

# HAWAII Vacation

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When you think of Hawaii, images of hula skirts, multiple leis draped around the necks of tourists and the gleaming white sand of the beaches come to mind. Visiting Hawaii for the spectacular waterfalls and the relaxing atmosphere is enough of an incentive to coax many people into traveling there.

But Hawaii is so much more than just a popular tourist destination. It's a place rich with traditions and legends that are as much a part of Hawaii as its beautiful, lush scenery - and it all began many years ago.

## **The Historical Culture of Hawaii**

Hawaii was first settled by Polynesian people, who came to the island and brought with them the culture and beliefs that made up their way of life in their original homeland. The people who settled had a hierarchy of society with the chiefs of the islands being the most important member.

These men spread the belief among the people that they came directly from the gods. Because the people feared angering their gods, they in turn feared the chiefs. There are many stories that portray these earlier settlers as people of a cannibalistic nature and those stories were correct.

Cannibalism was practiced as a way of offering up a sacrifice to their gods. The chiefs ran the various islands as they saw fit and profited from the people who worked the land and cared for the livestock.

The chiefs would take a portion of whatever the people earned or produced for themselves. Though life was fairly simple when Hawaii was first settled, the beliefs of the Polynesian people created many rules that governed daily life on the islands.

The people believed in many gods and tied in the rules with whether or not the gods were pleased. For example, if the people broke one of the

rules, it was considered going against the gods and the rule breaker could be punished by death.

Because of the caste system, women were considered to be toward the bottom of society and were not held to be valuable as people. Some of the rules in place in the early societal system were very unfavorable to women, often limiting what types of foods they could eat and their freedoms.

Families were often large in number of members and each family answered to an older male who would dictate the work to each of the members. He was also responsible to see that the rules chosen to please the gods were obeyed.

Each member pitched in with working and building the houses and all resources among the members were shared by the family unit. The Hawaii of today is a completely different culture, thanks to the ever-changing population of the islands that's taken place over the years.

More Westerners have settled in Hawaii and now there is a mixture of the old and new cultures as well as a mixture of ancient and modern beliefs about religious practices. English is spoken on the islands, but there is also still a strong focus on the Hawaiian language being spoken to protect the heritage of the people.

You'll find art galleries and museums that focus on preserving the rich culture of Hawaii both past and present. From that early start, where chiefs ruled the islands, today there are over a million people and more than half that number are not native islanders, but people who settled there later. Because of this influx of other cultures, true native Hawaiians are lessening in number.

### **The Religion of Hawaii**

Early settlers to Hawaii were polytheists. They believed in more than one God. Their gods were not equal according to their beliefs and each god was responsible for different areas affecting the citizen's lives.

Whenever an adverse event took place, such as bad weather, the people believed that someone had done something to make the gods upset. The chiefs would then hold an inquisition style search for answers among the people and would often demand the death of the person whom they suspected had angered the gods.

If weather came to the islands that was destructive or deadly, the chiefs would put to death the person they believed responsible for the cause and when the weather returned to normal, this cemented their belief that they had found and punished or executed the right culprit.

Kane was one of the original gods of the settlers and the people believed that this god was the one in charge of providing them with the world they lived in. Many of the chiefs claimed to be from this god.

Other gods had specific purposes. Ku was the god of war and he represented to the people the male dominated hierarchy. In order to produce their food supplies, the islanders believed they had to keep the god Lono appeased.

It was this god, they believed, that controlled some aspects of their weather. Whenever a hurricane rolled ashore, the people thought they had displeased the god Kanaloa, the deity they thought was in charge of the sea and had the power to destroy their ships.

The people believed their gods could take on other forms and to earn favor from the gods, the people would often engage in human sacrifices. The islanders also worshipped goddesses - including Pele or the goddess of fire. They believed this goddess controlled the fire from the volcanoes.

Though some of the people still practice polytheism, modern religion in Hawaii is varied. Visitors to the islands will find places to worship according to their beliefs. Some of the religions practiced in Hawaii today are Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and Catholicism.

### **The Beauty of Hawaii**

Hawaii is such a stunning place that it's been chosen as a site for blockbuster films and popular television shows. Hawaiians are very environmentally conscious and fight to keep the pollution, including toxic waste, low and air quality good.

Because of their aggressive green policies, Hawaii is considered to be one of the top ten greenest states. Thanks to their determination to keep Hawaii green, the state abounds with natural beauty and resources.

Protecting the land and way of life creates many see-it-to-believe it settings. Part of the breathtaking beauty of Hawaii is the sunsets and sparkling beaches. The cleanliness and transparent waters are what makes Hawaii popular as well.

The purity of the beaches and the surfing adventures call to visitors from all over the world. The beauty of Hawaii is seen in the many itineraries and popular spots offered by the island.

You can go low underground and see the amazing caves or you can travel to see the glory and power of a volcano and then later go snorkeling and see the amazing reef life. But that's only part of what makes the island one of the most chosen destinations for travel.

What also makes up Hawaii's beauty is a combination of the culture past and present, the warm and friendly nature of the island's inhabitants and the lushness of the land that's been carefully conserved. The almost perfect weather and mild temperatures add to the beauty of Hawaii.

### **The People of Hawaii**

In the early beginnings, when people lived close together as one large family and each family shared the good and the bad, it gave the islands a sense of warmth and community. That same sense of sharing and community is present today, making Hawaii one of the friendliest places to be.

You'll find that there are people living in Hawaii who can trace their ancestry back to those very first Polynesian settlers. But you'll also discover

that there are transplanted Hawaiians who came from various states to the island to live.

But regardless of whether native to the land or not, Hawaiians greet visitors with a warm welcome and the adornment of leis upon arrival, combined with the greeting of, "Aloha" - which means hello and goodbye, but also stands for a form of affection and tenderness.

There's a high level of respect for people among the inhabitants of Hawaii, which helps keep a sense of good will among the population. The islanders are very family oriented and will often graciously reach out to strangers and share a meal or a helping hand.

The ethnic breakdown of the people in Hawaii consists of Caucasian, which make up a third of the population, Asian, which makes up the majority of the population – including Filipino, Chinese and Japanese to make up almost half the population of Hawaii.

Hawaiians, both native and mixed ethnicity, are less than thirty percent of the population. Hispanics and African-Americans make up less than three percent of the population.

### **Hula in Hawaii**

Along with the early settlement of Hawaii was born the beautiful music that is still a part of the Hawaiian culture today. Hula dancing is often performed to the music, and while many visitors might think that the hula dancing is a form of Hawaiian dance, it's actually a way that the native people express their culture and tell stories.

When the hula dance was originally done, it was done as part of a religious dance performed before the gods the people worshipped. In the earlier days of this dance, women were not allowed to perform the hula.

The dance was considered to be for men only and was used as their way of contacting the gods. The musical instruments performed with the hula dance vary today, but in ancient times, drums were the musical backdrop whenever the hula was danced.

As time progressed, the hula became less about religious beliefs and focused more on being a way to share the folklore that was passed down. Today, more women than men perform the hula.

Hula dancers traditionally wear pieces that connect with nature. Some of the attire includes grass and flowers on the skirt as well as braided into bracelets around the feet and headpieces for the hair.

Considered to be an inappropriate dance by conservative Westerners who came to the islands in the 1800s, the hula was once declared against the law for the seemingly suggestive movements.

But in the late 1800s, King David Kalakaua, in order to protect this piece of Hawaiian culture, reinstated the freedom of the people to dance the hula. The hula is often performed at festivals and ceremonies in Hawaii.

The people of Hawaii thought of the hula as an art form and have dedicated places of learning to teach the art of the hula that still exist today.

### **The Legends of Hawaii**

Though Hawaii has come a long way since its days of cannibalism, some things, like the legends, haven't changed. The legends are a part of Hawaii's past - and yet many are still considered to be a part of Hawaii today.

Some can be seen as well as experienced by visitors. There is a legend about a shrub, the naupaka, which produces only part of the flower bloom. The reason for this occurrence (according to legend) is that long ago, an islander was not allowed to marry the man she loved.

Heartbroken, the islander divided a flower from the shrub and gave half to the man. Since that day, the shrub's flowers only appear with half of their petals. The legends range from tragic romantic legends to the more unsettling ones.

Legend is that anyone who removes a piece of volcanic rock will be subject to bad luck. The legends have been reinforced by the true stories of bad luck following people who have taken rocks.

The bad luck was only reversed when the rocks were sent back where they belonged. The legend originates from the belief in the goddess Pele who is said to be in control of the island's volcanoes and that the goddess is enraged when the rocks are removed.

### **Hawaiian Proverbs**

Hawaiian proverbs are more than just a collection of words. The proverbs are part of the culture of the state and give a glimpse into many of the long-held beliefs of the people. For example, 'pupukahi i holomua' is a proverb about people striving together for a common goal.

Some of the Hawaiian proverbs were saved over the years by simply sharing them in storytelling. The Hawaiian people are known for their love of family connections spanning several generations.

They are also known for their love of their land, how to live a good life and nature. So, it's no surprise that many of the proverbs focus on family, character and nature. The Hawaiian proverb, "A Ohe Lokomaika'i I Nele I Ke Pana'I" reflects the belief of many of the islanders and means that a kind deed will have a reward.

### **The Food of Hawaii**

The food of any state is a reflection of the population. Just like the population of the islands, the food of Hawaii is very diverse. It's a mixture of the cultures and ranges from regular American fare to Polynesian delights to Chinese delicacies and more.

Main courses to desserts are prepared with plenty of local unique flavor and presented in colorful style. You can dine on pig at a luau or have delectable prawns at one of the fine dining establishments on the island.

Hawaii has a cuisine style that's known as Hawaii Regional - and it's also been labeled Pacific Rim cuisine. This style of cuisine is a variety of foods from those you'll find in upscale restaurants to - believe it or not - Spam.

Though most people don't consider Spam to be delicious in any form, it's considered a staple in some Hawaii Regional recipes. Fruits and fish are plentiful in Hawaii. Some of the dishes are not for the faint of heart - including the lomi-lomi salmon, which consists of raw salmon minus the bones and skin of the fish.

The dish is prepared when the salmon is very cold and is massaged together with onions and tomatoes. If you want to try a smorgasbord of different Hawaiian dishes, you might want to check when there's a luau going on because many luaus are equivalent to an American buffet with the different choices offered.

### **Why People Choose to Live in Hawaii**

Hawaii is a great place for people who have young children and want them to grow up in a cleaner state that has a focus on outdoor activities versus digital living. Kids generally get more exercise and fresh air when living in Hawaii.

Hawaii has a lot of free things to do that cost more elsewhere. For example, in some places in New York, you must buy a permit to go to the beach and some beaches are only open during certain hours.

In Hawaii, it's free to go to the beach and despite tourism, the beaches are cleaner and less populated. If you choose to retire in Hawaii, it's one of the states that's very friendly toward senior citizens, offering many tax breaks as well as advantages for homeowners in the form of lowered property tax.

Hawaii has amazing temperatures - with it neither getting too hot nor too cold throughout the year. The average temperature in Hawaii for the warmer months is mid 80s or less. When it's 100 or more degrees in the southern states of America, Hawaii is enjoying an 80-degree day. The weather in Hawaii is good all year long.



Housing is still affordable in Hawaii, especially if you choose to live on the main island. The hustle of daily living isn't present in Hawaii because the pace of Hawaii is a lot slower than any other state. It's also the state that's known to be the most welcoming to newcomers.



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