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Updated: January 2010



**Moloka'i might not be right for you –  
But, if it is, you're going to love it**

Moloka'i gets relatively few visitors, especially by comparison to the four Hawaiian Islands that are larger and more populous (Hawai'i, Maui, O'ahu, and Kaua'i). There are quite a few reasons why this is so, and they all start with the word "no" – no resorts, no spas, no valet parking, no commercial lū'au, no movie theaters, no white-linen gourmet restaurants, no Lamborghinis for rent. That sounds pretty negative until you start thinking about what else is not there – no traffic signals, no traffic, no city lights, no noise, no crowds, no tension, no hype, no mistrust, and no chance that you'll ever get lost.

The fact that this island has very little tourism infrastructure at all reflects the distinct temperament of its people. Instead of having tourists, they would rather have guests. Interactions with residents tend to be spontaneous and authentic. Moloka'i is traditionally known as "the friendly isle," and that designation has struck some observers as ironic. There are no lei greeters at the airport. And people who have presented big money schemes (cruise-ship stopovers, high-end real estate developments, and so on) have found the reception at public hearings to be anything but friendly. But Moloka'i people are friendly the way you probably expect your friends to be. They'll tell you the truth, leave you alone when you seem to want that, and come through for you when you need help.

Don't forget that we're talking about Hawai'i here. In Hawaiian culture – and by transference, in all Island residents no matter what their ethnicity – the "aloha spirit" truly does run deep. For historical reasons, Moloka'i has a far greater percentage of native Hawaiian residents than any other island in the State. The more these people resist modernity and stick to land-based subsistence living practices (farming, fishing, hunting), the more they embody a rooted, native, heartfelt point of view.

If you are a traveler who prefers fresh viewpoints over fantasy swimming pools, consider Moloka‘i.

Just glance at a map to see how surprising this island is, how different it is from the others. Instead of being circular, as you would expect from a mid-oceanic volcanic mountain, Moloka‘i is bar-shaped, four times as long as it is wide. The long North Shore, spanning almost forty miles, consists mostly of sheer sea cliffs sliced by a few vertiginous, wild valleys. At the base of these cliffs is the tiny peninsula called Kalaupapa, where Father (now Saint) Damien was buried. Now a National Historical Park, Kalaupapa is a place of intense natural beauty and tragic history.

In vivid contrast to the vertical North Shore, Moloka‘i’s South Shore is almost flat as it tapers gently into the sea, then remains just a few feet deep till it reaches a fringing reef. Because this reef is as much as a mile away from dry land, this lake-like expanse constitutes the largest reef system in the United States. It’s a great place for kayaking and for exploring the chain of ancient fishponds, an archeological marvel that remains from pre-contact Hawai‘i.

As these two shorelines illustrate, this quiet little island is full of natural splendor. This is true from the East End’s Hālawā Valley – one of the most significant cultural sites in all of Hawai‘i – to West Moloka‘i’s Papohaku Beach, which is perhaps the grandest stretch of sand in the archipelago. Moloka‘i is also the home of two important wilderness preserves held by The Nature Conservancy, places where rare Hawaiian plants and animals still thrive in their unspoiled native habitat.

The pleasures of a Moloka‘i visit are largely rural and outdoorsy. You can see that upon arrival, whether by ferry from West Maui or (more typically) by a small, propeller-driven airplane that flies slow and low over the island and releases its few passengers right onto the quiet tarmac. The island simply doesn’t have much “indoors.” Many of the visitor attractions focus on agriculture—the restored taro ponds of Hālawā Valley, the fascinating production process of Coffees of Hawai‘i, the field-fresh organic yield at Kumu Farms, to name a few. This island also attracts people who like to hike and paddle,

to fish and dive, to somehow immerse themselves physically in the silent ruggedness of its natural environment.

And yet this immersion will happen whether or not you do strenuous deeds. It happens to every visitor just after the first sunset, when the sky turns velvet-black and close. There in the thick silence, the temperature ideal, you look up and see forty times more stars than you ever knew were up there.

This island really will change your mind.

Every major Hawaiian island has some kind of office dedicated to tourism. But Moloka‘i is the only one that explicitly requests that guests come into the office and talk about what they want to do during their stay. As haphazard as this may sound, you can literally land at the airport without a plan of any kind and know that you will be okay. Just rent a car and go to the headquarters of the Moloka‘i Visitors Association. Don’t worry how to find it. Drive to town – there’s only one, Kaunakakai – and ask the first person you see.

This just-drop-in idea says a lot about Moloka‘i. It reflects the fact that so many of the great features of the island are simply not apparent to outsiders. It suits the personal style of the place. (After all, if someone visited your house, you wouldn’t just ignore him and let him wander about. You’d try to find out what he wanted.) It suggests that the best way to understand this island is to become one of its people.

Julie Bicoy, who is head of the Moloka‘i Visitors Association, puts it this way: “Moloka‘i always gets the unique customers, the ones who are looking for us. I always like to ask them, ‘Why have you come? What do you want?’ This is one of the best healing places in the world. And it is full of spirituality. So the question in my mind is always, ‘How deep do you want to get into Moloka‘i?’

*(pau/end)*

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## Moloka'i Fact Sheet

**Size:** Moloka'i is 260 square miles (38 miles long and 10 miles wide).

**Population:** There are approximately 8,100 residents on Moloka'i.

**Major Town:** Kaunakakai

**Major Industries:** Diversified agriculture and tourism employ the majority of Moloka'i's residents.

**Average Temperature:** Depending on location and time of year, average temperatures range from 68 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Number of Swimmable Beaches:** There are six swimmable beaches on Moloka'i.

**Miles of Shoreline:** 106 miles.

**Number of Parks:** There are 15 parks on Moloka'i: three State Parks, 11 County Parks, and one National Park (Kalaupapa National Historical Park).

**Highest Peak:** Kamakou is Moloka'i's highest peak at 4,970 feet.

**Principal Resort Areas:** In West Moloka'i, the principal resort area is Kaluako'i; in Central Moloka'i, Kaunakakai; and on the Island's East End, there are several condominiums and vacation rentals.

**Number of Hotels:** Aqua Hotel Moloka'i is the only hotel on the island.

**Number of Condominium Resorts:** There are five condominium resorts.

**Number of Visitors Annually:** Approximately 79,000 guests visit Moloka'i annually.

**Most Popular Visitor Attractions:** Kalaupapa National Historical Park, Hālawā Valley, Pāpōhaku Beach Park, and Moloka'i Museum & Cultural Center.

**Airports:** The main airport is Moloka'i Airport (MKK), located in the center of Moloka'i. There is also a small airport at Kalaupapa National Historical Park (LUP).



**At the east end of Moloka'i, ancient wisdom  
and a smarter future could be one and the same**

On Moloka'i the sunrise first strikes the rocky headland of Mount Kamakou, which at just under 5,000 feet in elevation is the highest point on the island. The peak is high enough to catch a good amount of moisture from the trade winds, so the East End is the wetter part of the island. It's a steep landscape rich with vegetation and scattered with evidence of human history – weathered wooden houses a century old, churches older than that, and an abundance of stacked-stone structures created by the native Hawaiians untold hundreds of years ago.

Signs of civilization are infrequent out here. The relative absence of contemporary noise allows the past to speak all the more eloquently.

To begin at the end (end of the region's single road, that is) we find ourselves looking into one of Hawai'i's most expressive early places, Hālawa Valley. To the left at the head of the greenery-choked valley is the white cascade of Mo'oula Falls, the most prominent part of a stream system that over time cut this deep valley and still delivers clean water through its valley floor and out to sea through its mouth at sinuous Hālawa Bay. No road passes out of the valley. On the other side of the valley rise Moloka'i's North Shore sea cliffs, the tallest in the world.

Hālawa is the broadest, lushest, best-watered valley on the island, and the early Polynesian settlers saw that right away. Archeological evidence suggests that this valley might be the oldest settlement site in the Islands. Certainly people started living here sustainably, relying primarily on taro cultivation and fishing, at least 1,400 years ago. The hour-long hike from road's-end to the waterfall passes an amazing array of old stone house foundations and dozens of temple platforms (heiau).

By the mid-1940s, people had almost entirely given up living in this valley. The allure of modern lifestyles proved too seductive to the younger generations, and eventually the old-timers grew too feeble to work the taro patches. So for 50 years the jungle closed in, and the valley became an overgrown “ghost town.”

Then something very refreshing happened – descendants of the resident native families began to return. Young Hawaiians began clearing junk trees and rebuilding the skillfully engineered taro irrigation systems. Today the Hālawā Valley Restoration Project is returning traditional life and practices to the valley and offering guided instructional hikes to visitors who want to learn about the ancient ways.

One venerable man whom Hālawā visitors are likely to meet is 70-year-old Uncle Pilipo Solatorio. He was raised in the valley but left when he was a restless teenager. “When I got sixteen, I wanted out of here,” he says. But before he left his grandfather took him into the taro patch, barefooted, and said, “Do you feel the *lepo popolo* [‘farm dirt,’ formerly a derogatory term]? Remember your roots.”

A lifetime of experiences in the outer world convinced Pilipo Solatorio to return to the culture in which he was raised. Thanks to this man and others like him, Hālawā Valley has recently become a living classroom of rediscovery. Some of the lessons have to do with sustainable living in Hawai‘i. Some have to do with the art of living no matter where you are.

Something similar is taking place at Pu‘u o Hoku Ranch, which occupies 14,000 acres of pastureland just above Hālawā Valley. In recent years the ranch has been acting vigorously on its commitment to organic agriculture and locally made products. Its large biodynamic farm continually yields an array of vegetables and herbs, which ranch employees box and sell both on site and in town an hour’s drive from here. The farm also produces ‘awa (kava kava), a medicinal plant that plays a significant role in traditional Hawaiian cultural practices.

The ranch headquarters includes a small store stocked not only with farm produce and fruit but also lots of Moloka‘i-made items, including sea salt, lotions and oils, soap, kitchen ware, honey, and sweet-potato chips. Organically raised grass-fed beef is another ranch product.

Pu‘u o Hoku includes three guest-stay structures, one of these being a handsome, sprawling lodge. This lodge accommodates up to 22 guests, who can take advantage of a vast central living/meeting room and a kitchen that would make any chef shout with excitement. Nearby are the Sunrise Cottage and the Grove Cottage, each a completely furnished small house. Altogether up to 34 people at a time can reside here.

This design, plus the region’s natural beauty and solitude, makes the ranch ideal for retreats, conferences, and family reunions. It would be difficult to find any situation on Earth better suited to serve as a beacon of healthy living, sustainable practices, and higher consciousness.

The sinuous two-lane road from here to central Moloka‘i follows the south shoreline and offers many beautiful vistas. Directly east, Maui stands boldly on the other side of the Pailolo Channel. Just below, the rocky islet called Moku Ho‘oniki serves in the winter months as a calving place for humpback whales. The dome-shaped island of Lāna‘i seems to float like a great boat in the offing to the south.

Small sandy coves gouge the shoreline along here with ample room for a few cars to park off the road. Snorkeling is excellent along this shoreline. The curve of white sand at Mile Marker 20 is one of the most popular swim spots on the island (not that you’re likely ever to see a crowd here).

Then, as you drive west, trees and foliage begin to separate the road from the shoreline, which joins the great reef system of Moloka‘i’s south shore. You begin to spot the amazing stone fishponds that arc into the placid sea, built by the Hawaiians of old. You can visit two small churches that were hand-built by Father (now Saint) Damien de Veuster during his ministry of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. And you can stop for snacks and

groceries at just one place—Mana‘e Goods & Grinds, a roadside pull-off at the 16 Mile Marker.

Certainly you will notice from the evidence of abandoned structures that the East End of Moloka‘i once supported many more people, and that these vanished residents must have understood and cherished its resources. Experiences in Hālawa Valley and at Pu‘u o Hoku Ranch point to a possible future for this part of Hawai‘i as people return to wise practices of the old days.

For information on Hālawa Valley Cultural Tours and other features of Moloka‘i’s East End, visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

*(pau/end)*

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## **The hub of island life, central Moloka‘i is deceptively quiet, full of surprises**

The 5<sup>th</sup>-largest Hawaiian island, Moloka‘i consists of less than 400 square miles of dry land and a population of less than 8,000 souls. Although these people live in various locations all over the island, they all intersect in one place – the town. The only town.

Kaunakakai.

In a way this town is simply a necessary appendage to the island’s single important harbor, a mile-long pier that juts straight into the Pacific. These days the harbor handles all the island’s barge-shipped containers, the daily *Moloka‘i Princess* ferry that runs between here and West Maui, and a limited number of fish-sail-snorkel tour boats. But in pre-airplane days, this pier was Moloka‘i’s single vital connection with the rest of the world. And Kaunakakai was its port of call.

Located on this long island’s south shore at almost exactly the midpoint between east and west, Kaunakakai is home to nearly every shop, service, and commercial enterprise that the island has to offer. These are clustered on or near a simple two-lane road called Ala Mālama, along a stretch just three blocks long.

The look of the town is startling to first-timers who are accustomed to multi-level malls, giant discount outlets, or even the typical neighborhood supermarket. The buildings are mainly frontier-simple wooden boxes with awnings – no display windows, no flashing signs, no canned music. The names on the shops are unfamiliar because these are all home-grown Moloka‘i enterprises. But there is no need for alarm. Kaunakakai has what you need.

The west end of town has the island's public library, a couple of banks with ATMs, and two gas stations – the only two on Moloka'i. At the eastern end, near a Moloka'i Veterans War Memorial set in a small park, you will find the fire and police stations, the post office, the county office (for camping permits), and even a small hospital.

Without attempting a complete inventory of Moloka'i's unique town, the following will give you some idea of the variety of resources packed behind its blank storefronts: There are two fully stocked groceries, Misaki's and Friendly Market, plus a smaller place called Oviedo's that specializes in Filipino food and serves the best roast pork in the state. Take's Variety supplies everything from hammers to hose bibs, from Boggle games to bike parts. Moloka'i Drugs is a full-service pharmacy where people take the time to talk with you about your prescription.

Gourmands will head to Moloka'i Wines 'n Spirits, where they can pick up a top-rated Cabernet, a ten-year-old Madeira, or a block of Roquefort cheese. Despite its rustic look, Kaunakakai does have its dashes of sophistication.

There are several places to buy made-on-Moloka'i gifts, including Moloka'i Fish and Dive, which is packed to the rafters with fishing and camping gear, hats, tee-shirts, and curiosities. Moloka'i Artists & Crafters Guild Gallery & Gift Shop represents a co-op of nearly 100 talented island residents.

The town is essentially closed on Sundays, and all of Moloka'i (except for restaurants) goes to sleep every day at sundown. So most visitors will get to town for basic supplies as soon as possible after they arrive. Commonly, they will plan to be self-sufficient in their condos or rentals, content with the isolation and the splendid silence of the island.

Truth is, though, you don't have to become a recluse when you visit Moloka'i. There are a surprising number of eateries, for example. You can dine out every meal and scarcely repeat yourself in a week.

Kaunakakai's main street, Ala Mālama Avenue, offers many options for a "local style" lunch. Oviedo's is an authentic Filipino eatery. Kanemitsu Bakery serves diner-style breakfast and lunch. Big Daddy's is good for bento (Japanese box lunch), poke (raw fish in marinade), and shave ice (island-style snow cones), then for a brief period in the late afternoon does a brisk business in Chinese take-out.

At one end of the street, the tiny Sundown Deli offers made-to-order sandwiches and good soup; at the other end, Outpost Natural Foods provides organic, vegetarian dishes at its daytime window. Nearby Moloka'i Drive Inn does fast-food service with Hawaiian-style "plate lunches."

In town and nearby you can find several good-sized restaurants that stay open through the dinner hours. Moloka'i Pizza Cafe is a bright, friendly place, no alcohol, with an extensive menu – not just excellent pizzas but also chicken and ribs, sandwiches and pies. Around the corner, Paddler's Inn is shadowy and cool with a diverse menu and a large bar that serves both inside and on the back lanai. (This restaurant is closed on Sundays.) Two miles east of here on the highway, Aqua Hotel Moloka'i offers comfortable seaside dining, breakfast-lunch-and-dinner every day in its Hula Shores restaurant and bar. As is true with Paddler's Inn, this is a good place to hear live music in the evenings. The hotel's "Aloha Friday" gathering (each week from four to six pm) is one of the island's best traditions. Two dozen or more *kūpuna* (elders) come together for a jam session of favorite songs, hula, laughter, and plenty of aloha spirit.

Two other food opportunities can be found just west of Kaunakakai in a small crossroads area known as Kualapu'u. One is Kualapu'u Cookhouse, an antique establishment in the "greasy spoon" mode (it's really quite clean) where the spring-loaded screen door slams behind you, where the tables are just a little too small, and where everybody knows everybody else. Traditionally a breakfast-lunch place, its current owners now offer dinner specials Tuesday through Saturday. Nearby Coffees of Hawai'i operates a little café featuring its own Moloka'i-grown brews and a variety of sandwiches and salads. On a hot day it is most refreshing to stop here about two o'clock and slurp one of their sweet Mocha Mamas.

Coffees of Hawai‘i also offers tours of its farm and of its mill/processing system, which are superbly complex and well run. This is one of the only places in the world where you’ll see the entire coffee-production process, from the ripe red cherries on the trees to the final bagging of roasted high-quality beans for the retail market. Some tours feature a mule-drawn buggy ride. Some include coffee sampling in the COH cupping room.

The two-lane highway that passes through Kualapu‘u heads north into upper and cooler elevations, an “upcountry” area known as Kala‘e. It passes the Meyer Sugar Mill, constructed in 1878 by an industrious, ingenious German immigrant named Rudolph Meyer. Today the site is an evocative public museum where one can see, among other things, how sugarcane was once processed by mechanized steam and animal power. Such a well-preserved site in such a low-tech setting makes the 19<sup>th</sup> century seem very recent indeed.

From here the road keeps rising until it reaches Moloka‘i’s north shore, which touches the sea in a most unusual way—at a cliff-edge more than twice the height of the Empire State Building. Visitors who park in the (usually empty) lot at Pala‘au State Park, which is the end of the road, can walk a short trail and stand at a lookout on the brink of the tallest sea cliffs on Earth. Below, rimmed by the white crash of the blue sea, lies little Kalaupapa peninsula, the wild home-in-exile of former victims of Hansen’s Disease (“leprosy”).

Kalaupapa is now a U.S. National Historical Park, and yet it is not much easier to reach today than it was for Saint Damien during the 1800s. The peninsula has a small airstrip, so a few people fly in every day on small propeller-driven planes. But most visitors get to Kalaupapa using the trail that starts up near Pala‘au Park. Either they hike the intense switchback trail, or else they ride the trail on the backs of mules. The mule stables and trail-ride check-in station are located, sensibly, quite close to the trailhead.

The total journey across central Moloka‘i, from Kaunakakai Harbor through the town then up to this amazing promontory and descent, spans only about ten miles. But it passes

through so much history and so many potential encounters with people in peculiar places that every visit here has the power to surprise.

And don't forget – any time you need guidance or answers, check in with the Moloka'i Visitors Association. It's located (you guessed it) in Kaunakakai.

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## **Close to the land, Moloka'i's west end offers lots of sun, serenity, and soul**

When the setting sun touches the horizon off the “West End” of Moloka'i, it floods the sky with silent glory. This atmospheric dazzle sprawls over a hushed and open landscape. The West End is big-sky country – by day clean and powder blue, by night velvet black and loaded with stars, the breezes moving freely over a calm and uncivilized landscape.

Ironically, anyone who sits on the western shore, perhaps at enormous Papohaku Beach, will be looking across Kaiwi Channel toward the Makapu'u Point area of O'ahu – near the large town of Kailua, the crowded shores of Waikīkī, and the city of Honolulu. In the category of social experiences there is no greater contrast to be found anywhere in the Islands.

Moloka'i is a long, bar-shaped island, its east-west length four times greater than its north-south width. The western portion is lower in elevation than the East End and therefore relatively dry, for it reaches less boldly into the moist trade winds.

Much of this land has been put to agricultural purposes. Pre-contact Hawaiians grew a lot of sweet potato here. Later, plantation-scale pineapple cultivation predominated on these gently sloping fields, but that crop started phasing out in the late '70s. Crops such as watermelons, honey, string beans, and strawberries all had their day. Moloka'i Ranch, the principal owner out here, ceased operations in 2008 and closed its base of operations in the little hilltop hamlet called Maunaloa. People still live in Maunaloa. But, the ranch's guest lodge and outdoor-activities center are closed, as are the gas station and the island's erstwhile movie theater. For now, small-scale farming and ranching are on the rise.

Much of this acreage is Hawaiian Homestead land – land that formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Hawai'i – which is now leased to native Hawaiians by the State Department

of Hawaiian Home Lands. This concession to the seniority of native people, which has been part of State law for almost a century, helps explain why Moloka‘i’s population includes a far greater percentage of indigenous Hawaiians than any other island. As a result, one always gets the feeling on Moloka‘i that Hawaiian culture isn’t just preserved or set aside to be honored but that it is actually *lived* day to day.

Homesteading sets the rhythm of life in the West End – uncrowded two-lane roads running through a checkerboard of small agricultural lots, some of them shaggy, some industriously managed, extended families living together and depending in part on the benefits of hunting and fishing.

Visitor activities, such as they are, reflect this land-based lifestyle. At Purdy’s Macadamia Farm in the Ho‘olehua district you simply stop by and meet the proprietor, Tootie Purdy, who puts on an aloha shirt when he sees you coming. He shows you his trees, you crack some nuts, he tells you a bunch of good stories, and you walk away feeling that you’ve actually met a human being. At the Plumeria Farm you pick flowers, string fragrant leis, and settle into a deeply Hawaiian mood.

The 600-plus acres of coffee trees at Coffees of Hawai‘i constitute a large-scale operation for Moloka‘i. In fact, COH is the island’s second-biggest employer. But the feeling here is 100 percent “island style” with easy-going walking and mule-wagon tours. It is fascinating to wander through the company’s mill and processing plant, full of unusual machinery designed to clean, dry, sort, grade, roast, and package the Moloka‘i beans. Coffee connoisseurs (and would-be connoisseurs) can participate in a ritual coffee tasting in the COH “cupping room.” The gift shop and café are must-visit attractions even if you skip the tour.

Not far from here, Kumu Farms welcomes visitors to its 120-acre farm, over half of which is certified organic. The farm grows papayas, apple bananas, a dozen types of herbs, and a changing variety of specialty crops (for example, lettuce, corn, tomatoes, and chard). An easy walking tour shares the experience of organic farming. But visitors don’t need to do the tour in order to enjoy the little market, where they can purchase fresh farm

products of all types as well as Kumu's popular basil pesto and other packaged preparations. In fact, visitors to Moloka'i should consider coming here directly from the airport to stock up on healthy, good-tasting food for the duration of their stay.

Although Moloka'i Ranch has closed, there is still one compelling reason to drive up the hill for a stop in the tiny townlet of Maunaloa. Still in business, as it has been for some thirty years, is the Big Wind Kite Factory. Dedicated to all things that fly and float, as well as almost anything eccentric and colorful that catches the attention of owners Jonathan and Daphne Socher, Big Wind always delivers surprises. It exists just for fun – and that quality makes this gift shop something unusual for Moloka'i. But it conveys the experience one encounters everywhere on this island, honest good-hearted human interaction.

The cross-Moloka'i road climaxes along the West End shoreline, which is sprinkled with beaches and coves. The currents can be dangerous along this coast, and yet the sand is some of the best anywhere, especially at Papohaku Beach. Three miles long and 300 feet wide, this golden stretch is often devoid of people. Half a dozen sunbathers would be a crowd. The state park adjacent has restroom and barbecues, not to mention campsites. By the way, every May this park fills with people celebrating the art of hula at the annual Ka Hula Piko Festival. Hula hālau (schools) come from all over the state, from other countries too, not to compete but simply to show up and show off. The food, the crafts, and mostly the music and dance make this the most authentic, down-to-earth native festivity you'll ever find.

Kaluako'i Resort, now closed, occupies a large stretch of the West End. Still in business are its pleasant little seaside restaurant and a gift/sundries shop. Nearby there are three attractive condominium complexes, situated on the shoreline, that offer many short-term housing options for Moloka'i's guests. To stay out here is to position yourself perfectly for one of the greatest shows on earth. After a day of exploration across a small island (you can easily drive end to end in a single day), the experience then climaxes in a magnificent sunset. You can look across the channel and realize with deep satisfaction why you are here and not at Waikīkī.

There is always more to Moloka‘i than meets the eye. For advice on hiking opportunities, cultural experiences, and any other question you might have, always check in with the Moloka‘i Visitors Association or visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

*(pau/end)*

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## **The adventure of Kalaupapa National Historical Park**

Like a Gettysburg battlefield or an Anasazi cliff dwelling, the national park at Molokai's Kalaupapa Peninsula tells a rich and important story about being human. But its human drama tends to overshadow another fact – one that's equally compelling. Kalaupapa is one of the most thrilling landscapes on Earth. Taken as a one-day adventure, the trek repays your moderate exertion with maximum inspiration.

In fact, you scarcely have to exert yourself at all – just walk a short distance from your car at Pala'au State Park—to get an airplane-level view of the terrain. Suddenly you're standing at the top of the highest sea cliffs in the world. The sheer green walls, sliced with waterfalls, go on beyond seeing. So does the ocean, blue as a dark gem. White waves crash against the rocks two thousand feet below.

That's where Kalaupapa is. Down there, all alone. It's a wedge-shaped piece of runaway land that seems to have slipped out from the base of the cliff and gotten stuck. You see a few confetti-sized rooftops and a one-lane airstrip that looks as though someone rubbed with an eraser on the grassy lava.

Kalaupapa gives the word "remote" new meaning.

Scarcely more than forty people live there, all of them white-haired. The cargo barge arrives once a year—an annual Kalaupapa holiday, when everyone gets to look at each other's new stuff and make jokes about it.

Once a day, right through town comes the Damien Tours bus, yellow as a dusty banana, a vintage all-metal school bus with green plastic seats and stainless-steel hang-on poles.

When the bus comes through, the residents make sure they're busy somewhere else. They prefer not to be put on display.

You'd probably hide out, too, no matter where you lived. But Kalaupapa is a special place. The residents are all survivors of a well-known tragedy—now very much a thing of the past—and they've been given the privilege of living out their days in peace and privacy.

Starting in 1866, Hawai'i citizens who contracted Hansen's Disease, the dreaded "separating sickness" or "leprosy" that figures so prominently in Bible stories – were exiled here, virtually cast away. This was the final mission of Father Damien, recently sainted, and other "Martyrs of Moloka'i" whose sacrifices inspired a global effort to cure the disease.

In keeping with its hard-won spirit of privacy, Kalaupapa offers no lodging, no shopping, and no lunch counter. Visits are restricted to a single day.

Actually, there's an exception to this rule. The national park has a volunteer work program with three-day-minimum stays. In fact, for people who like to be outdoors and doing something purposeful, the park's volunteer program offers a startlingly original way to visit Hawai'i – preserving rare native habitat for endangered plants and animals, and working around one of the most valuable archeological preserves in the State. No matter how you visit, you have to be at least sixteen years old and you have to be a guest of one of the residents.

It's easy to become a guest – call for a reservation with Damien Tours and get on that clattering school bus. The driver is always a resident who knows the stories of this peninsula then and now. As the bus bounces along the rough-graded road from town to the site of Saint Damien's church, you laugh and fume at tales of incompetence and injustice. The lingering emotion of the tour is something like awe – especially after you've sat in the church that Damien built by hand and heard of saintly people who

sacrificed their lives here. In the end, the experience of visiting Kalaupapa is as uplifting as the wall of cliffs beside it.

But when you're standing up at the top, at the lookout, staring down the long cliff, it's natural to ask yourself – how? How do you get down there?

Obviously, the airstrip offers one option. Pacific Wings Airlines makes a couple runs a day between the peninsula and Honolulu or Maui.

Or you can walk.

There's one trail – four miles long and two thousand feet down. The trailhead starts not far from the lookout. Bring lunch and lots of water. And take your time. Stop to savor the impressions – the native forest that cloaks the cliff, the birds trilling, the phenomenal sea crashing below you. The trail is wide and perfectly safe. It's built to accommodate the maneuvering of mules.

Yes, you can ride a mule down the trail to Kalaupapa. Each mule trek is timed to meet with the old bus. The mules are big and brown, sure-footed and safe – safe as your living-room sofa. It's important to keep remembering that “sofa” image on your way down the cliff – when you're mounted tall in the saddle and your steed is casually clopping its hoofs around the outside edges of the trail's twenty-six dizzying switchbacks.

The ascent, of course, is no piece of cake, not even on mule-back. It's not easy, nudging and kicking your mulish way all the way back up the switchbacks. By the time you get topside, elated in body and mind, you know that you've had an experience. Something completely *involving*.

And when you get topside, whether by hoof or foot, you are surrounded by something just as rare – the remarkable island of Moloka'i. The glow of amazing remoteness that you feel on the peninsula does not fade up above. The entire island is a place snatched out of time.

For help planning your Kalaupapa excursion, and for assistance with everything you do on Moloka'i, be sure to rely on the Moloka'i Visitors Association, [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

*(pau/end)*

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## **Getting around on Moloka'i: Options are more varied than you might suppose**

The island of Moloka'i is less than forty miles long. And it's only ten miles wide. That means, if you got everybody off the island and started at the west end, driving your car as fast as possible, you could burn up every paved road in about an hour.

If you're in the mood to do something like that, Moloka'i's probably not the island for you.

But if you're in the mood for tooling around where people interpret the posted speed limit as a sign of maximum recklessness – in a place without traffic lights and almost literally without traffic – this is the one.

This is the one because it rewards the slow driver and the frequent stopper. If you drove like mad, the place would seem to be just a long hilltop of red dirt and short grass – not to mention its incredible coastline, with the beautiful islands Maui and Lāna'i in the offing. But the curious traveler, even the one who explores no farther than the paved roadways, will discover many subtle surprises on Moloka'i.

By contrast to the other Hawaiian Islands, this one has very little finesse for attraction-making and self-promotion. Its chief strength is its genuine and distinctive personality. It's an off-beat personality, certainly. For the right traveler, though, Moloka'i is extremely endearing.

There are two principal ways to get to the island of Moloka'i. Most visitors fly into Ho'olehua Airport, located in the central part of the island. Two airlines handle most of

the traffic—Island Air, which flies 37-passenger Dash 8 turboprop planes, and Go! Mokulele Air, flying 9-passenger 208B Grand Caravan Cessnas and 70-passenger Embreair 170 Jets. These airlines provide service from both Honolulu and Kahului (Maui).

The alternative to flying is ride the ferry over from Lāhainā in West Maui. The Moloka‘i Ferry crosses the channel twice a day, a 90-minute voyage that docks at Kaunakakai Harbor.

Once you are on island, the most convenient way to get around (just as on any Hawaiian Island) is to rent a car. Moloka‘i has two rental agencies –Moloka‘i Rental Car and Island Kine. Island Kine is a locally owned and operates out of a house in Kaunakakai, the island’s only town. They’ll send somebody, usually a family member, out to fetch you in a passenger car.

The Moloka‘i airport is so small that you can ‘almost’ claim your suitcase with one hand while you sign your car rental contract with the other. Both agencies will also shuttle customers from the ferry landing.

You can rent trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles when you visit the island. But it is important, if you plan to drive somewhere that’s off the paved roadway, that you get permission and let people know where you intend to go. Moloka‘i Visitors Association can help with that. Two off-road areas that visitors sometimes like to explore are natural preserves – Kamakou in the high mountains, and Mo‘omomi, a coastal dunes area in the northwest part of the island. In this case, it is imperative that you check with the organization that owns these ecologically fragile regions. The Nature Conservancy has its headquarters in central Moloka‘i just west of Kaunakakai.

Maybe you’d rather take a vacation from the whole automobile thing altogether. After all, Moloka‘i’s roads are in good shape, the traffic is light to nonexistent, and the weather conditions are almost always ideal. Consider letting the wind blow through your hair.

Moloka‘i Scooter Rentals has daily rates for its 50cc Honda Ruckus scooters. Top speed is 40 miles per hour (that’s plenty fast for Moloka‘i), you get about 100 miles to a gallon of gas.

If a scooter’s too racy for you, how about renting a bicycle? Phillip Kikukawa’s shop Moloka‘i Bicycles, located on Mōhala Street in Kaunakakai, has good rates on several types of bikes, including front-suspension types. Rentals include helmet, lock, maps, and water bottle. In addition to bicycles, these folks rent car racks, child carriers, trailers, and jogging strollers. They also provide drop-off and pick-up service to any island location.

Finally, what about a bus? You wouldn’t expect bus service in such a remote, unsophisticated location. But in fact there is a bus service that visitors can get wise to, and it is free. The source of this little-publicized form of public transportation is a county program called MEO, short for Maui Economic Opportunity. (Moloka‘i is one of the four islands that constitute the County of Maui.) MEO offers a “rural shuttle service” as an assistance to island residents. But it would be a violation of Moloka‘i’s aloha spirit to exclude visitors. If you’re on Moloka‘i, you are a guest, and guests are part of the family.

The MEO bus has two routes that originate in Kaunakakai. One goes east and one goes west. (The routing is made simple by the fact that the island has mainly just one two-lane road.) The western route runs six times a day and goes all the way out to the old Kaluako‘i Resort and to Maunaloa town. The eastern route has seven stops and gets as far as Puko‘o Fire Station near Mana‘e Goods and Grinds. No reservations are required. Just get to the stop by the scheduled time.

One word of caution to visitors who are traveling around the island. On Moloka‘i, people wave. When they see that you’ve got a rental car, they’re likely to slow down and make sure you get through the intersection okay. Experiences like these are liable to change the way you feel about life back home.

Your helper in all aspects of your trip to this island is the Moloka‘i Visitors Association. Be sure to check with them before you arrive or as soon afterwards as you can. They know the inside scoops. Call or visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

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**The sea has many moods on Moloka‘i.  
Here’s how to paddle, boat, dive, float to find them.**

It’s just after dawn on the beach at Aqua Hotel Moloka‘i, and the light is brilliant. The wind and the sea are perfectly matched – both are barely moving and slightly cool.

You pull your bright yellow kayak slushing across the beach, sleekly into the water, and jump in. Right away you know what to do – start paddling. It’s instinctive. It’s what people have been doing here for thousands of years.

If you’re a novice paddler, it takes a few minutes to get the grip and rhythm. Meanwhile, during the first awkwardness, you also happen to be shooting straight out into the open sea. So you’re grateful that there are no waves breaking over your hull or pushing you sideways. In fact, there are no waves at all. The ocean is amazingly calm.

The sea floor is just a few feet below you, and no matter how far you travel away from shore, it stays right there. “If you fall out,” says your guide, “just stand up.”

Suddenly you begin to grasp the amazing nature of Moloka‘i’s south coast. Now you can see that, in fact, there are waves – dead ahead. But they’re about a mile away! Out there, taking the blows of the sea, is the front edge of the reef – a natural wall that wraps more than thirty miles of this coastline. You’re paddling the shallow, lake-like surface of the most extensive fringing reef in the United States.

Needless to say, this is a great place to kayak. In the morning, before the tradewinds gain velocity, you can paddle this coast with relative ease, investigating the ancient fishponds

that line the coast. These fishponds – sea-enclosures built of artfully stacked stone – give silent testimony to the skill and ingenuity of the bygone residents of this island.

Two companies provide these guided kayak excursions. Moloka‘i Outdoors departs from its headquarters in the lobby of Aqua Hotel Moloka‘i. Moloka‘i Fish and Dive, a sporting goods store on Kaunakakai’s main strip, departs from the small-craft slip at Kaunakakai Wharf.

This latter kayak trip goes west along the coast to explore Pala‘au Fishpond, the largest of them all and the only one containing brackish water – a mix of sea water and fresh streamwater that rolls off the land into the stone enclosure. This circumstance gives the Pala‘au trip an extra kick: paddling through a dense jungle. The shoreline at Pala‘au is choked with a dense forest of mangroves. (The mangrove is the only tree capable of growing in seawater. Once established, it forms a forty-foot-high thicket full of darkness, stillness, and the creaking of branches.) The guides of Moloka‘i Fish and Dive have discovered that the fresh water streaming out of Pala‘au Fishpond creates a narrow channel through this jungle, a kind of kayak “trail.” They take their guests on this eerie trail, which in places gets so close you have to drop your paddle and pull yourself along by grabbing roots and branches. Typically, guests will exclaim: “This is just like Disneyland!” And it is, with one important difference—this is no amusement park. It’s the real McCoy.

A kayak excursion is just one way to experience Moloka‘i by sea. The people of the island have always lived and thrived on contact with the ocean, and they like sharing this tradition with their guests.

Sportfishing boats – the thirty-one-foot, twin-diesel *Alyce C.*, for example, or the twenty-seven-foot *Ahi* of Fun Hogs Hawai‘i – offer the excitement of hooking up to a big marlin, a mahi mahi, or an ono. (They go whale-watching, too.) *Ahi* captain Mike Holmes is one of the only fishing-boat skippers in Hawai‘i who believes his guests should keep whatever they catch.

Fun Hogs will also take you outside the reef to find the best waves on the island, hand you a boogie board and some advice, then let you play. Or Mike will cross over to Mānele Harbor on Lāna‘i, sometimes providing one-way passage for independent-minded travelers exploring Hawai‘i’s small, undeveloped islands.

Scuba diving on Moloka‘i? You bet. Moloka‘i Fish and Dive, the kayak provider, offers many kinds of activities but scuba is a particular specialty. For dive trips, they use Mike Holmes’s *Ahi* and some skillful guides – young men who are not only PADI certified but also born-and-raised island boys who know the waters as well as anyone alive. They know all the “blue holes,” the underwater caves, and places for swimming with hammerhead sharks.

All of these sea-going excursions begin and end at the Kaunakakai Wharf, on the reef-protected south shore.

Along the north shore, though, where wave and wind strike against the tallest sea-cliffs in the world, boating is a different experience altogether. For that you need Walter Naki of Moloka‘i Action Adventures and his twenty-one-foot Boston whaler called *Puakea O Wailau*. Walter has unique qualifications for taking people “backside.” First of all, he’s an exceptionally competent outdoorsman – hunter, fisher, diver. Moreover, his family roots are here along this intense coastline, in now-uninhabited Wailau Valley. Walter’s grandfather was one of the last Hawaiians to leave the valley and adopt a more civilized lifestyle.

The trip leaves from Hālawā Valley, at the extreme road’s-end of east Moloka‘i. Walter’s little boat bounces and dances over the swells as he races past the cliffs, a big grin on his face. He’s home. He points out the sights – Hawai‘i’s longest waterfall, rare seabirds with fantastically long tails, strange rock formations associated with old legends. He shoots his boat through a natural tunnel in the seacliffs. He lets his passengers wade ashore at Wailau Valley, where they wander around in a waking dream of lost Polynesia. It’s a wild ride – “for hardy people,” says Walter. But he not-so-modestly declares his

trip to be one of the two best activities on Moloka‘i (the other being the trek to Kalaupapa Peninsula). By the standard of pure exhilaration, there’s no doubt he’s right.

Walter Naki’s Moloka‘i Action Adventures also offers customized experiences of deep-sea fishing, hunting, spear fishing, reef trolling, and even fly-fishing. Just say what you want, and we will provide – that’s the Moloka‘i spirit. In the world of “package” travel, this island is always personal.

The largest seagoing vessel that you are likely to see docked at Moloka‘i is the ferry. It crosses the Pailolo Channel every day between Kaunakakai and Lāhainā, West Maui. Molokaian use the ferry to commute to jobs or to do their bulk buying on the much larger neighbor island. Conversely, visitors to West Maui will use the ferry so that they can include Moloka‘i in their travel experiences. The channel crossing, which takes less than two hours, costs about half the price of an airplane ticket.

Actually there are two vessels in the ferry fleet. The *Maui Princess* is 118 feet long, a high-speed touring yacht that carries as many as 150 people. The *Moloka‘i Princess* is a similar craft and almost as large. Both vessels have been fitted with gyroscopic stabilizers that help take some of the chop out of rough channel crossings. Activity providers such as Moloka‘i Outdoors offer programs that greet guests at the ferry landing and get them back in time for the return trip. This means that Maui visitors can make a day trip to Moloka‘i. But most people would agree that a few hours on Moloka‘i isn’t nearly enough time. A two or three night stay between channel crossings makes a lot more sense.

Aside from the seagoing activities mentioned here, you’ll see little else in the way of traffic on Moloka‘i’s pristine and brilliant blue seas. There’s no yacht harbor choked with masts, no giant glass-bottom dinner-dance cruise boats, no submarine rides, no parasails. Moloka‘i is not for everybody – and that’s precisely the reason to go.

The simplest and best way to make your connection with the beautiful sea around the island of Moloka'i is to get in touch with rely on the Moloka'i Visitors Association. Visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

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**Moloka'i people live close to the earth.  
So when you visit Moloka'i, visit the farms.**

At eight a.m. on a Saturday, it's already getting warm in Kaunakakai, the central and only town of Moloka'i. Along the town's two-block commercial strip, the two grocery stores are getting ready for a busy day. So is the fish-and-dive shop, the bakery, the pharmacy, and the bike shop. But the island's farmers are ahead of them all, for they've already rigged their booths and tents in a vacant corner lot. They'll be done by noon, when they'll head back to the land they've cultivated all week. Or maybe they'll go fishing. Or maybe they'll go home and clean out the imu, the underground oven, getting ready for a backyard lū'au.

When you live in a place with a land-and-sea-based subsistence economy – in other words, where most people live mainly by farming and fishing and hunting and swapping goods and helping each other out – especially when you live on a small remote island with only about 7,000 other people, a Saturday farmer's market feels pretty important. It's beyond quaint.

For example, it is a source of community pride to see the DeCoite family come in from L&R Farm with its sweet potatoes. This family has been growing sweet potatoes for three generations, starting with Tutu (Grandma) Becky Moku'au back in the sixties. And the tradition goes deeper than that, for they grow their crop in a region called Kualapu'u – a name from deep Hawaiian heritage that means simply "sweet potato hill." The DeCoites grow three kinds of sweet potatoes, the common orange ones, the Moloka'i Gold, and Moloka'i Purple. Those purple tubers have become darlings of the culinary arts, favored by chefs such as Emeril Lagasse and Sam Choy. Because there are laws prohibiting the export of sweet potatoes to the U.S, Mainland, L&R Farm has developed a line of sweet potato chips as a way of sharing their farm products with the wider world. L&R's 'uala-

farming operation is now a burgeoning Moloka‘i-based industry. Somewhat similar is the production of Moloka‘i Meli honey, a local crop created by the Kaneshiro family. The Kaneshiros spent years relocating bees from wild hives and have developed ways of jarring the purest sweetness the earth can offer.

When you come to Moloka‘i, you might think (mistakenly) at first that there’s just not much going on. What’s going on is exactly this sort of authentic industry. Agriculture. It makes a good theme for a visit to this unique island.

For example, when you get off the plane, a good next move would be to drive immediately to Kumu Farms. Kumu (meaning “the source”) is a 30-year-old mostly organic farm located just five minutes from the airport. The farm has a visitor greeting area with a small store. You can stock up on their produce – papayas, bananas, fresh herbs, and an ever-changing array of organic goods – as well as yummy stuff from other island growers. The store also offers tips and recipes for cooking with the farm’s fresh herbs, packaged goods such as Kumu Farms’ delicious basil pesto, and walking tours of the farming and packing operation.

Coffees of Hawai‘i, located on Highway 470 in Kualapu‘u, provides its visitors with the most comprehensive experience of coffee production that they are likely to find anywhere. That’s an intricate story indeed, since any mug of steaming coffee results from one of the most complex processes in all of agriculture. Most of the world’s beans get shipped off to mills, then to roasters, and so on. But Coffees of Hawai‘i does it all on site, even the packaging. To do this the company employs many ingenious techniques for orchard maintenance, harvesting, husking, drying, sorting, cleaning, and roasting. Visitors can take advantage of several types of tours, including an easy walking tour, a full-on hike, and a ride in a mule-drawn wagon. There’s a cupping room, too, where you can learn to judge coffee flavors just like a pro. Even without taking a tour, visitors like to refresh themselves at the café/snack shop and buy quality local craft items in the gift shop.

A stop at Purdy’s Natural Macadamia Farm in Ho‘olehua entails not so much a tour as a social call on a true native son, Tuddie Purdy. At his five-acre homestead you relax in the

shade, practice cracking these iron-clad nuts, sample some macadamia honey, and hear all sorts of stories about life on Moloka‘i. This is a good place for getting oriented to island living.

Anyone who drives west from the island’s central town Kaunakakai will notice the multi-acre orchard of Moloka‘i Plumerias. These sweet-scented, sturdy yellow blossoms are the consummate lei flowers and a perfect symbol of the aloha spirit. Though they are primarily in the business of shipping fresh flowers and leis all over the world, these plumeria growers are open to visits from interested travelers.

Situated at the extreme east end of Moloka‘i, Pu‘u o Hoku Ranch is devoting itself increasingly to the cause of sustainable organic agriculture. The small store at ranch headquarters sells an ever-changing variety of healthy vegetables, also organically raised beef. This is also an excellent place to buy Moloka‘i-produced sea salt, lotions, soaps, botanical sprays, and other handcrafted goods. It’s possible to hike up slope to visit the farm and to take in the beauty and serenity of this amazing location.

It turns out that agriculture is one of the best ways to involve yourself in the subtle pleasures of Moloka‘i. It’s an excellent way to meet the rooted people of the island, and it provides many insights about sustainable practices. To help organize your agricultural visits and to make your contacts as easily as possible, go to the Moloka‘i Visitors Association. The MVA’s entire purpose is to help you find what you have come to discover, here on an island where “tourism” relies entirely on person-to-person contacts. Julie-Ann Bicoy director, 808 553–3876, P.O. Box 960, Kaunakakai HI 96748. Or visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

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**Down-home Moloka'i is free of resorts.  
So how can a visitor know where to stay?**

It's dusk on the island of Moloka'i. You pull your car out onto the main highway, heading to a restaurant for dinner. This is the busy part of the island, near the main town of Kaunakakai. Then you notice something strange and marvelous – nothing.

The two-lane highway is straight as a stick, and you can't see a single car all the way down the road. No headlights at all in your rear-view mirror. No tall buildings or crowded luxury homes separate you from the lake-like sea, which is shining with the last colors of the sunset. The emerging stars look close enough to touch, and the sky is full of silence. You pass a huge plumeria tree loaded with flowers and, even with the windows rolled up; the sweet perfume fills the car and becomes a topic of conversation.

Yes, it's true there's "nothing" on Moloka'i, lots of it – an abundance of the delicious "nothing" that busy people crave when their jobs and lives crowd them. No red lights, ever.

On a drive like this, you feel muscles unclench.

But only if you have a place to lay your head at the end of the day.

Moloka'i has no chain motels with flashing "vacancy" signs, nor does it have a single lush resort with parking attendants poised at the porte-cochere. Instead when you visit this island you should plan to discover an out-of-the-ordinary guest accommodation.

Most of these places assume that you'll be setting up a home-away-from-home where you can do your own thing. Such an attitude certainly fits the spirit of this island – independent, noncommercial, and content with natural spectacles such as moonlight and sunsets.

Aqua Hotel Moloka'i is the island's one accommodation that functions like a traditional hotel. Located central, just two miles east of Kaunakakai town, Aqua Hotel Moloka'i consists of a cluster of two-story structures gathered around an open-air seaside restaurant and bar. The buildings are modeled after Polynesian "long houses," with roofs that sweep almost to the ground (although shingled, not thatched in the antique style). Starting in '08 the hotel has been on a remodeling campaign, freshening every aspect of the place from new furnishings to a resurfaced pool deck to high-speed Internet connections in each room. The restaurant/bar have become a center of island social life – a tradition the hotel encourages by offering live performances with local Hawaiian bands seven nights a week. (On Friday afternoons, don't miss the weekly jam session by the Moloka'i kupuna, or old-timers.) Aqua Hotel Moloka'i also offers a massage and spa center, manicures/pedicures, plus a list of tours, activities, and culture classes (think lei-making and poi-pounding).

Traveling east from Kaunakakai, you find two seaside condominiums that offer fully furnished units with kitchens – self-contained homes with ocean-view lanais. Wavecrest and Moloka'i Shores are similar in that they consist of three-story apartment-style buildings around central lawns with swimming pool, tennis courts, and barbecues. There is a small beach along this shore. The sea here is placid because it is protected by the South Shore reef system. This is one of the few places in Hawai'i where you can watch the sun rise and set from the same seaside park bench.

Heading farther east you'll spot the two Dunbar Beachfront Cottages. Located beyond the reef system, each on its own private-feeling cove, these are stand-alone homes. Built in the classic "cane house style" (set on posts with single-wall rough-wood construction, air-conditioned by sea breezes), these are as close to the "little grass shack" fantasy as you'll ever get. And yet the furnishings are excellent and the cottages meticulously kept.

Each cottage sleeps four and has a three-night minimum. It would be silly to come this far and not spend at least three nights in the sensory immersion of starlight, wave-crash, and wind-rattled coconut fronds.

Pu‘u o Hoku Ranch, a certified organic ranch on 14,000 acres located at the extreme eastern point of the island – 25 miles from Kaunakakai—includes three rentals of a very peculiar and beautiful nature. There are two large handcrafted cottages—Sunrise Cottage has two bedrooms; Grove Cottage has four. Then there is The Lodge, with 11 guest rooms and spacious main hall, massive lava-rock fireplace, and huge kitchen supplied with the finest culinary gear. Surrounded by green pastoral beauty and the rich blue Pacific, this place altogether makes one of the greatest retreat sites in the world, excellent for family reunions or any focused gathering for up to 34 people. The cottages themselves, however, are available for smaller groups—as few as two.

Moloka‘i’s other accommodation choices lie at the extreme opposite location, the West End, along the sunset shore that looks across the channel to O‘ahu. Here next to the old Kaluako‘i Resort (now closed) there are three different condominiums designed in the best contemporary fashion to take advantage of a varied coastal topography and a remote seaside location. Paniolo Hale, perched on a natural ledge, consists of deluxe townhouse condos of one and two bedrooms located close to Kepuhi Beach. Ke Nani Kai includes 120 low-rise units with two tennis courts as well as swimming pool/Jacuzzi. Kaluako‘i Villas, spread over 26 acres, invites extensive rambling over the beautiful beaches of this coastline.

To match yourself with the right Moloka‘i lodging, you would be smart to contact island residents who are first-hand familiar with the options. Get in touch with the property managers at Moloka‘i Vacation Rental ([www.molokai-vacation-rental.com](http://www.molokai-vacation-rental.com)). As with everything on this island, this interaction will be forthright and friendly.

With this as with all your interests on Moloka‘i, please get in touch with the Moloka‘i Visitors Association. It’s the job of the folks at MVA to help you find what you’re

looking for on an island whose attraction is that it has no commercialized “attractions.” It is authentically itself. Visit [molokai-hawaii.com](http://molokai-hawaii.com).

Long and narrow, Moloka‘i looks insignificant next to its neighbors. If someone asked you to compare the Hawaiian Islands to a paragraph, you’d have to say that Moloka‘i is a quiet dash between two boisterous sentences, O‘ahu and Maui. In other words, Moloka‘i provides what its neighbors can’t – a rich, simple “nothing.”

*(pau/end)*

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