



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Randy Son Of Robert

Budget Outdoors in Hawaii

Hilo, Big Island (Hawaii), 7 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: This economy doesn't do much for the pocketbook, especially when traveling somewhere as notoriously pricy as the Big Island. Luckily, there is still a way to experience Hawaii's gorgeous outdoors without breaking the bank. When planning a budget trip to Hawaii, it is important to remember that you are most likely going to need a car to get around, and that in itself can eat up money. With a car, however, you can see the island on your own terms and get to all of the spectacular (and free!) sightseeing available. With that in mind, remember that most of this trip is built around adventures on your own two feet – do not forget your hiking boots and lots of water. There are a couple of expenses, but they are limited to truly spectacular things to do. Your hotels may not be luxurious, but they are locally run and known for their budget-conscious quality, wonderful places to rest your head after a long day of volcano hiking. In terms of food, I would recommend visiting local grocery stores and stocking up on bread, cheese, salami, and other portable foodstuffs for lunches – you'll save \$\$\$ if you pack them yourselves, allowing you to explore local food and nightlife at night.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Big Island (Hawaii)

DAY NOTE: Your first day should be dedicated to getting off the plane, renting a car, finding and checking into your hotel, and finding out about local grocery options. Your first hotel, Carson's Volcano Cottages, includes breakfast everyday, helping lessen your food costs. Also, don't forget to take them up on their afternoon refreshments. Explore the hotel and vicinity, and perhaps take a dip in the hot tub.



Carson's Volcano Cottages

A little piece of paradise

Day 2 - Big Island (Hawaii)

DAY NOTE: As this is a budget outdoors trip, strap on your hiking boots, eat a big breakfast at Carson's and venture off to your hike of the day. If you consider yourself an experienced hiker, you must try the Crater Rim Trail. It is a long, challenging 11 mile loop – don't forget food and water – that WILL take you all day. You can expect hot and dry conditions, as well as potential sulfur fumes – asthmatics be warned. BE CAREFUL and stay on the trail, as the National Park Service website reminds you "Falling on lava can result in severe wounds". After such a long day, hit up Volcano's Lava Rock Cafe. Locals eat here, and unless you're absolutely dying for foie gras, there's nothing better than a burger and milkshake after your trek.



Crater Rim Trail

Circle the rim



Volcano's Lava Rock Cafe

Inexpensive, laid-back eatery



Carson's Volcano Cottages

A little piece of paradise

Day 3 - Big Island (Hawaii)

DAY NOTE: For Day Three, check out the nature along the Puu Oo Trail. The scenery and natural wonder is amazing, and you have a chance to take a dip in a waterhole along the way. Lots of birdwatching and cooler temperatures are a nice respite from yesterday's aridness. Stay warm and pay attention to the trail, you may get lost. For dinner, grab some stir fry at Thai Thai.



Puu Oo Trail

Interesting nature hike



Thai Thai Restaurant

Unexpected Thai cuisine



Carson's Volcano Cottages

A little piece of paradise

Day 4 - Big Island (Hawaii)

DAY NOTE: Today, we move and explore the other side of the Island. You have a three hour drive on your hands, so turn on some music and enjoy the scenery. Your new hotel, Uncle Billy's, is a locally run operation, so be sure to ask for tips on what to see and do (breakfast is also included). Once you arrive and check in, explore Kona and grab dinner at Merriman's, a local institution.



Merriman's

A Birthplace of Hawaii Regional Cuisine

Day 5 - Big Island (Hawaii)

DAY NOTE: Today's adventure is for fitness and history buffs alike. In Kealakekua Bay Historical Park, you can snorkel, rent a Kayak, and visit the monument to Captain James Cook. After dinner, get ready for one of the more expensive but more exciting parts of your trip – Sea Paradise's Manta Night Experience! Rated as one of the "Top 10 Things to Do in Your Life", it will set you back a bit of money, but may be the perfect splurge for your trip.



Kealakekua Bay Historical Park

Marine preserve and historic site



Sea Paradise

Go pearl hunting!

Day 6

DAY NOTE: Dedicated to relaxing, Day 6 includes a trip to the emerald sands of Mahana Beach, which is definitely worth the hike to it. A rare find in Hawaii, it is a lovely place to get some

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

sun. Afterwards, grab a buffet dinner back at your hotel – cheap and plentiful!

Day 1 - Big Island (Hawaii)

QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: +1 808 967 7683

fax: 808/967.8094

<http://www.carsonscottage.com/>

location:

113920 6th St
Volcano HI 96785

1 Carson's Volcano Cottages

DESCRIPTION: In 1988, friends of Tom and Brenda Carson came to visit from Alaska, so the Carsons renovated their 1925 tin-roofed cabin, under giant tree ferns in the rain forest, to accommodate them. That was the beginning of the Carson's B&B business, and today they're quite a success story. They have six units on their 1/2 acres in the rain forest: three guest rooms with private entrances and private baths, done in Oriental, 1940s, and 1950s Hawaiiana themes; and three cottages, each with its own decor (Asian, American, and a quaint Victorian English cottage), plus another three houses in the neighborhood. The property also has a hot tub tucked under the ferns for guests' use. Several of the "deluxe" cottages even have their own hot tubs and free-standing fireplaces. Tom and Brenda serve a hearty breakfast in the dining room. © Frommer's



Carson's Volcano Cottages

Day 2 - Big Island (Hawaii)

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contact:

tel: 808-985-6000

fax: 808-985-6004

www.nps.gov/havo/

location:

Crater Rim Dr
Hawai'i HI 96718

1 Crater Rim Trail

DESCRIPTION: Crater Rim Trail encircles Kilauea's summit Caldera closely following the path of Crater Rim Road. This is a challenging and long day hike, that passes through varied terrain, including a desert and rain forest. Views of Halemaumau and Keanakakoi Craters and Mauna Loa are excellent from this 11-mile path. The trail begins at the Kilauea Visitor Center and leads along the northern crater rim. On the southern side of the crater the trail leads away from the rim, with the road between the trail and the crater. This obstructs hikers' views from The Jaggar Museum to the Thurston Lava Tube. A short spur trail leading north to the Halemaumau Overlook is accessible from Crater Rim Trail. Bring water and food and be prepared for hot and dry, and wet and windy weather. Expect sulfur fumes in the Halema'uma'u Crater and southwest rift zone area. To get there follow Crater Rim Road to the Kilauea visitor center. The trailhead begins from the visitor center parking area.



National Park Service

contact:

tel: +1 808 967 8526

http://www.volcanovillage.com/Volcanoes_Lava_Rock.htm

location:

Old Volcano Road
Waikoloa HI 96785

hours:

7:30a-4p Su, 7:30a-5p M,

7:30a-9p Tu-Sa

2 Volcano's Lava Rock Cafe

DESCRIPTION: When a burger and a milkshake is preferable to fusion cuisine and cocktails, stop by this down-home deli. Billed as the place where the locals eat, it's a friendly, no-frills diner in Volcano Village. Menu items include stir-fries, burgers, sweet-bread french toast and super-gooey chocolate cake. The macadamia nut cookies are the toast of the town. This place offers live entertainment on weekend nights and Internet access all the time. © wcities.com



Volcano Village

contact:

tel: +1 808 967 7683

fax: 808/967.8094

<http://www.carsonscottage.com/>

location:

113920 6th St
Volcano HI 96785

3 Carson's Volcano Cottages

DESCRIPTION: In 1988, friends of Tom and Brenda Carson came to visit from Alaska, so the Carsons renovated their 1925 tin-roofed cabin, under giant tree ferns in the rain forest, to accommodate them. That was the beginning of the Carson's B&B business, and today they're quite a success story. They have six units on their 1/2 acres in the rain forest: three guest rooms with private entrances and private baths, done in Oriental, 1940s, and 1950s Hawaiiana themes; and three cottages, each with its own decor (Asian, American, and a quaint Victorian English cottage), plus another three houses in the neighborhood. The property also has a hot tub tucked under the ferns for guests' use. Several of the "deluxe" cottages even have their own hot tubs and free-standing fireplaces. Tom and Brenda serve a hearty breakfast in the dining room. © Frommer's



Carson's Volcano Cottages

Day 3 - Big Island (Hawaii)

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contact:

tel: 800-GOHAWAII
fax: 808-924-0290
<http://www.hawaiitrails.org/trail.asp>

location:

Hwy 11
Kapaau HI 96718

1 Puu Oo Trail

DESCRIPTION: This 7.4 mile, moderate difficulty trail heads south through pioneer ohia forest, brush and grassland in the direction of Volcano Village. It passes over the 1855 & 1881 lava flows and through several kipuka of mixed native species and older koa. Hikers may return by way of Powerline Road, a hunter access road which intersects the trail at the 3.7 mile point and rejoins Saddle Road about 0.5 mi. closer to Hilo. An interesting nature hike through a variety of mostly native vegetation, Pu'u O'o Trail offers birders the opportunity to see I'iwi, `Apapane, `Amakihi, Elapio, `O`mao, `lo, Akiapola`au and Nene. It was pioneered by early cattle ranchers to drive their stock to embarkation points on the coast. Rain, fog and cool temperatures are common. Seasonal bird hunting is allowed, so wear brightly colored clothing for safety. The trail can be difficult to follow where it crosses lava flows, especially in daily fog. Cold climate with rain and fog. Trail head is identified by a sign on the south side of Saddle Road (Hwy 200) approximately 22.4 mi. from Hilo. Parking is limited.



Photo courtesy of Puu Oo Trail

contact:

tel: 808-967-7969
http://national.citysearch.com/profile/3212059/volcano_hi/thai_thai_restaurant.html

location:

19-4084 Old Volcano Rd
Waikoloa HI 96785

hours:

Daily 5pm-9pm

2 Thai Thai Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Tasty curries, stir-fries and salads in a wholly unexpected locale adjacent to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.



<http://media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/01/25/48/b2/thai-thai-restaurant.jpg>

contact:

tel: +1 808 967 7683
fax: 808/967.8094
<http://www.carsonscottage.com/>

location:

113920 6th St
Volcano HI 96785

3 Carson's Volcano Cottages

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Carson's Volcano Cottages

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Day 4 - Big Island (Hawaii)

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contact:

tel: 808 885 6822

fax: 808 885 8756

<http://www.merrimanshawaii.com>

location:

65-1227 Opelo Rd
Kainaliu HI 96743-2349

hours:

Lunch: M-F 11:30a-1:30p,
Dinner: Su-Sa 5:30p-9p

1 Merriman's

DESCRIPTION: It's located in the cool and quiet ranching town of Waimea and it is nothing less than the place to dine on the Big Island for those who run in circles that transcend over-priced and grand scale dining at the resorts along the Kohala Coast. Peter Merriman's notable and modest restaurant is nothing less than one of the cradles of the ever popularized and often copied Hawaii Regional Cuisine. The dining room offers warm Hawaiian hospitality and an open kitchen along with a menu that changes from day to day and from season to season. © NileGuide



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Day 5 - Big Island (Hawaii)

QUICK NOTE

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contact:

http://www.hawaiiweb.com/Hawaii/html/sites/kealakekua_bay_historical_park.html

location:

Pu'u'honoa Road and Highway 160
Honaunau HI 96750

1 Kealakekua Bay Historical Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Look for the chair made of two flat rocks at the back of the beach and relax in the shade.

DESCRIPTION: Snorkelers and divers flock to this bay, which is a designated marine preserve and home to hundreds of varieties of tropical fish, sea turtles and even some dolphins. Kayakers also enjoy the calm, warm waters. History buffs will be more interested in the monument to Captain James Cook, the first British sailor to venture to Hawai'i. Cook was at first revered by the Hawaiians, who believed him to be the god Lono, but eventually they killed him in a skirmish upon his return to the island. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Kealakekua Bay Historical Park

contact:

tel: +1 808 322 2500 / +1 800 322 5662

<http://www.seaparadise.com/>

location:

PO Box 390159
Laupahoehoe HI 96739

hours:

Vary

2 Sea Paradise

DESCRIPTION: Sea Paradise helps you to explore the Hawaiian seascape like no other. With tours in snorkeling, scuba diving and sailing, this organization offers you a wide range of water sports to choose from and also organizes guided tours. While the daily tours take care of the hoards of tourists, it is the arranged tours like 'dinner sail' and private charters, which can be booked for a small group or a special occasion. This ensures an intimate experience and one that you'll have special personal memories of. So go ahead and have a royal splurge! © wcities.com



wcities

Day 6

DAY NOTE: Dedicated to relaxing, Day 6 includes a trip to the emerald sands of Mahana Beach, which is definitely worth the hike to it. A rare find in Hawaii, it is a lovely place to get some sun. Afterwards, grab a buffet dinner back at your hotel – cheap and plentiful!

location:

Highway 137 (Red Road)
Big Island of Hawaii HI 96778

1 Ahalanui Beach Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Don't leave your valuables in the car.

DESCRIPTION: Located 30 miles outside of Hilo town along the Puna coast, Ahalanui County Park is one of those places that you could spend all day at sunbathing on the lawn or the lava rock cliffs, submerging yourself in the warm water, and having lunch at a picnic table under trees or a roof. The main attraction is the large geothermal hot pond. Surrounded by towering coconut trees and jungle foliage, the remote pool is heated by underlying volcanic activity to a comfortable 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and is surrounded by a man-made lava rock wall. At the ocean end of the pond is a small gate made of metal bars where the ocean washes in and out, keeping the pond clean. Above the gate is a walkway that is horizontal to the cliffs lining the ocean perfect for a view of the coast or sunbathing. If you are facing the ocean, a walk over large lava boulders will take you to a lesser known surf break known as "Secrets." Definitely not for any surfers who are not experts, Secrets is another site you see and you may catch someone putting on a show for you in the dangerous and shallow waves.

A lifeguard is usually on duty during the day at Ahalanui, but if you come at night, you are on your own and make sure you bring a flashlight because it is pitch dark. The occasional local may decide to go topless, but the pond is not locally known as an official nude beach. Picnic tables are also on site, both under the trees and in covered pavilions, and portable toilets and showers are also available.

If you park in the lot on the pond side of the road, your car is pretty safe but bring anything of real value to the pond with you. There is a larger parking lot on the inland side of the road, and if you park here make sure you leave nothing of value.

© wcities.com



courtesy of flickr via google commercial images

contact:

tel: 800-GOHAWAII
fax: 808-924-0290
<http://www.hawaiitrails.org/trail.asp>

location:

Keanakolu Rd
Hilo HI 96743

2 Humuula Trail

DESCRIPTION: Located on the northeastern side of the island, this 10.5 mile difficult trail first passes through mixed exotic forest, then native Koa/Ohia forest, and finally through former pasture, before rising 3,250' in elevation in 5.5 miles to reach the old Civilian Conservation Corps camp and Ranger station at Keanakolu. The trail is not well maintained and can be difficult to negotiate in wet weather. Catchment water is available at Keanakolu, but purify before drinking. Area is open to year-round game mammal hunting. Wear bright colored clothing. A partially paved, four wheel drive road leads mauka from

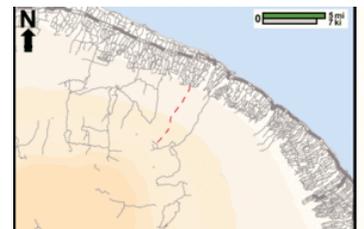


Photo courtesy of Humuula Trail

Highway 11 at the 30 mile post in Ookala. Follow road 2.7 miles to the Hilo Forest Reserve boundary and Humuula Trail.

contact:

tel: 808-969-9090
http://national.citysearch.com/profile/3193631/hilo_hi/pescatore.html

location:

235 Keawe Street
Kamuela HI 96720

hours:

Mon-Fri 8:30am-2pm
and 5:30pm-9pm, Sat-
Sun 7:30am-2pm and
5:30pm-9pm

3 Pescatore

DESCRIPTION: Filled with warm woodwork decor, this formal dining restaurant specializes in genuine Sicilian style Italian cuisine with items on the menu including tasty soups, creative seafood, chicken, veal, vegetarian, and pasta dishes, great pizzas, homemade breads, and delectable desserts. The two-room restaurant is on the smaller side, which enables the friendly servers to provide diners with prompt service and a warm smile. All servers appear to be well versed on the wine menu, and can help diners decide which wine to order. Although the restaurant is a bit formal, diners can eat dressed in very casual clothing or in formal attire. Located in Hilo's lively downtown area, eating at Pescatore is nicely accented by exploring the shops and art galleries in the bay front area either before or after dinner. They are open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Il pescatore

contact:

tel: 808-974-6200

location:

Highway 19
Honoka'a HI 96740

4 Kekaha Kai (Kona Coast) State Park

DESCRIPTION: Kekaha Kai State Park encompasses over 1,500 acres of beach, dune and wilderness areas on the leeward side of the Big Island north of Kailua-Kona. This park is divided into two sections: Mahai'ula and Kua Bay. The Mahai'ula section is the more developed of the two sections of the park. It offers a sandy beach and dunes, picnic area with tables and restrooms. In addition to unpaved road access between the two sections, a 4.5 mile hike along the Ala Kahakai Trail, an historic coastal trail, leads to the Kua Bay portion of the park. Halfway along this trail, a hike to the summit of Pu'u Ku'ili, a 342-foot high cinder cone, offers excellent coastline views. Kua Bay, at the north end of the park offers beach access and beach related activities. Both sections of this park provide swimming, water play and snorkeling during calm conditions. Kekaha Kai lies on the leeward side of the Big Island north of Kailua-Kona. Visitors can access the site from Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway.

Big Island (Hawaii) Snapshot

Local Info

The island of Hawaii is a collection of contrasts and extremes accented with the aloha spirit. This island is not only the furthest south in the Hawaiian Island chain, it happens to be the newest of the main islands and the location of the southernmost point in the United States. In contrast it is also the location of the highest mountain in the world that offers stunning sunset views. Mauna Kea rises 33,000 feet when measured from the sub-oceanic base and is also home of the highest freshwater lake in the United States. Lake Waiau sits just over the 13,000 ft level near the summit of Mauna Kea and served as an important site for the newborn of Hawaiian royalty. The mountain has been proven by anthropologists to have provided a source of obsidian to make stone tools during the traditional Hawaiian times. Mauna Kea is also where the clearest air is found on the planet, hence many of the world's largest telescopes are located on the summit.

The Big Island is also a contrast of fire and ice. Snow covers the peaks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa during winter months while the volcanic eruption at Kilauea Volcano has been continuously active for over 15 years and is still creating new land in the Kalapana area below Volcano National Park. Visitors are free to experience the winter snow, which usually follows a substantial rain fall, by driving up the mountain in a four wheel drive vehicle.

North and South Kona

Most visitors to the Big Island first arrive at the Kona International Airport at Keahole. Located in the North Kona, the architecture of the airport is definitively Polynesian. Ticket counters and gate areas are a collection of small buildings resembling groupings of village huts. The open-air setting is unique and provides easy one level access to everything from check-in kiosks to baggage claim and ground transportation.

Turn south from the airport and you will be well in the area that encompasses North and South Kona. This area includes the majority of the original town and tourist district of Kailua-Kona along with the largest business, industrial and commercial area on the Leeward side of the Big Island. Here you will find doctors, big box stores,

restaurants, cultural sites, and many shops and boutiques. Some of the must-sees are Laaloa Beach Park, Ahu'ena Heiau and Hulihe'e Palace which are both along the waterfront. Also along the waterfront is the main thoroughfare called Alii Drive. It is the place to browse shops, dance the night away, watch the green flash over a local larger or have a romantic sunset dinner for two.

North and South Kohala

Named after the oldest of the five mountains on the island, the landscape of the Kohala Coast is sunny, hot and dry with beautiful sunset and endless ocean views, numerous lava fields and only a few white sand beaches. There are fabulous views of not only Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa, the Kohala Mountains and Hualalai, but on a clear day views of the eastern slope of Haleakala can be seen in the distance. Some of the best and more opulent resorts in the state are located along this coast. The Hilton Waikoloa village is probably the most fantastic followed by the very opulent Mauna Lani, the Fairmont Orchid and the Mauna Kea Beach and Hapuna resorts farther north.

Also noteworthy in the area is Spencer Beach Park and Hapuna Beach Park. These two beach parks are one of the best in the state not to mention the island. If there is one thing that brings people from around the world to the Kohala Coast, it is the golf. Most area courses rank among the top 100 in the United States. Hapuna Golf Course, Francis Brown I & II and the Waikoloa Village Golf Courses are all world-renowned. To the south of Hapuna Beach Park down a dusty, bumpy, yet two wheel drive road is Sixty-Nine Beach. Off the beaten map lies the secluded beach that is much smaller than Hapuna, yet big enough to get some privacy on white sand and enjoy swimming in clear water dotted with colorful tropical fish.

North Kohala feels like a world of its own, dotted with older plantation homes along the coast, and a small historic town with galleries, eateries, and a sense of culture. North Kohala makes for a perfect day trip of shopping in the quaint town, and most importantly, a visit to Pololu Valley, the birthplace of the notorious King Kamehameha, with a steep hike and a beautiful black sand beach.

One of the more unique areas in South Kohala is Waimea. Located at the 2500 foot elevation, Waimea town is cool and green. Breezy sunny days that can have the hint of a chill, and cool nights, Waimea is a combination of local cowboys known as paniolos, scientists and upscale island homes and not just another sleepy Hawaii plantation town. Waimea, or Kamuela as it is sometimes referred to, is a ranching town. It sits adjacent to one of the largest working cattle ranches in the country, Parker Ranch, and is steeped in tradition, culture and history. Waimea is also the location of the administrative support for the Keck and Canada France Telescopes that sit on the summit of Mauna Kea in full view from the heart of town on a clear day.

Hamakua

From the sleepy town of Honokaa to the tiny town of Paauilo, the Hamakua coast is known for beautiful ocean vistas, waterfalls, valleys and lush tropical landscapes. Life is slow, unhurried, and is lived by a combination of the young and old settled in for a lifestyle of peace and tranquility. It is a place where relationships mean more than time and the beep of a car horn is more of a greeting than a reproach. Just a few miles north from the center of Honokaa Town is Waipio Valley. Exploring the valley to view the streams, taro patches, waterfalls, and black sand beach is an island highlight. Valley tours are available to see the valley, as well as a stop at the lookout up top, a strenuous and very steep walk down and up, or a four wheel drive cruise into the valley only to be piloted by skilled drivers. Also a part of Hamakua is the Mauna Kea State Recreation Area. Accessible via Saddle Road from either Kona or Hilo, a visit to the summit would necessitate a four wheel drive and a call to the check on the area weather conditions. The Saddle Road is a site in its own, with views of both Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, various cinder cones, open land and pastures, and state park for cabin stays and picnics, and a general feeling of being in another world.

A drive along the Hamakua coast will take you through eucalyptus forests, pasture lands over bridges and through valleys. It is a relaxing experience and one of the more special parts of the island.

North and South Hilo

Big Island (Hawaii) Snapshot continued

Located just south of Hamakua along the windward side of the island the Hilo area encompasses the area from Ookala to the quiet waterfront town of Hilo. The area is much like the Hamakua Coast to the casual untrained eye, a closer look will reveal some of the most beautiful waterfalls, picturesque parks and charming towns in the state. There are no championship golf courses, wide white sand beaches or mega resorts here, but there is a unique charm just under the thick canopy of tropical vegetation and giant hapuu fern trees. A stop in Laupahoehoe can take just a few minutes, but in those minutes one can visit the historical train museum or visit the lovely seaside park complete with tide pools and beautiful rocky coast line. A short stop in Ninole town cannot be complete without a photo opportunity at the post office. Delightful and charming, it is the smallest in the state and certainly one of the smallest in the country.

Not to be missed is a stop at the Akaka Falls State Park. The paved trails wander through thick vegetation under a tropical canopy. The park is actually home of two of the longest waterfalls in the state. Akaka Falls is the longest more well-known and neighboring Kahuna Falls is almost as long.

Hilo is the largest community on the island and has a long and interesting history that has been shaped by natural events. Hilo has been threatened by lava flows, wiped out by tsunami, hurricanes and earthquakes. Today, it is home to a wonderful farmer's market that takes place on Wednesdays and Saturdays, several museums, botanical gardens, a wonderful astronomy center, and the largest and most renowned hula competition in the world, the Merrie Monarch. Hilo is scattered with delicious eateries, local style boutiques and shops, a mall, several health food stores, and several big box stores.

Downtown Hilo is a wonderful spot to browse through the small shops, have lunch after a morning at the volcano and pick up some fresh orchids or anthuriums. Bayfront, the area of downtown Hilo located along, you guessed it, the bay, is a place where sightseers can start at either Banyan Drive or the new Tsunami Museum to explore an area of town that boasts some of the most hip places to dine and shop. There's also the East Hawaii Cultural Center and Lyman Museum. For

information on these attractions and on the outlying areas, visit the Hawaii Visitor's Bureau.

Puna

The Big Islands district of Puna has been known in the past as the "Wild West," even though it is on the east side of the island. With the small former plantation towns of Keaau and Pahoa that are nearer to the ocean than the small towns of Mountain View and Volcano on the slopes of Kilauea, Puna offers everything from chilly nights, forests of ferns and ohia lehua trees to the inexpensive acre lots with ocean views and the sounds of coqui frogs at night. Puna has evolved through a history combining plantation life, strong native Hawaiian culture, a strong hippie culture in Pahoa, and the reputation through decades as one of the largest marijuana cultivating locations.

Shipman Beach, a white sand bay where sea turtles and monk seals come to rest is located as the base of the neighborhood paradise park, and is a must see. Lower Puna, the area below Pahoa, offers various hot ponds, steam vents, tide pools, and fresh and hard lava. Puna can look a little rough at first site but a deeper look will discover hidden treasures that cannot be found anywhere else in Hawaii.

Kau

To mention Kau, is to refer to Hawaii's last frontier. Kau is certainly the most rural area on the entire island with miles and miles of wide open land with just a single road bisecting it from South Kona to the entrance of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. This area is home to small country communities, natural beauty and historical significance that has yet to be documented. A drive from Kona to the volcano will treat you with glimpses of wild untouched coastline, low-land forests, off the map black sand beaches, cold water ponds, and green sand beaches. Once at the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park a visit to the Kilauea Visitor Center, Volcano Art Center and Jaggar Museum along with a short hike through the Thurston Lava Tube are not to be missed. A visit to the semi-famous Punalu'u Bakeshop and Visitor Center for lunch and the Punaluu Black Sand Beach is also a must-do.

To experience the Big Island is to experience Madame Pele's fiery fury at

Kilauea, to venture up to snow capped summit home of the Hawaiian Goddess Poliahu at Mauna Kea, to warm up on the sunny leeward shores, to drive through miles and miles of open countryside, hike to gorgeous waterfalls, sit in natural steamy saunas, visit green and black sand beaches, and take in a variety of cultures. The Big Island is a place where direction to the intriguing and exotic sites helps and visitor, and travelers can get lost in the beauty and culture and Hawaii's largest island.

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Fun Facts

Hawai'i(Big Island)

State: Hawaii

Country: United States

Hawai'i(Big Island) by the Numbers:

Population: 148,677

Elevation: 18 feet

Highest Point: 13,796 feet(Mauna Kea)

Average Annual Rainfall: Ranges from 10 inches at Kawaihae to 128 inches at Hilo Airport

Average January Temperature: 73 degrees F

Average July Temperature: 76 degrees F

Quick Facts:

Major Industries: tourism/hospitality/recreation, sugar, coffee, cattle

Landmarks: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Kealakekua Bay, Kailua-Kona, Kawaihae, Parker Ranch, Waipio Valley

Ethnic Mix: 30.2% Hawaiian, 23.2% Caucasian, 14.1% Japanese, 10.5% Filipino

Electricity: 110 volts, 60Hz, standard two pin plugs

Time Zone: GMT-10

Country Dialing Code: 1

Area Code: 808

Did You Know?

Hawaii's Big Island is the youngest in geologic age, as well as the largest of the Hawaiian Islands and continues to increase

Big Island (Hawaii) Snapshot continued

in size because of Kilauea, the world's most active volcano that is highly active due to its location of the Pacific hot spot.

Hawaii's Big Island is located amongst the Hawaiian Islands in the central Pacific Ocean.

Orientation:

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