thin strands of volcanic glass caught in the air during a eruption. Pele’s tears are solid tear-shaped glass particles formed in the same way.
Though the Big Island of Hawai‘i may seem incredibly large compared to it’s predecessors in the chain, in all likelihood it is not that much larger at all (historically speaking). Just across the ‘Alenuihaha Channel sits the island of Maui and it’s greatest volcano, Haleakala. Geologists suspect that at one time Haleakala was not only joined to the West Maui Mountains, like today, but also was a single landmass combined with the islands of Lana‘i, Moloka‘i, and Kaho‘olawe -- known as Maui Nui (literally, big Maui) (view map).

The submergence of Maui Nui resulted as the volcanic body moved away from the Hawaiian hot spot. The lack of volcanic upbuilding combined with continued subsidence into the ocean floor eventually sank portions of the large island into the Pacific, providing us with the four separate islands we see today.

A similar fate awaits the Big Island in due time. As the hot spot “moves away” from the island (due to the Pacific Plate carrying the islands piggyback-style off to the north west) the Big Island too will fall victim to subsidence and erosion. Eventually the Big Island will likely find itself in a similar state to that of Maui Nui. It will become separate and smaller islands as the ocean encroaches on the flanks of each separate mountain. Such is the geologic circle of life beyond the Hawaiian hot spot.

For the next few thousand years however the Big Island will remain just that, big! It continues to represent an astounding 62% of the total land area of the Hawaiian Islands. And because Mauna Loa and Kilauea are currently still active and erupting volcanoes, the island of Hawai‘i is still growing. The geologic future of the island is a work in progress.
The Hawaiian Islands are quite possibly as diverse as the planet itself. Almost all races of man can be found living on her volcanic lands. Hawaii has become a gathering point and melting pot of the world’s cultures. And as many men flock here to create some commonality of the human race, the rarity of the fauna and flora species that thrive here are unique to all the world. Also, there are few landscapes or environmental conditions that cannot be found somewhere on Hawaii’s shores. For every visitor, Hawaii offers something unique. From the richest person who desires first class luxury to the soul-searcher looking for deeper meaning, the islands are the answer. Despite whom you are when you come to Hawaii, you will leave a changed individual. Hawaii has a way of creeping into your being, invoking your soul, and rejuvenating the drive for life inside of you. Ironically so many choose to ignore this feeling upon their return home, misjudging it as mere wistfulness for a vacation they enjoyed some time in their past. This feeling, this calling, is actually ‘Aloha’ in its purest form, and if you kindle it inside of you, it will grow - then you too will know the magic of the Hawaiian Islands.

Remember… Hawaii is both sacred and pure, born from the fiery depths of the earth by a goddess the Hawaiians call Pele. Do not mistake these people as purely mystical and full of senseless lore. A wise man once said to the missionaries of the 1800s, “Pele is the volcano, and the volcano is Pele… they are one in the same.”

Please do not take Pele’s children (the rocks) from this land, and please try and not leave anything behind that you take into the wilderness. Respect the people, the aina, the kai (ocean), and yourself for who and what they are. Let your troubles go, and leave the world you left back home behind. Let your problems dissolve in this majestic place. And when you leave these beautiful islands and the sensation creeps over you that you deem certain to be Aloha, let it grow inside of you. We’ll see you when you return. Aloha.