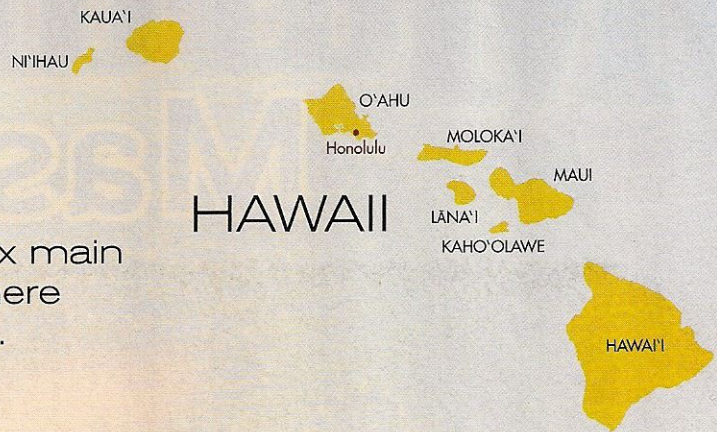


# THE BEST OF THE ISLANDS

BY BEKAH WRIGHT

With islands come treasures—particularly when it comes to the Hawaiian Islands. Indeed, veritable jewels can be found on Hawai'i's six main islands. For an unforgettable visit, here are a few that should top itineraries.



## HAWAII ISLAND

The myths and legends of the islands take on new meaning with a visit to Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park on Hawai'i Island, home to two of the world's tallest volcanoes—Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa—and one of the world's most active volcanoes, Kīlauea. The nearly 333,000-acre park is designated an International Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. There are 150 miles of trails to be explored that take hikers past petroglyph fields, old lava flows, cinder cones and rainforest.

The best overview of the park is had by car. While making Caldera Rim Drive's 11-mile loop around Kīlauea Caldera, a multitude of terrain changes can be observed from volcanic to rainforest. Stops to make along the way include Thurston Lava Tube, Steam Vents, Devastation Trail and Kīlauea Iki Crater. As for those Hawaiian myths, check out Halema'uma'u Crater, the place Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes, calls home.

## KAUAI

A favorite pastime on Kauai is gazing at the landscape. Of the numerous breathtaking destinations to visit, Waimea Canyon heads the list. Waimea lives up to its nickname of the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, measuring 10 miles long, one mile wide and 3,657-feet deep. Hiking trails through Waimea Canyon State Park and the adjoining Kōke'e State Park provide dazzling views of the canyon's grandeur along with vistas of Kalalau Valley, Mount Wai'ale'ale and the Na Pali Coast.

## LĀNA'I

On Lāna'i, a 4X4 adventure awaits on Munro Trail. George Munro, manager of Lāna'i Ranch in the early 1900s, planted the majority of the flora found on the trail. The 12-mile, round-trip drive traverses through an ironwood forest, rainforest and past Ho'okio Gulch, a stronghold for Lāna'i's warriors during a battle in 1778 against Chief Kalaniopuu's troops from the Hawai'i Island. As for views, the most panoramic is atop Lāna'ihale, Lāna'i's highest peak.

## MAUI

Some may say the most idyllic time to visit the Hawaiian Islands is December through April when kohola—endangered North Pacific humpback whales—migrate to the area. Numerous whale-watching expeditions are offered during this time, many of them departing from Lahaina, considered the Pacific's most significant whaling port in the mid-1800s. Before setting sail, stroll Lahaina

boardwalk's shops, galleries and restaurants, or step back in history at the Lahaina Heritage Museum, Lahaina Lighthouse or beneath the shade of the world's largest banyan tree.

## MOLOKA'I

There are many sacred sites on the islands. One much revered on Moloka'i is Kalaupapa National Historical Park. Guests must have permission to access the park, which can only be done on foot or by mule, helicopter or boat. Reaching the park via Moloka'i Mule Ride Inc. will appeal to the adventuresome as mules hug the sides of the 1,700-foot sea cliffs during the 2.9-mile descent with its 26 switchbacks. Inside the park a guide leads visitors through two historic settlements where people afflicted by Hansen's disease, or leprosy, were forced into isolation between 1866 and 1969. The story of the recently sainted Joseph De Veuster—a Belgian priest known as Father Damien who devoted his life to the settlement—is related at sites such as St. Philomena Church and Damien's gravesite. Still to be seen are the awe-inspiring North Shore Cliffs National Landmark, which at 2,000 feet are the world's tallest sea cliffs.

## O'AHU

Myriad sites on O'ahu bring forth Hawai'i's rich culture and history. A glimpse into the life of Hawai'i's royalty comes with a visit to 'Iolani Palace. Built in 1882 by King David Kalakaua, the palace was the official residence of the monarchy. After Kalakaua's death, his sister, Lili'uokalani, took the throne. Two years later, the monarchy was overthrown and the queen's attempts to restore her power found her a prisoner in her own home. Today, visitors to the palace can walk in the steps of royalty and learn about their role in history.

The story of the December 7, 1941 military attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan is retold inside five distinct memorials and museums: the USS Arizona Memorial, USS Bowfin Submarine Museum and Park, Battleship Missouri Memorial, USS Oklahoma Memorial and the Pacific Aviation Museum. Beyond recounting a history of the surprise strike, which led to the U.S. entering World War II, the historic sites offer insight into the pre-war lives of military personnel stationed in Hawai'i, the attack's impact on U.S. history and the events that led to Japan's unconditional surrender aboard the battleship USS Missouri on September 2, 1945 in Tokyo Bay.