



**Big Island Visitors Bureau Media Contact:**

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## **HAWAI'I'S BIG ISLAND – FAST FACTS**

**HAWAI'I'S BIG ISLAND** – Here are some useful and surprising facts about Hawai'i's Big Island – Hawai'i's Island of Adventure.

Land Mass: 4,028 square miles—twice the combined size of the other islands (10,473 square km)

Population: 175,784 (2008, U.S. Census)

**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, one of the world's most active volcanoes. It has 266 miles (428 km) of coastline.

Hawai'i's Big Island stretches from sea level to the volcanic peaks of Maunakea, 13,796 feet (4,205 m), and Maunaloa, 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, Maunakea.

Of all the islands, Hawai'i's Big Island is the most ecologically diverse, with natural environments ranging from the desert plains of Ka'ū to the rain forests above Hilo, to sometimes-snowcapped Maunakea. There are said to be all but two of earth's main climate zones on Hawai'i Island: the Arctic and the Saharan.

**HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK: HAWAI'I'S ONLY WORLD HERITAGE SITE:** Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, established in 1916 is Hawai'i's most visited attraction. The 333,086-acre park reveals steam vents, lava flows, summits and rift zones of two of the world's most active volcanoes, Kīlauea and Maunaloa. Extending from sea level to 13,677 feet, it also provides habitat to endangered plant, bird, bat and sea turtle species.

HVNP perpetuates the island's native Hawaiian culture and protects numerous and significant archeological sites – tangible reminders of an indigenous people forever linked to this land. Here

in this *wahi kapu* (sacred place), the beat of the drum and heartfelt expression of chant remind us that Hawai‘i’s indigenous culture is very much alive.

In recognition of its outstanding value to humanity, Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park has been designated an International Biosphere Reserve (1980) and a UNESCO World Heritage site (1987). The World Heritage Alliance for Sustainable Tourism and Friends of World Heritage promote and protect UNESCO World Heritage sites through sustainable tourism.

**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:** Astronomy, tourism & agriculture. Agriculture products include: coffee and other tropical fruits, macadamia nuts, papaya, cattle, anthuriums, orchids, and aquaculture.

**RECREATION:** Deep sea fishing, ocean kayaking, stargazing, snorkeling, sightseeing, National Parks, National Historic Sites, hiking, horseback riding, scuba diving, tennis, golfing, sailing, shopping and agricultural tourism, 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* (laws to protect Hawaiian spirituality) system, abolished by his successor (and son) Kamehameha II in 1819. Kealakekua Bay, Captain James 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 Hawai‘i’s cultural heritage can still be seen throughout the island, where historical sites have been preserved.

**Special note to media:** The Big Island Visitors Bureau (BIVB) recognizes the use of the ‘okina [‘] or glottal stop, one of the eight consonants of the modern Hawaiian language; and the kahakō [ā] or macron (e.g., in place names of Hawai‘i such as Kīlauea). However, BIVB respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

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*For more information on Hawai‘i’s Big Island, please visit [www.bigisland.org](http://www.bigisland.org)  
Online press kit at <http://media.bigisland.org>*