

# Hawai'i's Big Island

## THE ISLAND OF HAWAI'I "Aloha Spoken Here" Fact Sheet

Land Mass:	4,028 square miles – twice the combined size of the other islands (10,473 square km)
Population:	158,423
Principal Cities:	Hilo and Kona
Flower:	Red Lehua
Color:	Red

### GEOGRAPHY

Hawai'i's Big Island is the youngest and largest of the Hawaiian Islands with 4,028 square miles and it's still growing as long as lava continues to pour out of Kīlauea, the world's most active volcano. It has 266 miles (428 km) of coastline. Hawai'i's Big Island stretches from sea level to the volcanic peaks of Mauna Kea, 13,796 feet (4,205 m), and Mauna Loa, 13,677 feet (4,169 m). Hawai'i's Big Island has the Islands' highest lake, Lake Waiau, at 13,020 feet (3,969 m) above sea level; the state's longest sheer drop waterfall, 'Akaka Falls, 442 feet (135 m); the southernmost tip of the United States, Ka Lae (South Point) and the tallest mountain measured from the ocean floor, Mauna Kea.

Of all the islands, Hawai'i's Big Island is the most ecologically diverse, with natural environments ranging from the desert plains of Ka'u to the rain forests above Hilo, to snowcapped Mauna Kea. There are said to be 13 climatic regions on earth and the Big Island has all but two, the Arctic and the Saharan.

## **CLIMATE**

Average temperature ranges from 71° – 77° F (22° – 25° C) with cooler climates of 57° – 63° F (14° – 17° C) at the 4,000-foot Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park headquarters, and 62° – 66° F (17° – 19° C) at 2,760-foot Waimea. Rainfall is variable in different sectors, which makes for some beautiful, lush scenery.

## **MAJOR INDUSTRIES**

Kona coffee (only gourmet coffee grown in the United States), macadamia nuts, papaya, cattle, anthuriums, orchids, aquaculture, scientific technology, and tourism including ag-tourism, nature-tourism, science-tourism and edu-tourism.

## **RECREATION**

Deep sea fishing, ocean kayaking, stargazing, snorkeling, sightseeing, National Parks, National Historic Sites, hiking, horseback riding, scuba diving, tennis, golfing, sailing, whale watching, camping, surfing, bicycling, hunting, shopping and agricultural tourism including Kona Coffee tours, botanical garden tours and family-run farm tours.

## **BRIEF HISTORY**

Believed to be the first Hawaiian Island discovered and settled by Polynesians, perhaps as early as the fifth century, Hawai'i's Big Island has been the scene of many of the state's historic events. The birthplace of King Kamehameha I, this land was the one from which he launched forays to unify the islands. For a time, it was the capital of the kingdom. Hawai'i's Big Island was also the scene of King Kamehameha I's death, and with it the end of the kapu system, abolished by his successor (and son) Kamehameha II in 1819. Kealahou Bay, Captain Cook's first Big Island landfall in 1779, and the scene of his death, is the site where the first Christian service (a seaman's burial) was performed on Hawai'i's shores. Today, much of ancient Hawai'i can still be seen throughout the island, where historical sites have been preserved.

## **FASCINATING FACTS**

- Ka Lae is the southernmost point in the United States.
- Kīlauea is the world's most active volcano and has been continually erupting since 1983.
- Nearly every one of the Big Island's stunningly diverse regions—from the lava fields of Puna to Kohala's lush valleys—boasts its own nationally recognized park.
- Parker Ranch is one of the largest privately held ranches in the United States.
- Miloli'i, on the southern Kona Coast, is Hawai'i's last authentic native fishing village.
- You can see 90% of all the stars visible from earth from Mauna Kea, the world's tallest mountain when measured from its base below sea level. 13 world-class telescopes, representing nine countries and 30 years of astronomy research are found here.
- Hawai'i's Big Island has 12 spas, making it the perfect destination to renew the spirit.
- The Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, held annually in Hilo, is the largest gathering of hula in the world.
- Hawai'i's Big Island is a worldwide leader in harvesting macadamia nuts and orchids and is the only place in the United States where vanilla and cacao beans (the raw material used to make chocolate) are grown. Kona is also the only place in the United States where gourmet coffee is grown.
- Hawai'i's Big Island is known as the Golf Capital of Hawai'i with 20 golf courses and several more scheduled for completion.

## **TOP-RATED ATTRACTIONS**

- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
- 'Akaka Falls
- Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park
- Volcano Art Center
- Lyman House Memorial Museum
- Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site
- Pu'uhonua O Hōnaunau National Historical Park
- Parker Ranch
- Hulihee Palace
- Waipio Valley