

The HAWAIIANTM ISLANDS

Kaua'i • O'ahu • Moloka'i • Lāna'i • Maui • Hawai'i



CULTURE



what is Hawaiian *culture?*



Hawai‘i has for centuries been an archipelago filled with stories. And some of the oldest speak about the creation of this place by the Hawaiian goddess of fire, a deity best known throughout the islands today as Pele.

Fleeing long ago across the Pacific Ocean – running from a fight with her family – Pele stumbled on a chain of uninhabitable islands, made up then of nothing more than black rock at the time. Deciding one of those barren islands might be a good place to put down her own roots, Pele plunged her magic ‘ō‘ō, or digging stick, into that barren rock, calling up her sacred fires and lava that burned deep within the earth and giving life to the island of Kaua‘i.

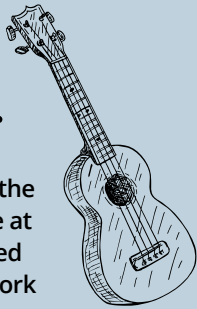
But while Pele settled into her new home on Kaua‘i, the old stories say her sister and a goddess of the sea, Nāmakaokaha‘i, also known as Nāmaka, was in close pursuit and angry about how Pele left things with her family. A ferocious battle of fire and water ensued, and Pele was eventually forced to retreat to another barren rock in the uninhabited island chain, where she again plunged her magic ‘ō‘ō into the black rock and made a new home on what we know today as the island of O‘ahu.



DID YOU KNOW?

‘ukulele factory tour

O'ahu visitors fascinated by the history of the 'ukulele can see firsthand how one is made at the KoAloha factory in Honolulu. The guided visits offer a chance to watch luthiers at work and provide an informative introduction to the entire process – from wood selection all the way to stringing. And you might also catch a special 'ukulele performance by a staff member. koaloha.com



To Pele's frustration, Nāmaka was relentless and chased after her again. They battled fiercely once more, forcing Pele to later seek refuge on Maui. Nāmaka again pursued her sister, but on Maui, the stories say Pele was unable to escape her sister's rage, and she was defeated on Maui's east coast at Hāna, where today you'll find a volcanic cinder cone called Kaiwiopēle, or literally "the bones of Pele."

Although physically defeated by her sister Nāmaka, the stories say that Pele's spirit escaped, fleeing to the island of Hawai'i, where she resides today in Halema'uma'u Crater at Kīlauea – one of the planet's most mischievous and active volcanoes.

ALOHA

Look up the word *aloha* in a Hawaiian-English dictionary, and you'll find it has many meanings. While it can function as a phrase to welcome and bid farewell, *aloha* can also express feelings of love, mercy, sympathy and charity.

And *aloha* can also refer to a responsible way of behaving, thinking of others first and treating people in a way you'd like to be treated. *Aloha* is a feeling, a thought process, a way of conducting yourself and treating your neighbors.

You can also have *aloha* for the land, for the ocean, for the forest as well as for your friends, family and yourself. *Aloha* is a word to be cherished and shared, and it is most certainly a way of life here in the islands.





LEI

Often made with flowers, leaves, shells, berries, nuts, seeds and even feathers, a *lei* is a physical embodiment of *aloha* in the islands, made and given with love. Thought of by many as the embrace of a loved one, *lei* are often gifts at special occasions like graduations, birthdays or office promotions, but also given just because.

Because they are thought of as physical gifts of *aloha*, it is typically impolite to refuse a *lei*. Additionally, it is considered improper to present a tied *lei* to pregnant woman as Hawaiians feel a closed *lei* around the neck is bad luck for the unborn child. So open-ended *lei* are given here instead.

While visiting the islands, if you receive a *lei*, it's customary to wear it until you return to your hotel room, where it's ok to leave the *lei* when you depart. It is improper to put a *lei* in the trash. Giving them away is also fine, or consider untying them and leaving their flowers back to nature.

HULA

This iconic dance form has long been a vital part of storytelling in the Hawaiian culture and was traditionally accompanied by percussive instruments and chanting, creating a presentation where the dancer's movement provided visual representation for stories.

Prior to western contact, there was only one form of *hula* in the islands: *hula kabiko* (ancient form of dance). However, the dance underwent a modernization in the 20th century with the addition of contemporary music and movements popularized in Waikiki, and later Hollywood. Known as *hula 'auana*, this contemporary

version is still rooted deeply in storytelling, but is usually accompanied by stringed instruments like the guitar, *'ukulele* and even piano and features a more upbeat approach and technique that is often more familiar to visitors.

Hula is, of course, a purely Hawaiian artform and not to be confused with dances of other Polynesian cultures found elsewhere in the Pacific.

Hula is also an artform practiced over a lifetime, passed on from a *kumu*, or teacher, to students through *bālau hula*, or *hula* schools, over years of intensive practice and performance. And *hula* is most certainly not just for women. Some of Hawai'i's most powerful and awe-inspiring *hula* is performed by men, a tradition dating back centuries in the islands.



HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE

Based on centuries of solely oral traditions, the Hawaiian language, or *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, wasn’t first transcribed into a written format until the early 19th century, when Hawai‘i was still a sovereign nation.

First brought to the Hawaiian Islands aboard sailing canoes by Polynesian explorers, *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i* evolved along with the culture into its own distinctive language, deeply rooted in Polynesian linguistic heritage. Hawaiian words and expressions often have many meanings and require close attention and context. Hawaiian chanting, meanwhile, is a tradition that – often in conjunction with *hula* – helped tell the stories of the islands’ people and preserve the complex Hawaiian history and customs for future generations.

By the middle of the 20th century, the Hawaiian language was very much threatened as were those who spoke it. *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i* was officially banned from schools and public institutions in 1896. However, Hawai‘i’s culture and language underwent a critical renaissance in the



1970s. A decade later, the first Hawaiian language preschool, Pūnana Leo o Kekaha, opened its doors on Kaua‘i – teaching children in an immersive setting with fluent Hawaiian language-speaking elders. *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i* has since made a steady comeback as the number of families speaking Hawaiian increased along with immersion schools and programs. Now students are taught from infant stages all the way to earning a Doctorates’ degree. You’ll hear some level of Hawaiian spoken throughout the islands on public transportation, for example, or in the airport and on local television channels. And Hawai‘i is the only state in the U.S. with two official languages.

HAWAIIAN MUSIC

The music of Hawai‘i has undergone dramatic change over the centuries, influenced substantially after the first western contact by cultures outside the islands and the missionaries who came in the 19th century, bringing along with them hymns and harmonies.

Vaqueros, or Spanish cowboys who

came later to work on cattle ranches in the islands, also brought with them guitars, which over time were used to create the now extraordinarily popular Hawaiian staple of slack-key guitar music – played with a slacked or loosened tuning technique that embodies the often breezy, relaxed and warm feel of the local climate.

First introduced by Portuguese immigrants, the small braguinha guitar became extraordinarily popular in Hawai‘i during the late 1800s. That instrument also evolved some with time and is known throughout the world as the *‘ukulele*, a word translated as “jumping flea” that according to some accounts was inspired by the extraordinarily quick fingers of early Portuguese musicians who played the small stringed instrument.

Hawai‘i’s kings and queens were also extraordinarily gifted and prolific musicians and composers, who wrote some of the islands’ most iconic music, often with heart-wrenching lyrics and hauntingly beautiful melodies. Queen Lili‘uokalani, Hawai‘i’s last reigning monarch, wrote *Aloha ‘Oe* – still one of the islands’ most recognizable songs today. She also wrote *Hawai‘i Pono‘i*, which was composed by her older brother King Kalākaua. It was the Kingdom of Hawai‘i’s former national anthem and is the State of Hawai‘i’s official anthem today. Hawai‘i is the only state with an anthem in a language other than English.



DID YOU KNOW?

visit a palace

Hawai‘i is home to the only official royal residence in the United States, and visitors can visit three different royal palaces in the islands: ‘Iolani Palace and Hānaiakamalama, or the Queen Emma Summer Palace, on O‘ahu and Hulihe‘e Palace in Kailua-Kona on the island of Hawai‘i. All three offer an insightful look back at Hawai‘i’s rich and complex history as a sovereign nation ruled by beloved royal families. dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/hawaiiis-royal-palaces



LOCAL CULTURE

HAKU: *Haku* means to braid or plait in *lei*-making terms, and can be worn on any part of the body. A *lei po'o* refers to the placement of the *lei*. *Po'o* means head, so a *lei po'o* is a "head *lei*," one that is worn on the head, often of the *haku*-style.

SHAKA: An extraordinarily common gesture in Hawai'i, the true origins of the shaka remain a little murky, but to offer one properly, extend your pinkie and thumb while curling your pointer, middle and ring fingers. Typically, the palm faces the chest for a standard shaka, but variations are certainly plentiful, and a shaka is often directed toward someone else to send a message of acknowledgement, greeting or thanks.

SLIPPAHS: Local people don't wear flip-flops here in the islands. You'll instead find residents referring to their "slippahs", probably best defined as the iconic rubber slide-ons many say were inspired by the Japanese zori – flat sandals made of rice straw and cloth – that became popular in Hawai'i after World War II. With tropical temperatures year-round, the ease and utility of slippahs makes them great for just about any Hawai'i occasion.



DID YOU KNOW?

make a *lei*

Just a short drive from downtown Kaunakakai, Moloka'i visitors who phone ahead can tour the photogenic Moloka'i Plumerias farm, where Aome and Dick Wheeler have been growing plumeria for 30 years. Visitors are in good hands with Aome, the farm's chief *lei* maker and a very patient teacher. molokaiplomerias.com



SHOES OFF INDOORS: You won't find many houses in Hawai'i where residents don't take shoes off before entering. A demonstration of respect for your hosts that keeps dirt outside, it's a little easier here because most folks wear slippahs. Important note: place them neatly outside the door.

DIRECTIONS: Some common phrases used when giving or looking for directions in the islands are *ma uka*, (mah-oo-kah) meaning toward the mountains, or *ma kai*, (muh-kahy) meaning toward the ocean. And on O'ahu, people also frequently use 'Ewa to indicate west and Lē'ahi, (also known as Diamond Head) can often refer to the east.

PIDGIN: Pidgin is a unique mixture of words, phrases and idioms drawn from the many languages and cultures that make up Hawai'i. Pidgin was first developed during Hawai'i's

sugar and pineapple plantation era in the late 1800s and was used by plantation workers to communicate with each other. Today it is known as Hawai'i Creole English.





CELEBRATION OF CULTURE

KAUA'I:

Waimea Town Celebration:

Kicking off in February each year, the Waimea Town Celebration is a week-long west Kaua'i festival featuring everything from live music and *bula* performances to cooking demonstrations and craft fairs to traditional outrigger canoe races and one of Hawai'i's most lively rodeos. waimeatowncelebration.com

O'AHU:

King Kamehameha Celebration:

Held each year on June 11—King Kamehameha Day—this colorful statewide celebration honors the reign

of King Kamehameha I, who united the Hawaiian Islands under his rule in 1810. Festivities include a *lei* draping ceremony conducted at the King Kamehameha statue across from 'Iolani Palace in Honolulu and a parade that travels from the statue to Kapi'olani Park in Waikiki, featuring lively floats, marching bands and traditional *pā'ū* riders, who represent a Hawaiian royal court on horseback. The celebration continues after the parade with the King Kamehameha Celebration *Ho'olaule'a* featuring Hawaiian entertainment, food and craft booths.

sfca.hawaii.gov/resources/king-kamehameha-celebration-commission/

MAUI:

Celebration of the Arts : Taking place at the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua on Maui each spring, the Celebration of the Arts brings together many of the islands' most respected Hawaiian artisans, educators, cultural practitioners, and entertainers for *bula* and live music performances, hands-on cultural demonstrations, cultural panel discussions and one of the state's most beloved *lū'au*.

kapaluacelebrationofthearts.com



"*Mālama* is to cherish and protect the reefs, the fish, the birds, the winds and the land. ... If you say you love or enjoy Hawai'i, if you think it's beautiful, you can also contribute to help to keep the place beautiful. And if you have a part in that, that's something that lasts generations. If my ancestors have been doing this for generations, it has to work for us."

—Kia'i Collier, Hawai'i Land Trust

ISLAND OF HAWAI'I:

Merrie Monarch Festival:

Traditionally held the week after Easter, the week-long festival features an internationally acclaimed *bula* competition, an invitation-only Hawaiian arts fair, live music performances and a grand parade through Hilo town all in honor of King Kalākaua, a beloved and inspiring force behind the perpetuation of Hawaiian traditions, language, music, art and especially *bula*.

merriemonarch.com

A CHANCE TO MĀLAMA

Kaua'i: A great voluntourism opportunity to get involved with is the Friends of Kamalani and Lydgate Park. Ongoing beach clean ups are scheduled every Saturday from 8:30-10:30am. It is easy to promote, and easy to participate as there is no sign up needed – just show up ready to work! facebook.com/FriendsOfKamalani/

O'ahu: Some suggestions for the Mālama Hawai'i voluntourism options are tree planting at Gunstock Ranch, the Mālama 'Āina experience at Kualoa Ranch and joining a workday at Mālama Loko Ea. These are all well-established, part of the official Mālama Hawai'i program specific to O'ahu and very accessible to visitors.

Maui: Whether volunteers feel more drawn to *mālama 'āina* (take care of the land) or *mālama kai* (take care of the ocean), they'll find opportunities with Ka'ehu. Ka'ehu is a nonprofit organization with a mission to restore Ka'ehu Bay, an area rich with natural and cultural resources, while perpetuating traditional Hawaiian culture. Maintain taro patches, restore streams, or clear beach debris along 64 acres of protected coastal wetlands. kaehu.org/volunteer

Island of Hawai'i: The Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative was formed to protect, promote and restore a native Hawaiian dry forest in Waikoloa. Volunteers can join in efforts to build trails, clear weeds, plant trees, collect native seeds and propagate the plants that will rehabilitate the native ecosystem and grow into future forests. waikolodryforest.org



TOP HAWAI'I CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

KAUA'I:

Kaua'i Museum: Loaded with educational exhibits offering visitors wonderful insight into the history of Kaua'i's native Hawaiian and sugar plantation cultures, the Kaua'i Museum is a tremendous collection of native Hawaiian art and artifacts that also showcases work by the island's artists of today. kauaimuseum.org

O'AHU:

'Iolani Palace: Officially dedicated in 1882, 'Iolani Palace is the only official residence of royalty in the United States and was home to Hawai'i's last ruling monarchs – King Kalākaua and his sister and successor, Queen Lili'uokalani. The palace's grounds and galleries function today as a museum, allowing guests a firsthand look at the history, fashion, furniture, royal regalia, military accessories and even tableware used within the palace from King Kalākaua's installment in 1882 to the dethronement of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893. iolanipalace.org

MAUI:

'Īao Valley State Monument: Highlights include easy hikes, scenic mountain views and a cool mountain stream. The park is centered around 'Īao Needle (Kūkaemoku) — a captivating rock pinnacle 1,200 feet high. A tumultuous past belies the tranquility of the place. In 1790 'Īao Valley was the site of a historic battle, in which King Kamehameha I of the island of Hawai'i defeated Maui's army in his quest to unite the Hawaiian Islands. dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/maui/iao-valley-state-monument/

