

Hawaii, the Big Island

The Big Island of Hawaii—the island that lends its name to the entire 1,500-mile-long Hawaiian archipelago—is where Mother Nature pulled out all the stops. Simply put, it’s spectacular.

The Big Island has it all: fiery volcanoes and sparkling waterfalls, black-lava deserts and snowcapped mountain peaks, tropical rainforests and alpine meadows, a glacial lake and miles of golden, black, and even green-sand beaches. The Big Island has an unmatched diversity of terrain and climate. A 50-mile drive will take you from snowy winter to sultry summer, passing through spring or fall along the way. The island looks like the inside of a barbecue pit on one side and a lush jungle on the other.

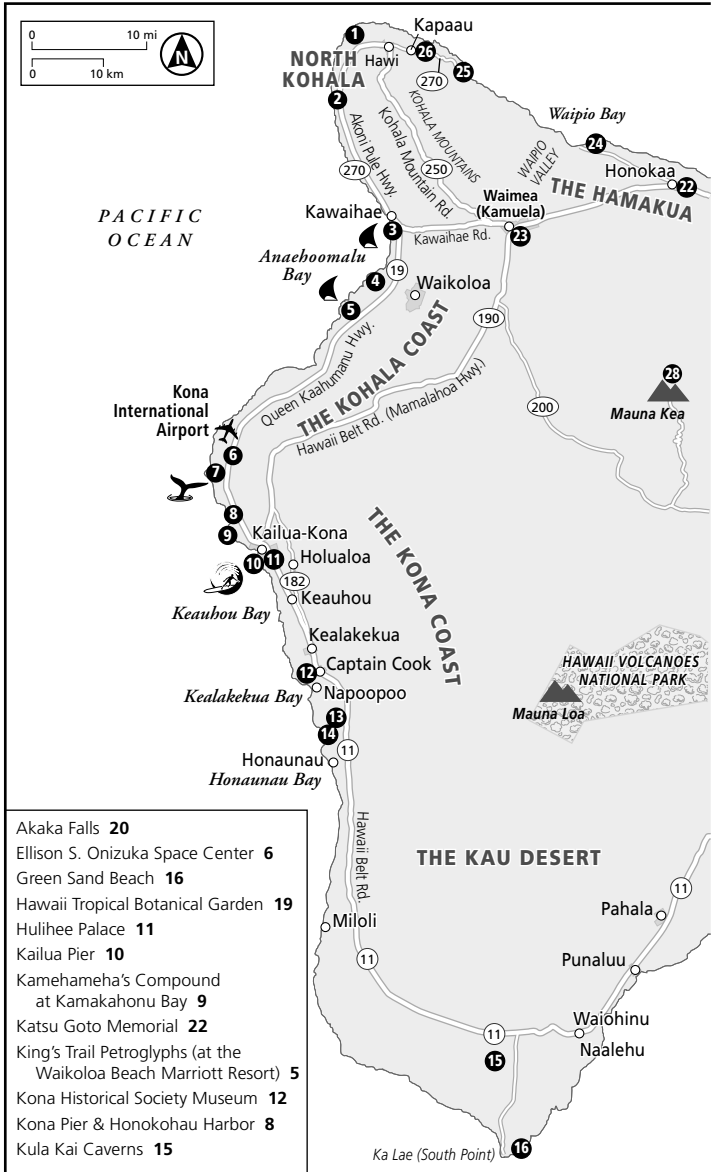
The Big Island is the largest island in the Hawaiian chain (4,038 sq. miles—about the size of Connecticut), the youngest (800,000 years), and the least populated (with 30 people per sq. mile). It has the highest peaks in the Pacific, the most volcanoes of any Hawaiian island, and the newest land on earth.

Five volcanoes—one still erupting—have created this continental island, which is growing bigger daily. At its heart is snowcapped Mauna Kea, the world’s tallest sea mountain (measured from the ocean floor), complete with its own glacial lake. Mauna Kea’s nearest neighbor is Mauna Loa (or “Long Mountain”), creator of one-sixth of the island; it’s the largest volcano on earth, rising 30,000 feet out of the ocean floor (of course, you can see only the 13,796 ft. that are above sea level). Kilauea’s eruptions make the Big Island bigger every day—and, if you’re lucky, you can stand just a few feet away and watch it do its work.

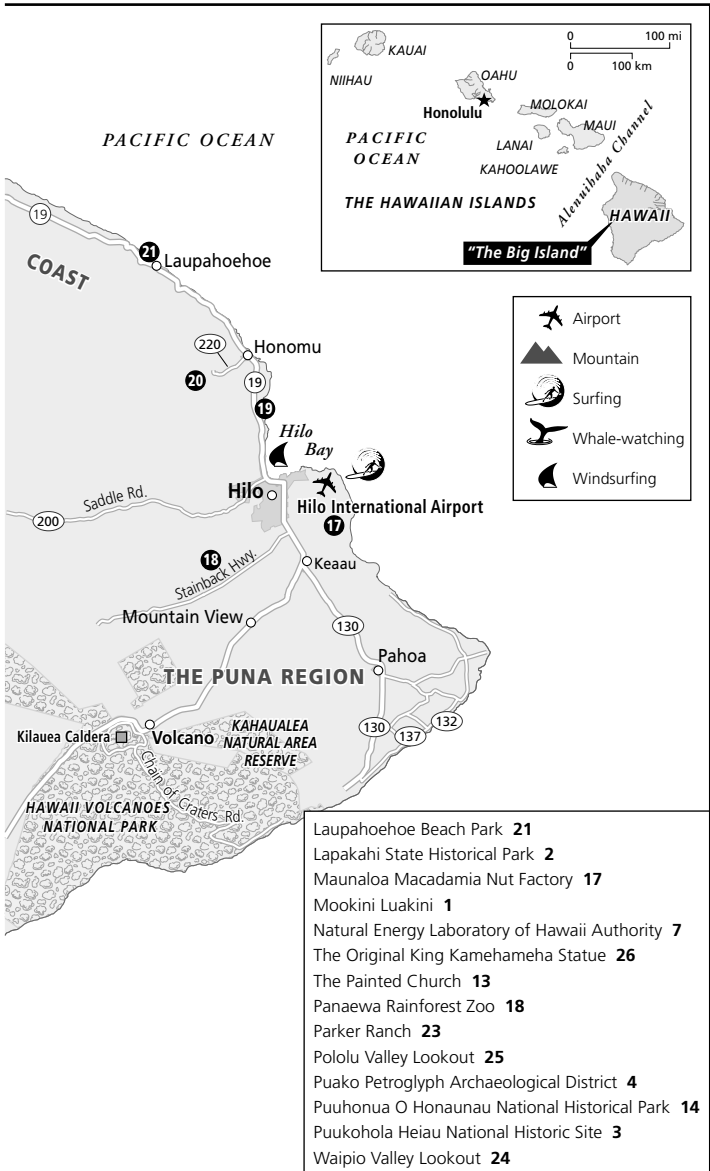
Steeped in tradition and shrouded in the primal mist of creation, the Big Island radiates what the Hawaiians call *mana*, a sense of spirituality that’s still apparent in the acres of petroglyphs etched in the black lava, the numerous *heiau* (temples), burial caves scattered in the cliffs, sacred shrines both on land and in the sea, and even the sound the wind makes as it blows across the desolate lava fields.

The Big Island is not for everyone, however. It refuses to fit the stereotype of a tropical island. Some tourists are taken aback at

The Big Island



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the sight of stark fields of lava or black-sand beaches. You must remember that it's *big* (expect to do lots of driving). And you may have to go out of your way if you're looking for traditional tropical beauty, such as a quintessential white-sand beach.

On the other hand, if you're into watersports, this is paradise. The two tall volcanoes mean the water on the leeward side is calm 350 days a year. The underwater landscape of caves, cliffs, and tunnels attracts a stunning array of colorful marine life. The island's west coast is one of the best destinations in the world for big-game fishing. And its miles of remote coastline are a kayaker's dream of caves, secluded coves, and crescent-shaped beaches reachable only by sea.

On land, hikers, bikers, and horseback riders can head up and down a volcano, across beaches, into remote valleys, and through rainforests without seeing another soul. Bird-watchers are rewarded with sightings of the rare, rapidly dwindling native birds of Hawaii. Golfers can find nirvana on a wide variety of courses.

This is the least-explored island in the Hawaiian chain, but if you're looking to get away from it all and back to nature in its most primal state, that might be the best thing about it. Where else can you witness fiery creation and swim with dolphins, ponder the stars from the world's tallest mountain and catch a blue marlin, downhill-ski, and surf the waves in a single day? You can do all this and more on only one island in the world: the Big Island of Hawaii.

1 The Island in Brief

Most people arrive on the Big Island at Kona International Airport, on the island's west coast. From the airport, Kilauea volcano is to the right (counterclockwise), and the ritzy Kohala Coast is to the left (clockwise). (If you land in Hilo, of course, the volcano is clockwise and Kohala is counterclockwise.)

THE KONA COAST ⚡⚡

Kona is synonymous with great coffee and big fish—both of which are found in abundance along this 70-mile-long stretch of black-lava-covered coast.

A collection of tiny communities devoted to farming and fishing along the sun-baked leeward side of the island, the Kona Coast has an amazingly diverse geography and climate for such a compact area. The oceanfront town of **Kailua-Kona**, a quaint fishing village that now caters more to tourists than boat captains, is its commercial center. The lands of Kona range from stark, black, dry coastal

desert to cool, cloudy upcountry where glossy green coffee, macadamia nuts, tropical fruit, and a riotous profusion of flowers cover the steep, jagged slopes. Among the coffee fields, you'll find the funky, artsy village of **Holualoa**. Higher yet in elevation are native forests of giant trees filled with tiny, colorful birds, some perilously close to extinction. About 7 miles south of Kailua-Kona, bordering the ocean, is the resort area of **Keauhou**, a suburban-like series of upscale condominiums, a shopping center, and million-dollar homes.

Kona means "leeward side" in Hawaiian—and that means full-on sun every day of the year. This is an affordable vacation spot; an ample selection of midpriced condo units, peppered with a few older hotels and B&Bs, lines the shore, which is mostly rocky lava reef, interrupted by an occasional pocket beach. Here, too, stand two world-class resorts: Kona Village, the site of one of the best luau in the islands, and one of Hawaii's luxury retreats, the Four Seasons at Hualalai.

Away from the bright lights of the town of Kailua lies the rural **South Kona Coast**, home to coffee farmers, macadamia-nut growers, and people escaping to the country. The serrated South Kona Coast is indented with numerous bays, from **Kealakekua**, a marine-life preserve that's the island's best diving spot, down to **Honaunau**, where a national historic park recalls the days of old Hawaii. Accommodations in this area are mainly B&Bs. This coast is a great place to stay if you want to get away from crowds and experience peaceful country living. You'll be within driving distance of beaches and the sites of Kailua.

THE KOHALA COAST ★★

Fringes of palms and flowers, brilliant blankets of emerald green, and an occasional flash of white buildings are your only clues from the road that this black-lava coast north of Kona is more than bleak and barren. But, oh, is it! Down by the sea, pleasure domes rise like palaces no Hawaiian king ever imagined. This is where the Lear jet—set escapes to play in world-class beachfront hotels set like jewels in the golden sand. But you don't have to be a billionaire to visit the Waikoloa, Mauna Lani, and Mauna Kea resorts: The fabulous beaches and abundant historic sites are open to the public, with parking and other facilities, including restaurants, golf courses, and shopping, provided by the resorts.

NORTH KOHALA ★★

Seven sugar mills once shipped enough sugar from three harbors on this knob of land to sweeten all the coffee in San Francisco. **Hawi**, the region's hub and home to the Kohala Sugar Co., was a flourishing town. Today Hawi's quaint, 3-block-long strip of sun-faded, false-fronted buildings and 1920s vintage shops lives on as a minor tourist stop in one of Hawaii's most scenic rural regions, located at the northernmost reaches of the island. North Kohala is most famous as the birthplace of King Kamehameha the Great; a statue commemorates the royal site. It's also home to the islands' most sacred site, the 1,500-year-old **Mo'okini Heiau**.

WAIMEA (KAMUELA) ★★

This old upcountry cow town on the northern road between the coasts is set in lovely country: rolling green pastures, wide-open spaces dotted by *puu* (hills), and real cowpokes who ride mammoth **Parker Ranch**, Hawaii's largest working ranch. The town is also headquarters for the **Keck Telescope**, the largest and most powerful in the world. Waimea is home to several affordable B&Bs, and Merriman's restaurant is a popular foodie outpost at Opelo Plaza.

THE HAMAKUA COAST ★★

This emerald coast, a 52-mile stretch from Honokaa to Hilo on the island's windward northeast side, was once planted with sugar cane; it now blooms with flowers, macadamia nuts, papayas, and marijuana, also known as *pakalolo* (still Hawaii's number-one cash crop). Resort-free and virtually without beaches, the Hamakua Coast still has a few major destinations. Picture-perfect **Waipio Valley** has impossibly steep sides, taro patches, a green riot of wild plants, and a winding stream leading to a broad, black-sand beach; and the historic plantation town of **Honokaa** is making a comeback as the B&B capital on the coastal trail. **Akaka Falls** and **Laupahoehoe Beach Park** are also worth seeking out.

HILO ★★

When the sun shines in Hilo, it's one of the most beautiful tropical cities in the Pacific. Being here is an entirely different kind of island experience: Hawaii's largest metropolis after Honolulu is a quaint, misty, flower-filled city of Victorian houses overlooking a half-moon bay, with a restored historic downtown and a clear view of Mauna Loa's often snowcapped peak. Hilo catches everyone's eye until it rains—it rains a lot in Hilo, and when it rains, it pours.

Hilo is one of America's wettest towns, with 128 inches of rain annually. It's ideal for growing ferns, orchids, and anthuriums, but not for catching a few rays. But there's a lot to see and do in Hilo, so grab your umbrella. The rain is warm (the temperature seldom dips below 70°F/21°C), and there's usually a rainbow afterward.

Hilo's oversize airport and hotels are remnants of a dream: The city wanted to be Hawaii's major port of entry. That didn't happen, but the facilities here are excellent. Hilo is also Hawaii's best bargain for budget travelers. It has plenty of hotel rooms—most of the year, that is. Hilo's magic moment comes in spring, the week after Easter, when hula *halau* (schools) arrive for the annual Merrie Monarch Hula Festival hula competition (see “Big Island Calendar of Events,” later in this chapter). This is a full-on Hawaiian spectacle and a wonderful cultural event. Plan ahead if you want to go: Tickets are sold out by the first week in January, and the hotels within 30 miles are usually booked solid.

Hilo is also the gateway to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park; it's just an hour's drive up-slope.

HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK ★★

This is America's most exciting national park, where a live volcano called Kilauea erupts daily. If you're lucky, it will be a spectacular sight. At other times, you may not be able to see the molten lava at all, but there's always a lot to see and learn. Ideally, you should plan to spend 3 days at the park exploring the trails, watching the volcano, visiting the rainforest, and just enjoying this spectacular place. But even if you have only a day, get here—it's worth the trip. Bring your sweats or jacket (honest!); it's cool up here, especially at night.

If you plan to dally in the park, plan to stay in the sleepy hamlet of Volcano Village, just outside the National Park entrance. Several terrifically cozy B&Bs, some with fireplaces, hide under tree ferns in this cool mountain hideaway. The tiny highland community (elev. 4,000 ft.), first settled by Japanese immigrants, is now inhabited by artists, soul-searchers, and others who like the crisp air of Hawaii's high country. It has just enough civilization to sustain a good life: a few stores, a handful of eateries, a gas station, and a golf course.

KA LAE: SOUTH POINT ★★

This is the Plymouth Rock of Hawaii, where the first Polynesians arrived in seagoing canoes, probably from the Marquesas Islands or Tahiti, around A.D. 500. You'll feel like you're at the end of the world on this lonely, windswept place, the southernmost point of

the United States (a geographic claim that belonged to Key West, Florida, before Hawaii became a state). Hawaii ends in a sharp, black-lava point. Bold 500-foot cliffs stand against the blue sea to the west and shelter the old fishing village of Waiahukini, which was populated from A.D. 750 until the 1860s. Ancient canoe moorings, shelter caves, and *heiau* (temples) poke through windblown pili grass. The east coast curves inland to reveal a green-sand beach, a world-famous anomaly that's accessible only by foot or four-wheel-drive. For most, the only reason to venture down to the southern tip is to experience the empty vista of land's end.

Everything in **Naalehu** and **Waiohinu**, the two wide spots in the road that pass for towns at South Point, claims to be the southernmost this or that. Except for a monkeypod tree planted by Mark Twain in 1866, there's not much else to crow about. There is, thankfully, a gas station, along with a couple of places to eat, a fruit stand, and a few B&Bs. These end-of-the-world towns are just about as far removed from the real world as you can get.

2 Visitor Information

The **Big Island Visitors Bureau** has two offices on the Big Island: one at 250 Keawe St., Hilo, HI 96720 (☎ **808/961-5797**; fax 808/961-2126), and on the other side of the island at 250 Waikoloa Beach Dr., Waikoloa, HI 96738 (☎ **808/886-1652**). Its website is www.bigisland.org.

On the west side of the island, there are two additional sources to contact for information: the **Kona-Kohala Resort Association**, 68–1310 Mauna Lani Dr., suite 101, Kahala Coast, HI 96743 (☎ **800/318-3637** or 808/885-6414; fax 808/885-6145; www.kohalacoastresorts.com); and **Destination Kona**, P.O. Box 2850, Kailua-Kona, HI 96745 (☎ **808/322-6809**; fax 808/322-8899). On the east side, you can contact **Destination Hilo**, P.O. Box 1391, Hilo, HI 96721 (☎ **808/935-5294**; fax 808/969-1984). And in the middle, contact the **Waimea Visitor Center**, P.O. Box 6570, Kamuela, HI 96743 (☎ **808/885-6707**; fax 808/885-0885).

The Big Island's best free tourist publications are *This Week*, the *Beach and Activity Guide*, and *101 Things to Do on Hawaii the Big Island*. All three offer lots of useful information, as well as discount coupons on a variety of island adventures. Copies are easy to find all around the island.

The *Beach and Activity Guide* is affiliated with the **Activity Connection**, Bougainvillea Plaza, Suite 102, 75–5656 Kuakini Hwy.,

Kailua-Kona (☎ **800/459-7156** or 808/329-1038; fax 808/327-9411; www.beachactivityguide.com), a discount activities desk offering real savings (no fees, no timeshares) of up to 15% on activities including island tours, snorkel and dive trips, submarine and horseback rides, luau, and more. The office is open daily from 7:30am to 5:30pm.

3 Entry Requirements

PASSPORTS

For information on how to get a passport, go to “**Passports**” in the “**Fast Facts**” section of this chapter—the websites listed provide downloadable passport applications as well as the current fees for processing passport applications. For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the “Foreign Entry Requirement” Web page of the U.S. State Department at <http://travel.state.gov>. International visitors can obtain a visa application at the same website. **Note:** Children are required to present a passport when entering the United States at airports. More information on obtaining a passport for a minor can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

VISAS

For specifics on how to get a visa, go to “**Visas**” in the “**Fast Facts**” section of this chapter.

The U.S. State Department has a **Visa Waiver Program (VWP)** allowing citizens of the following countries (at press time) to enter the United States without a visa for stays of up to 90 days: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg,

U.S. Entry: Passport Required

New regulations issued by the Homeland Security Department now require virtually every air traveler entering the U.S. to show a passport—and future regulations will cover land and sea entry as well. As of January 23, 2007, all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda are required to present a valid passport. Similar regulations for those traveling by land or sea (including ferries) are expected as early as January 1, 2008.

Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Canadian citizens may enter the United States without visas; they will need to show passports and proof of residence, however. **Note:** Any passport issued on or after October 26, 2006, by a VWP country must be an **e-Passport** for VWP travelers to be eligible to enter the U.S. without a visa. Citizens of these nations also need to present a round-trip air or cruise ticket upon arrival. E-Passports contain computer chips capable of storing biometric information, such as the required digital photograph of the holder. (You can identify an e-Passport by the symbol on the bottom center cover of your passport.) If your passport doesn't have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if it is a valid passport issued before October 26, 2005, and includes a machine-readable zone, or between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, and includes a digital photograph. For more information, go to www.travel.state.gov/visa.

Citizens of all other countries must have (1) a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of their visit to the United States and (2) a tourist visa, which may be obtained without charge from any U.S. consulate.

As of January 2004, many international visitors traveling on visas to the United States will be photographed and fingerprinted on arrival at Customs in airports and on cruise ships in a program created by the Department of Homeland Security called **US-VISIT**. Exempt from the extra scrutiny are visitors entering by land or those that don't require a visa for short-term visits. For more information, go to the Homeland Security website at www.dhs.gov/dhspublic.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into the United States. If you have a medical condition that requires **syringe-administered medications**, carry a valid signed prescription from your physician; syringes in carry-on baggage will be inspected. Insulin in any form should have the proper pharmaceutical documentation. If you have a disease that requires treatment with **narcotics**, you should also carry documented proof with you—smuggling narcotics aboard a plane carries severe penalties in the U.S.

For **HIV-positive visitors**, requirements for entering the United States are somewhat vague and change frequently. For up-to-the-minute information, contact **AIDSinfo** (☎ 800/448-0440 or 301/519-6616 outside the U.S.; www.aidsinfo.nih.gov) or the **Gay Men's Health Crisis** (☎ 212/367-1000; www.gmhc.org).

CUSTOMS

For information on what you can bring into and take out of Hawaii, go to “**Customs**” in the “**Fast Facts**” section of this chapter.

4 When to Go

Most visitors don't come to Hawaii when the weather's best in the islands; rather, they come when it's at its worst everywhere else. Thus, the **high season**—when prices are up and resorts are often booked to capacity—is generally from mid-December through March or mid-April. The last 2 weeks of December, in particular, are the prime time for travel to Hawaii. If you're planning a holiday trip, make your reservations as early as possible, expect crowds, and prepare to pay top dollar for accommodations, car rentals, and airfare.

The **off season**, when the best rates are available and the islands are less crowded, is spring (mid-Apr to mid-June) and fall (Sept to mid-Dec)—a paradox because these are the best seasons to be in Hawaii, in terms of reliably great weather. If you're looking to save money, or if you just want to avoid the crowds, this is the time to visit. Hotel rates and airfares tend to be significantly lower, and good packages are often available.

Note: If you plan to come to Hawaii between the last week in April and early May, be sure you book your accommodations, inter-island air reservations, and car rentals in advance. In Japan, the last week of April is called **Golden Week** because three Japanese holidays take place one after the other. Waikiki is especially busy with Japanese tourists during this time, but the neighboring islands also see dramatic increases.

Due to the large number of families traveling in **summer** (June–Aug), you won't get the fantastic bargains of spring and fall. However, you'll still do much better on packages, airfare, and accommodations than you will in the winter months.

CLIMATE

Because Hawaii lies at the edge of the tropical zone, it technically has only two seasons, both of them warm. There's a dry season that

corresponds to **summer** (Apr–Oct) and a rainy season in **winter** (Nov–Mar). It rains every day somewhere in the islands any time of the year, but the rainy season sometimes brings enough gray weather to spoil your tanning opportunities. Fortunately, it seldom rains in one spot for more than 3 days straight.

The **year-round temperature** doesn't vary much. At the beach, the average daytime high in summer is 85°F (29°C), while the average daytime high in winter is 78°F (26°C); nighttime lows are usually about 10°F cooler. But how warm it is on any given day really depends on *where* you are on the island.

Each island has a leeward side (the side sheltered from the wind) and a windward side (the side that gets the wind's full force). The **leeward** sides (the west and south) are usually hot and dry, while the **windward** sides (east and north) are generally cooler and moist. When you want arid, sunbaked, desertlike weather, go leeward. When you want lush, wet, junglelike weather, go windward.

Hawaii is also full of **microclimates**, thanks to its interior valleys, coastal plains, and mountain peaks. Kauai's Mount Waialeale is the wettest spot on earth, yet Waimea Canyon, just a few miles away, is almost a desert. On the Big Island, Hilo is one of the wettest cities in the nation, with 180 inches of rainfall a year, but at Puako, only 60 miles away, it rains less than 6 inches a year. If you travel into the mountains, the climate can change from summer to winter in a matter of hours because it's cooler the higher you go. So if the weather doesn't suit you, just go to the other side of the island—or head into the hills.

On rare occasions, the weather can be disastrous, as when Hurricane Iniki crushed Kauai in September 1992 with 225-mph winds. Tsunamis have swept Hilo and the south shore of Oahu. But those are extreme exceptions. Mostly, one day follows another here in glorious, sunny procession, each quite like the other.

HOLIDAYS

When Hawaii observes holidays (especially those over a long weekend), travel between the islands increases, interisland airline seats are fully booked, rental cars are at a premium, and hotels and restaurants are busier.

Federal, state, and county government offices are closed on all federal holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), the third Monday in January (Martin Luther King, Jr., Day), the third Monday in February (Presidents' Day, Washington's Birthday), the last Monday in May (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day), the first Monday

in September (Labor Day), the second Monday in October (Columbus Day), November 11 (Veterans Day), the fourth Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day), and December 25 (Christmas).

State and county offices are also closed on local holidays, including Prince Kuhio Day (Mar 26), honoring the birthday of Hawaii's first delegate to the U.S. Congress; King Kamehameha Day (June 11), a statewide holiday commemorating Kamehameha the Great, who united the islands and ruled from 1795 to 1819; and Admissions Day (third Fri in Aug), which honors the admittance of Hawaii as the 50th state on August 21, 1959.

Other special days celebrated in Hawaii by many people but which involve no closing of federal, state, and county offices are the Chinese New Year (which can fall in Jan or Feb; in 2008, it's Feb 7), Girls' Day (Mar 3), Buddha's Birthday (Apr 8), Father Damien's Day (Apr 15), Boys' Day (May 5), Samoan Flag Day (in Aug), Aloha Festivals (in Sept and Oct), and Pearl Harbor Day (Dec 7).

BIG ISLAND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please note that, as with any schedule of upcoming events, the following information is subject to change; always confirm the details before you plan your trip around an event.

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those mentioned here, check www.calendar.gohawaii.com for a list of events throughout the islands, or <http://events.frommers.com>, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

March

Daylight saving time begins. Since 1966, most of the United States has observed daylight saving time from 2am on the first Sunday of April to 2am on the last Sunday of October. In 2007, these dates changed, and now daylight saving time lasts from 2am on the second Sunday in March to 2am on the first Sunday in November. Hawaii does *not* observe daylight saving time. So beginning on March 9, 2008, Hawaii is 3 hours behind the West Coast and 6 hours behind the East Coast.

Kona Brewer's Festival, King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel Luau Grounds, Kailua-Kona. This annual event features micro-breweries from around the world, with beer tastings, food, and entertainment. Call ☎ **808/334-1133**. Second Saturday in March.

Annual Kona Chocolate Festival, Kona. A 3-day celebration of the chocolate (cacao) that is grown and produced in Hawaii. Days 1 and 2 are filled with symposiums and seminars on chocolate and its uses. Day 3 features a Gala party with samples of

chocolate creations by Big Island chefs, caterers, and ice cream and candy makers. A chocoholic's dream! For information and tickets, call ☎ **808/324-4606** or visit www.konachocolatefestival.com. Mid- to late March.

Prince Kuhio Day Celebrations, various locations. State holiday. Various festivals throughout the state celebrate the birth of Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaʻole, who was born on March 26, 1871, and elected to Congress in 1902. Kauai, his birthplace, stages a huge celebration in Lihue; call ☎ **808/240-6369** for details. Molokai also hosts a 2-day-long celebration; call ☎ **808/553-3876** to learn more. March 26.

April

Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, Hilo. Hawaii's biggest hula festival features 3 nights of modern (*auana*) and ancient (*kahiko*) dance competition in honor of King David Kalakaua, the "Merrie Monarch" who revived the dance. Tickets sell out by January 30, so reserve early. Call ☎ **808/935-9168**; www.merriemonarchfestival.org. The week after Easter (Mar 23–30, 2008).

May

Outrigger Canoe Season, various locations. From May to September, canoe paddlers across the state participate in outrigger canoe races nearly every weekend. Call ☎ **808/383-7798**, or go to www.y2kanu.com for this year's schedule of events.

Annual Lei Day Celebrations, various locations. May Day is Lei Day in Hawaii, celebrated with lei-making contests, pageantry, arts and crafts, and the real highlight, a Brothers Cazimero concert at the Waikiki Shell. Call ☎ **808/692-5118** or visit www.honolulu.gov/parks/programs/leiday for Oahu events (☎ **808/597-1888**, ext. 232, for the Brothers Cazimero show; ☎ **808/886-1655** for Big Island events; ☎ **808/224-6042** for Maui events; or ☎ **808/245-6931** for Kauai events). May 1.

June

King Kamehameha Celebration. This state holiday features a massive floral parade, *hoolaulea* (party), and much more. Call ☎ **808/586-0333** for Big Island events, or visit www.state.hi.us/dags/kkcc.

Great Waikoloa Food, Wine & Music Festival, Hilton Waikoloa Village. One of the Big Island's best food and wine festivals features Hawaii's top chefs (and a few mainland chefs) showing off their culinary talents, wines from around the world, and an excellent jazz concert with fireworks. Not to be missed.

Call ☎ **808/886-1234** or visit www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com or www.dolphindays.com. Mid-June.

August

Puukohola Heiau National Historic Site Anniversary Celebration, Kawaihae. This is a weekend of Hawaiian crafts, workshops, and games. Call ☎ **808/882-7218**. Mid-August (Aug 16–17, 2008).

Admissions Day. Hawaii became the 50th state on August 21, 1959. The state takes a holiday (all state-related facilities are closed) on the third Friday in August (Aug 15, 2008).

September

Queen Liliuokalani Canoe Race, Kailua-Kona to Honaunau. The world's largest long-distance canoe race takes place over Labor Day weekend, with hundreds participating. Call ☎ **808/331-8849** or visit www.kaiopua.org.

Parker Ranch Rodeo, Waimea. This is a hot rodeo competition in the heart of cowboy country. Call ☎ **808/885-7311** or go to www.parkerranch.com. Labor Day Weekend (Aug 30–Sept 1, 2008).

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival, Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa, Kona. The best of Hawaii's folk music (slack-key guitar) performed by the best musicians in Hawaii. It's 5 hours long and absolutely free. Call ☎ **808/239-4336** or e-mail kahokuproductions@yahoo.com. September 7, 2008.

Aloha Festivals, various locations. Parades and other events celebrate Hawaiian culture and friendliness throughout the state. Call ☎ **808/589-1771** or visit www.alohafestivals.com for a schedule of events.

Aloha Festivals Poke Recipe Contest, Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel, Mauna Kea Beach Resort, Kohala Coast. Top chefs from across Hawaii and the U.S. mainland, as well as local amateurs, compete in making this Hawaiian delicacy, poke (pronounced *po-kay*): chopped raw fish mixed with seaweed and spices. Here's your chance to sample poke at its best. Call ☎ **808/880-3424** or visit www.pokecontest.com.

October

Hamakua Music Festival, Hamakua. This event features a surprisingly eclectic mix of well-known musicians, ranging from blues and jazz to rock 'n' roll, Hawaiian, and even classical. At press time, the festival was in the midst of reorganization, so first call ☎ **808/775-3378** or check at www.hamakuamusicfestival.org.

Ironman Triathlon World Championship, Kailua-Kona. Some 1,500-plus world-class athletes run a full marathon, swim 2½ miles, and bike 112 miles on the Kona-Kohala coast of the Big Island. Spectators can watch the action along the route for free. The best place to see the 7am start is along the seawall on Alii Drive, facing Kailua Bay; arrive before 5:30am to get a seat. The best place to see the bike-and-run portion is along Alii Drive (which will be closed to traffic; park on a side street and walk down). To watch the finishers come in, line up along Alii Drive from Holualoa Street to the finish at Palani Road/Alii Drive; the first finisher can come as early as 2:30pm, and the course closes at midnight. Call ☎ **808/329-0063** or visit www.ironman.com. October. (As we went to press, they did not have a confirmed date, so check the website.)

November

Daylight saving time ends. Beginning in 2007, most of the U.S. will revert to standard time on the first Sunday in November. Since Hawaii does not observe daylight saving time, starting on November 4, 2008, Hawaii will be 2 hours behind the West Coast and 5 hours behind the East Coast.

Annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival, Kailua-Kona. Celebrate the coffee harvest with a bean-picking contest, lei contests, song and dance, and the Miss Kona Coffee pageant. Call ☎ **808/326-7820** or go to www.konacoffeefest.com for this year's schedule.

Hawaii International Film Festival, various locations. This cinema festival with a cross-cultural spin features filmmakers from Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the United States. Call ☎ **808/550-8457** or visit www.hiff.org. First 2 weeks in November.

Annual Invitational Wreath Exhibit, Volcano Art Center, Volcano National Park. Thirty-two artists, including painters, sculptors, glass artists, fiber artists, and potters, produce wreaths in a wide variety of styles for this exhibit. Park entrance fees apply. Call ☎ **866/967-7565** or 808/967-7565; www.volcanoartcenter.org. Mid-November through the first of January.

5 Getting There

BY PLANE

Most major U.S. and many international carriers fly to Honolulu International Airport. Some also offer direct flights to Kailua-Kona, on the Big Island.

United Airlines (☎ **800/225-5825**; www.ual.com) offers the most frequent service from the U.S. mainland, flying not only to

Honolulu, but also offering nonstop flights from Los Angeles and San Francisco to the Big Island, Maui, and Kauai. **Aloha Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5250 or 808/484-1111; www.alohaairlines.com) has direct flights from Oakland to Maui, Kona, and Honolulu, and from Orange County, California, to Honolulu, Kona, and Maui. Aloha also offers connecting flights from Las Vegas to Oakland and Orange County. **American Airlines** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.americanair.com) offers flights from Dallas, Chicago, San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and St. Louis to Honolulu, plus several direct flights to Maui and Kona. **ATA/code sharing with Southwest Airlines** (☎ 800/I-FLY-ATA or 800/435-9282; www.ata.com) has direct flights to Honolulu from Oakland, Los Angeles, Orange County, Las Vegas, and Phoenix; direct flights to Maui from Oakland, Orange County, and Phoenix; and direct flights from Oakland to Kona, Hilo, and Lihue. **Continental Airlines** (☎ 800/231-0856; www.continental.com) offers the only daily nonstop from the New York area (Newark) to Honolulu. **Delta Air Lines** (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com) flies nonstop from the West Coast and from Houston and Cincinnati. **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com) offers nonstop flights to Honolulu from several West Coast cities (including new service from San Diego), plus nonstop flights from Los Angeles to Maui. **Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com) has a daily nonstop from Detroit to Honolulu.

Airlines serving Hawaii from places other than the U.S. mainland include **Air Canada** (☎ 800/776-3000; www.aircanada.ca); **Air New Zealand** (☎ 0800/737-000 in Auckland, 643/379-5200 in Christchurch, 800/926-7255 in the U.S.; www.airnewzealand.com); **Qantas** (☎ 008/177-767 in Australia, 800/227-4500 in the U.S.; www.qantas.com.au); **Japan Air Lines** (☎ 03/5489-1111 in Tokyo, 800/525-3663 in the U.S.; www.japanair.com); **All Nippon Airways (ANA)** (☎ 03/5489-1212 in Tokyo, 800/235-9262 in the U.S.; www.fly-ana.com); **China Airlines** (☎ 02/715-1212 in Taipei, 800/227-5118 in the U.S.; www.china-airlines.com); **Air Pacific**, serving Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific (☎ 800/227-4446; www.airpacific.com); **Korean Air** (☎ 02/656-2000 in Seoul, 800/223-1155 on the East Coast, 800/421-8200 on the West Coast, 800/438-5000 from Hawaii; www.koreanair.com); and **Philippine Airlines** (☎ 631/816-6691 in Manila, 800/435-9725 in the U.S.; www.philippineairlines.com).

Operated by the European Travel Network, **www.discount-tickets.com** is a great online source for regular and discounted

airfares to destinations around the world. You can also use this site to compare rates and book accommodations, car rentals, and tours.

If you're traveling in the United States beyond Hawaii, some large American airlines—such as **American, Delta, Northwest, and United**—offer travelers on transatlantic or transpacific flights special discount tickets under the name **Visit USA**, allowing travel between any U.S. destinations at reduced rates. These tickets must be purchased before you leave your foreign point of departure. This system is the best, easiest, and fastest way to see the United States at low cost. You should obtain information well in advance from your travel agent or the office of the airline concerned, since the conditions attached to these discount tickets can change without advance notice.

Locally, **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com) flies nonstop to Sydney, Tahiti, and American Samoa.

Visitors arriving by air should cultivate patience and resignation before setting foot on U.S. soil. Getting through immigration control may take as long as 2 hours on some days, especially summer weekends. Add the time it takes to clear Customs, and you'll see that you should make a very generous allowance for delay in planning connections between international and domestic flights—an average of 2 to 3 hours at least.

AGRICULTURAL SCREENING AT THE AIRPORTS At Honolulu International and the neighbor-island airports, baggage and passengers bound for the mainland must be screened by agricultural officials. Officials will confiscate local produce like fresh avocados, bananas, and mangoes, in the name of fruit-fly control. Pineapples, coconuts, and papayas inspected and certified for export; boxed flowers; leis without seeds; and processed foods (macadamia nuts, coffee, jams, dried fruit, and the like) will pass.

ARRIVING AT THE AIRPORT

The Big Island has two major airports for jet traffic between the islands: **Kona International Airport** and **Hilo International Airport**.

The **Kona Airport** receives direct overseas flights from Japan on **Japan Airlines** (☎ 800/525-3663; www.jal.co.jp/en) and Vancouver on **Air Canada** (☎ 888/247-2262; www.aircanada.com). Carriers from the mainland include **Aloha Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5250; www.alohaairlines.com), with nonstop flights to Oakland and Orange County, both in California; **American Airlines** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com), with flights to Los Angeles; **Delta**

Airlines (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com), with nonstop flights from Salt Lake City (originating in Atlanta); **Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com), with flights from Seattle; **U.S. Airways/American West** (☎ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com), with flights from Phoenix; and **United Airlines** (☎ 800/241-6522; www.united.com), with nonstop flights from Denver, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and a direct flight to Chicago.

Hilo Airport has a direct flight from Oakland via **ATA** (☎ 800/435-9282; www.ata.com), which code-shares with **Southwest Airlines**.

If you cannot get a direct flight to the Big Island, you'll have to pick up an interisland flight in Honolulu: **Aloha Airlines** (see above), **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com), and **go!** (☎ 888/IFLYGO2; www.iflygo.com) offer jet service to both Big Island airports. All major rental companies have cars available at both airports. See "Getting Around," later in this chapter, for more details on interisland travel and car rentals.

IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS CLEARANCE Foreign visitors arriving by air, no matter what the port of entry, should cultivate patience and resignation before setting foot on U.S. soil. U.S. airports have considerably beefed up security clearances in the years since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and clearing Customs and Immigration can take as long as 2 hours.

People traveling by air from Canada, Bermuda, and certain Caribbean countries can sometimes clear Customs and Immigration at the point of departure, which is much faster.

6 Money

It's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM.

ATMS

Nationwide, the easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash machine" or "cashpoint." ATMs are everywhere in Hawaii—at banks, supermarkets, Long's Drugs, and Honolulu International Airport, and in some resorts and shopping centers. The **Cirrus** (☎ 800/424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (☎ 800/843-7587;

www.visa.com) networks span the country; you can find them even in remote regions. Go to your bank card's website to find ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

Note: Many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee is often higher for international transactions (up to \$5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than \$2). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. To compare banks' ATM fees within the U.S., use **www.bankrate.com**. Visitors from outside the U.S. should also find out whether their bank assesses a 1% to 3% fee on charges incurred abroad.

CREDIT CARDS & DEBIT CARDS

Credit cards are the most widely used form of payment in the United States: **Visa** (Barclaycard in Britain), **MasterCard** (EuroCard in Europe, Access in Britain, Chargex in Canada), **American Express**, **Diners Club**, and **Discover**. They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses and offer relatively good exchange rates. You can withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, but high fees make credit card cash advances a pricey way to get cash.

It's highly recommended that you travel with at least one major credit card. You must have a credit card to rent a car, and hotels and airlines usually require a credit card imprint as a deposit against expenses.

ATM cards with major credit card backing, known as "**debit cards**," are now a commonly acceptable form of payment in most stores and restaurants. Debit cards draw money directly from your checking account. Some stores enable you to receive cash back on your debit card purchases as well. The same is true at most U.S. post offices.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Though credit cards and debit cards are more often used, traveler's checks are still widely accepted in the U.S. Foreign visitors should make sure that traveler's checks are denominated in U.S. dollars; foreign-currency checks are often difficult to exchange.

You can buy traveler's checks at most banks. Most are offered in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and sometimes \$1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (☎ 800/807-6233; ☎ 800/221-7282 for card holders—this number accepts collect calls, offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts Amex gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee.); **Visa** (☎ 800/732-1322—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a \$9.95 fee for checks up to \$1,500 at most AAA offices or by calling ☎ 866/339-3378); and **MasterCard** (☎ 800/223-9920).

Be sure to keep a copy of the traveler's checks serial numbers separate from your checks in case they are stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

Another option is the new **prepaid traveler's check cards**, reloadable cards that work much like debit cards but aren't linked to your checking account. The **American Express Travelers Cheque Card**, for example, requires a minimum deposit (\$300), sets a maximum balance (\$2,750), and has a one-time issuance fee of \$14.95. You can withdraw money from an ATM (\$2.50 per transaction, not including bank fees), and the funds can be purchased in dollars, euros, or pounds. If you lose the card, your available funds will be refunded within 24 hours.

7 Travel Insurance

The cost of travel insurance varies widely, depending on the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but expect to pay between 5% and 8% of the vacation itself. You can get estimates from various providers through **Insure-MyTrip.com**. Enter your trip cost and dates, your age, and other information, for prices from more than a dozen companies.

For **U.K. citizens**, insurance is always advisable when traveling in the States. Travelers or families who make more than one trip abroad per year may find an annual travel insurance policy works out cheaper. Check **www.moneysupermarket.com**, which compares prices across a wide range of providers for single- and multitrip policies.

Most big travel agents offer their own insurance and will probably try to sell you their package when you book a holiday. Think before you sign. **Britain's Consumers' Association** recommends that you insist on seeing the policy and reading the fine print before buying travel insurance. **The Association of British Insurers** (☎ 020/7600-3333; www.abi.org.uk) gives advice by phone and publishes *Holiday Insurance*, a free guide to policy provisions and

prices. You might also shop around for better deals: Try **Columbus Direct** (☎ 0870/033-9988; www.columbusdirect.net).

TRIP-CANCELLATION INSURANCE

Trip-cancellation insurance will help retrieve your money if you have to back out of a trip or depart early, or if your travel supplier goes bankrupt. Trip cancellation traditionally covers such events as sickness, natural disasters, and State Department advisories. The latest news in trip-cancellation insurance is the availability of **expanded hurricane coverage** and the “**any-reason**” cancellation coverage—which costs more but covers cancellations made for any reason. You won’t get back 100% of your prepaid trip cost, but you’ll be refunded a substantial portion. **TravelSafe** (☎ 888/885-7233; www.travel-safe.com) offers both types of coverage. Expedia also offers any-reason cancellation coverage for its air-hotel packages.

For details, contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (☎ 866/807-3982; www.accessamerica.com), **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800/826-4919; www.travelguard.com), **Travel Insured International** (☎ 800/243-3174; www.travelinsured.com), and **Travelex Insurance Services** (☎ 888/457-4602; www.travelex-insurance.com).

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Although it’s not required of travelers, health insurance is highly recommended. Most health insurance policies cover you if you get sick away from home—but check your coverage before you leave.

International visitors should note that, unlike many European countries, the United States does not usually offer free or low-cost medical care to its citizens or visitors. Doctors and hospitals are expensive and, in most cases, will require advance payment or proof of coverage before they render their services. Good policies will cover the costs of an accident, repatriation, or death. Packages such as **Europ Assistance’s “Worldwide Healthcare Plan”** are sold by European automobile clubs and travel agencies at attractive rates. **Worldwide Assistance Services, Inc.** (☎ 800/777-8710; www.worldwideassistance.com) is the agent for Europ Assistance in the United States.

Though lack of health insurance may prevent you from being admitted to a hospital in nonemergencies, don’t worry about being left on a street corner to die: The American way is to fix you now and bill the living daylight out of you later.

If you're ever hospitalized more than 150 miles from home, **MedjetAssist** (☎ 800/527-7478; www.medjetassistance.com) will pick you up and fly you to the hospital of your choice in a medically equipped and staffed aircraft 24 hours day, 7 days a week. Annual memberships are \$225 individual, \$350 family; you can also purchase short-term memberships.

Canadians should check with their provincial health plan offices or call **Health Canada** (☎ 866/225-0709; www.hc-sc.gc.ca) to find out the extent of their coverage and what documentation and receipts they must take home in case they are treated in the United States.

LOST-LUGGAGE INSURANCE

On flights within the U.S., checked baggage is covered up to \$2,500 per ticketed passenger. On flights outside the U.S. (and on U.S. portions of international trips), baggage coverage is limited to approximately \$9.07 per pound, up to approximately \$635 per checked bag. If you plan to check items more valuable than what's covered by the standard liability, see if your homeowner's policy covers your valuables, get baggage insurance as part of your comprehensive travel-insurance package, or buy Travel Guard's "BagTrak" product.

If your luggage is lost, immediately file a lost-luggage claim at the airport, detailing the luggage contents. Most airlines require that you report delayed, damaged, or lost baggage within 4 hours of arrival. The airlines are required to deliver luggage, once found, directly to your house or destination free of charge.

8 Specialized Travel Resources

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling in the U.S. There are more options and resources out there than ever before.

Travelers with disabilities are made to feel very welcome in Hawaii. There are more than 2,000 ramped curbs in Oahu alone, hotels are usually equipped with wheelchair-accessible rooms, and tour companies provide many special services. The **Hawaii Center for Independent Living**, 414 Kauwili St., Suite 102, Honolulu, HI 96817 (☎ 808/522-5400; fax 808/586-8129), can provide information.

The only travel agency in Hawaii specializing in needs for travelers with disabilities is **Access Aloha Travel** (☎ 800/480-1143; www.accessalohatravel.com), which can book anything, including rental vans (available on Maui and Oahu only), accommodations, tours, cruises, airfare, and anything else you can think of.

The **America the Beautiful—National Park and Federal Recreational Lands Pass—Access Pass** (formerly the **Golden Access Passport**) gives the visually impaired persons or those with permanent disabilities (regardless of age) free lifetime entrance to federal recreation sites administered by the National Park Service, including the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation. This may include national parks, monuments, historic sites, recreation areas, and national wildlife refuges.

The America the Beautiful Access Pass can be obtained only in person at any NPS facility that charges an entrance fee. You need to show proof of medically determined disability. Besides free entry, the pass offers a 50% discount on some federal-use fees charged for such facilities as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours. For more information, go to www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm or call ☎ **888/467-2757**.

Organizations that offer a vast range of resources and assistance to travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab** (☎ **800/CALL-MOSS**; www.mossresourcenet.org), the **American Foundation for the Blind** (AFB; ☎ **800/232-5463**; www.afb.org), and **SATH** (**Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality**; ☎ **212/447-7284**; www.sath.org). **AirAmbulanceCard.com** is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

Access-Able Travel Source (☎ **303/232-2979**; www.accessable.com) offers a comprehensive database on travel agents from around the world with experience in accessible travel, destination-specific access information, and links to such resources as service animals, equipment rentals, and access guides.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ **507/451-5005**; www.flyingwheelstravel.com) and **Accessible Journeys** (☎ **800/846-4537** or **610/521-0339**; www.disabilitytravel.com).

Flying with Disability (www.flying-with-disability.org) is a comprehensive information source on airplane travel. **Avis Rent a Car** (☎ **888/879-4273**) has an “Avis Access” program that offers services for customers with special travel needs. These include specially outfitted vehicles with swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls; mobility scooter rentals; and accessible bus service. Be sure to reserve well in advance.

Also check out the quarterly magazine *Emerging Horizons* (www.emerginghorizons.com), available by subscription (\$16.95 year U.S.; \$21.95 outside U.S.).

The “Accessible Travel” link at **Mobility-Advisor.com** (www.mobility-advisor.com) offers a variety of travel resources to persons with disabilities.

British travelers should contact **Holiday Care** (☎ 0845-124-9971 in U.K. only; www.holidaycare.org.uk) to access a wide range of travel information and resources for elderly people and those with disabilities.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Hawaii is known for its acceptance of all groups. The number of gay- or lesbian-specific accommodations on the islands is limited, but most properties welcome gays and lesbians like any other travelers.

The Center, mailing address P.O. Box 22718, Honolulu, 96823, or 2424 S. Beretania St., between Isenberg and University, Honolulu (☎ 808/951-7000; fax 808/951-7001; www.thecenterhawaii.org), open Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm and on Saturday from noon to 4pm, is a referral center for nearly every kind of gay-related service you can think of, including the latest happenings on Oahu. Check out their community newspaper, *Outlook* (published quarterly), for information on local issues in the gay community in the islands.

For information on Kauai’s gay community and related events, contact the **Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Audio Bulletin Board** (☎ 808/823-6248).

For the Big Island, Oahu, Maui, and Kauai, check out the website for **Out in Hawaii**, www.outinhawaii.com, for vacation ideas and a calendar of events.

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA; ☎ 800/448-8550 or 954/776-2626; www.iglta.org) is the trade association for the gay and lesbian travel industry, and offers an online directory of gay- and lesbian-friendly travel businesses and tour operators.

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries specifically for gay and lesbian travelers. **Above and Beyond Tours** (☎ 800/397-2681; www.abovebeyondtours.com) are gay Australia tour specialists. San Francisco-based **Now, Voyager** (☎ 800/255-6951; www.nowvoyager.com) offers worldwide trips and cruises, and **Olivia** (☎ 800/631-6277; www.olivia.com) offers lesbian cruises and resort vacations.

Pacific Ocean Holidays (☎ 800/735-6600 or 808/944-4700; www.gayhawaiiivacations.com) offers vacation packages that feature gay-owned and gay-friendly lodgings. Also on their website is *A Guide for Gay Visitors & Kamaaina*.

Gay.com Travel (☎ 800/929-2268 or 415/644-8044; www.gay.com/travel or www.outandabout.com) is an excellent online successor to the popular *Out & About* print magazine. It provides regularly updated information about gay-owned, gay-oriented, and gay-friendly lodging, dining, sightseeing, nightlife, and shopping establishments in every important destination worldwide. British travelers should click on the “Travel” link at www.uk.gay.com for advice and gay-friendly trip ideas.

The Canadian website **GayTraveler** (gaytraveler.ca) offers ideas and advice for gay travel all over the world.

The following travel guides are available at many bookstores, or you can order them from any online bookseller: *Spartacus International Gay Guide, 35th Edition* (Bruno Gmünder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com/gayguide/) and *Odysseus: The International Gay Travel Planner, 17th Edition* (www.odysusa.com); and the *Damron* guides (www.damron.com), with separate annual books for gay men and lesbians.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Discounts for seniors are available at almost all of Hawaii’s major attractions and occasionally at hotels and restaurants. The Outrigger hotel chain, for instance, offers travelers ages 50 and older a 20% discount off regular published rates—and an additional 5% off for members of AARP. Always ask when making hotel reservations or buying tickets. And always carry identification with proof of your age—it can really pay off.

Members of **AARP**, 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (☎ 888/687-2277; www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP: The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

The U.S. National Park Service offers an **America the Beautiful—National Park and Federal Recreational Lands Pass—Senior Pass** (formerly the **Golden Age Passport**), which gives seniors 62 years or older lifetime entrance to all properties administered by the National Park Service—national parks, monuments, historic sites, recreation areas, and national wildlife refuges—for a one-time processing fee of \$10. The pass must be purchased in person at any NPS facility that

charges an entrance fee. Besides free entry, the America the Beautiful Senior Pass offers a 50% discount on some federal-use fees charged for such facilities as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours. For more information, go to www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm or call ☎ 888/467-2757.

Many reliable agencies and organizations target the 50-plus market. **Elderhostel** (☎ 800/454-5768; www.elderhostel.org) arranges worldwide study programs for those aged 55 and over. **ElderTreks** (☎ 800/741-7956 or 416/558-5000 outside North America; www.eldertreks.com) offers small-group tours to off-the-beaten-path or adventure-travel locations, restricted to travelers 50 and older.

Recommended publications offering travel resources and discounts for seniors include the quarterly magazine *Travel 50 & Beyond* (www.travel50andbeyond.com) and the bestselling paperback *Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can't Get Unless You're Over 50 2005–2006, 16th Edition* (McGraw-Hill), by Joann Rattner Heilman.

FAMILY TRAVEL

Hawaii is paradise for children: beaches to run on, water to splash in, and unusual sights to see. Be sure to look for the “kids” icon in each chapter for kid-friendly places to stay and family activities.

The larger hotels and resorts offer supervised programs for children and can refer you to qualified babysitters. By state law, hotels can accept only children ages 5 to 12 in supervised activities programs, but they often accommodate younger children by simply hiring babysitters to watch over them. You can also contact **People Attentive to Children (PATCH)**, which can refer you to babysitters who have taken a training course on child care. On Oahu call ☎ 808/839-1988; on the Big Island call ☎ 808/325-3864 in Kona or ☎ 808/961-3169 in Hilo; on Maui call ☎ 808/242-9232; on Kauai call ☎ 808/246-0622; on Molokai and Lanai call ☎ 800/498-4145; or visit www.patchhawaii.org.

Baby's Away (www.babysaway.com) rents cribs, strollers, high-chairs, playpens, infant seats, and the like on Maui (☎ 800/942-9030 or 808/875-9030), the Big Island (☎ 800/996-9030 or 808/987-9236), and Oahu (☎ 800/496-6386 or 808/222-6041). The staff will deliver whatever you need to wherever you're staying and pick it up when you're done.

To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, refer to the “Kids” icon throughout this guide.

Recommended family travel websites include **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com), a comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning; **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com), an online magazine providing travel tips; and **TravelWithYourKids.com** (www.travelwithyourkids.com), a comprehensive site written by parents for parents offering sound advice for long-distance and international travel with children.

Also look for *Frommer's Hawaii with Kids* (Wiley Publishing, Inc.).

9 Getting Around

INTERISLAND FLIGHTS

Since September 11, 2001, the major interisland carriers have cut way, way, way back on the number of interisland flights. The airlines warn you to show up at least 90 minutes before your flight, and believe me, with all the security inspections, you will need all 90 minutes to catch your flight.

In 2006, a new airline entered the Hawaiian market: **go!** (☎ 888/IFLYGO2; www.iflygo.com), owned by Mesa Air Group (which has more than 1,000 flights to 166 cities across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico). The new airline began service with 50-passenger Bombardier CRJ 200 jets with service from Honolulu to Maui, Kauai, and both Hilo and Kona on the Big Island. go! offers the cheapest interisland fares in Hawaii.

Aloha Airlines (☎ 800/367-5250 or 808/484-1111; www.alohaairlines.com) is the state's largest provider of interisland air transport service. It offers daily flights throughout Hawaii, using an all-jet fleet of Boeing 737 aircraft. **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320 or 808/835-3700; www.hawaiianair.com), Hawaii's first interisland airline, has carried more than 100 million passengers to and around the state.

In 2007, visitors to Molokai and Lanai got not one, but two new commuter airlines, which began flying from Honolulu to Molokai and Lanai. go! started a new commuter service from Honolulu to Molokai and Lanai, under the name **go!Express**, on their new fleet of Cessna Grand Caravan 208B planes. Another commuter airline, **Pacific Wings**, started operating a discount airline, **PW Express** (☎ 888/866-5022 or 808/873-0877; www.flypwx.com), with daily nonstop flights between Honolulu and Molokai and Lanai, plus flights from Kahului, Maui, and Molokai.

Island Air (☎ 800/323-3345 or 808/484-2222) serves Hawaii's small interisland airports on Maui, Molokai, and Lanai. However, I have to tell you that I have not had stellar service from Island Air and recommend that you book on go!Express or PW Express if you are headed to Molokai or Lanai.

Overseas visitors can take advantage of the APEX (Advance Purchase Excursion) reductions offered by all major U.S. and European carriers. In addition, some large airlines offer transatlantic or transpacific passengers special discount tickets under the name **Visit USA**, which allows mostly one-way travel from one U.S. destination to another at very low prices. Unavailable in the U.S., these discount tickets must be purchased abroad in conjunction with your international fare. This system is the easiest, fastest, cheapest way to see the country.

BY CAR

You'll need a rental car on the Big Island; not having one will really limit you. To rent a car in Hawaii, you must be at least 25 years of age and have a valid driver's license and credit card. **Note:** Foreign driver's licenses are usually recognized in the U.S., but you should get an international one if your home license is not in English.

At Honolulu International Airport and most neighbor-island airports, you'll find most major car-rental agencies, including **Alamo** (☎ 800/327-9633; www.goalamo.com), **Avis** (☎ 800/321-3712; www.avis.com), **Budget** (☎ 800/572-0700; www.budget.com), **Dollar** (☎ 800/800-4000; www.dollarcar.com), **Enterprise** (☎ 800/325-8007; www.enterprise.com), **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3011; www.hertz.com), **National** (☎ 800/227-7368; www.nationalcar.com), and **Thrifty** (☎ 800/367-2277; www.thrifty.com). It's almost always cheaper to rent a car at the airport than in Waikiki or through your hotel (unless there's one already included in your package deal).

INSURANCE Hawaii is a no-fault state, which means that if you don't have collision-damage insurance, you are required to pay for all damages before you leave the state, whether or not the accident was your fault. Your personal car insurance may provide rental-car coverage; check before you leave home. Bring your insurance identification card if you decline the optional insurance, which usually costs from \$12 to \$20 a day. Obtain the name of your company's local claim representative before you go. Some credit card companies also provide collision-damage insurance for their customers; check with yours before you rent.

DRIVING RULES Hawaiian state law mandates that all car passengers must wear a **seat belt** and all infants must be strapped into car seats. You'll pay a \$50 fine if you don't buckle up. **Pedestrians** always have the right of way, even if they're not in the crosswalk. You can turn **right on red** after a full and complete stop, unless otherwise posted.

ROAD MAPS There are more than 480 miles of paved road on the Big Island. The highway that circles the island is called the **Hawaii Belt Road**. On the Kona side of the island, you have two choices: the scenic "upper" road, **Mamalaho Highway** (Hwy. 190), or the speedier "lower" road, **Queen Kaahumanu Highway** (Hwy. 19). The road that links east to west is called the **Saddle Road** (Hwy. 200). Saddle Road looks like a shortcut from Kona to Hilo, but it usually doesn't make for a shorter trip. It's rough, narrow, and plagued by bad weather; as a result, most rental-car agencies forbid you from taking their cars on it.

The best and most detailed maps for activities are published by **Franko Maps** (www.frankosmaps.com); they feature a host of island maps, plus a terrific "Hawaiian Reef Creatures Guide" for snorkelers curious about those fish they spot under water. Free road maps are published by *This Week Magazine*, a free visitor publication available on Oahu, the Big Island, Maui, and Kauai. For even greater road map detail, check out Odyssey Publishing (☎ 888/729-1074; www.hawaii-map-source.com). They have very detailed maps of East and West Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai. Another source of good maps is the University of Hawaii Press maps, which include a detailed network of island roads, large-scale insets of towns, historical and contemporary points of interest, parks, beaches, and hiking trails. If you can't find them in a bookstore near you, contact **University of Hawaii Press**, 2840 Kolowalu St., Honolulu, HI 96822 (☎ 888/847-7737; www.uhpress.hawaii.edu). For topographic and other maps of the islands, go to the **Hawaii Geographic Society**, 49 S. Hotel St., Honolulu, or contact P.O. Box 1698, Honolulu, HI 96806 (☎ 800/538-3950 or 808/538-3952).

BY TAXI

Taxis are readily available at both Kona and Hilo airports. In Hilo call **Ace-1** (☎ 808/935-8303). In Kailua-Kona call **Kona Airport Taxi** (☎ 808/329-7779). Taxis will take you wherever you want to go on the Big Island, but it's prohibitively expensive to use them for long distances.

BY BUS & SHUTTLE

For transportation from the Kona Airport, there are three options: two shuttle services that will come when you call them, and a discount shuttle that leaves the airport every hour on the hour and drops you at your hotel. Door-to-door service is provided by **Speedi-Shuttle** (☎ 808/329-5433; www.speedishuttle.com). Some sample rates: From the airport to Kailua-Kona, the fare is \$21 per person; to the Four Seasons, it's \$21; and to Mauna Lani Resort, it's \$46.

The islandwide bus system is the **Hele-On Bus** (☎ 808/961-8744; www.co.hawaii.hi.us/mass_transit/heleonbus.html); as we went to press, the Hele-On Bus had the best deal on the island: ride free. The recently created Kookia Zone allows riders in West Hawaii to travel from as far south as Ocean View to as far north as Kawaihae for free; in East Hawaii, riders can ride free from Pahoa to Hilo. Visitors to Hawaii can pick up the free, air-conditioned bus from the Kohala hotels or from the Kona International Airport and ride the bus south to shopping centers like Costco, Lanikai Center, Kmart, Wal-Mart, and Keauhou Shopping Center. The Hele-On Bus also stops at the Kona Community Hospital and provides wheelchair access.

In the Keauhou Resort area, there's a free, open-air, 44-seat **Keauhou Resort Trolley**, with stops at the Keauhou Bay, Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa, Kona Country Club, Keauhou Shopping Center, Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort, and Kahaione Beach Park. In addition, three times a day the Trolley travels round-trip, via Alii Drive to Kailua Village, stopping at White Sands Beach on the way. For information, contact concierges at either the Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa (☎ 808/930-4900) or the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Hotel (☎ 808/322-3411).

FAST FACTS: The Big Island

American Express There's an office on the Kohala Coast at the **Hilton Waikoloa Village** (☎ 808/886-7958) and **The Fairmont Orchid** in Mauna Lani Resort (☎ 808/885-2000). To report lost or stolen traveler's checks, call ☎ 800/221-7282.

Area Code All the Hawaiian Islands are in the 808 area code. Note that if you're calling one island from another, you'll have to dial 1-808 first.

ATM Networks See "Money," p. 19.

Automobile Organizations Auto clubs will supply maps, suggested routes, guidebooks, accident and bail-bond insurance, and emergency road service. The **American Automobile Association (AAA)** is the major auto club in the United States. If you belong to an auto club in your home country, inquire about AAA reciprocity before you leave. You may be able to join AAA even if you're not a member of a reciprocal club; to inquire, call AAA (☎ 800/222-4357). AAA is actually an organization of regional auto clubs, so look under "AAA Automobile Club" in the White Pages of the telephone directory. AAA has a nationwide emergency road service telephone number (☎ 800/AAA-HELP).

Business Hours Most offices are open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Bank hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:30am to 3pm and Friday from 8:30am to 6pm; some banks are open on Saturday as well. Shopping centers are open Monday through Friday from 10am to 9pm, Saturday 10am to 5:30pm, and Sunday from noon to 5 or 6pm.

Car Rentals See "Getting Around," p. 28.

Currency The most common bills are the \$1 (a "buck"), \$5, \$10, and \$20 denominations. There are also \$2 bills (seldom encountered), \$50 bills, and \$100 bills (the last two are usually not welcome as payment for small purchases).

Coins come in seven denominations: 1¢ (1 cent, or a penny); 5¢ (5 cents, or a nickel); 10¢ (10 cents, or a dime); 25¢ (25 cents, or a quarter); 50¢ (50 cents, or a half-dollar); the gold-colored Sacagawea coin, worth \$1; and the rare silver dollar.

For additional information, see "Money," p. 19.

Customs What You Can Bring into Hawaii Every visitor more than 21 years of age may bring in, free of duty, the following: (1) 1 liter of wine or hard liquor; (2) 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars (but not from Cuba), or 3 pounds of smoking tobacco; and (3) \$100 worth of gifts. These exemptions are offered to travelers who spend at least 72 hours in the United States and who have not claimed them within the preceding 6 months. It is altogether forbidden to bring into the country foodstuffs (particularly fruit, cooked meats, and canned goods) and plants (vegetables, seeds, tropical plants, and the like). Foreign tourists may carry in or out up to \$10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency with no formalities; larger sums must be declared to U.S. Customs on entering or leaving, which

includes filing form CM 4790. For details regarding U.S. Customs and Border Protection, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or **U.S. Customs** (☎ 202/927-1770; www.customs.ustreas.gov).

What You Can Take Home from Hawaii:

Canadian Citizens: For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare*, issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens: For information, contact **HM Customs & Excise** at ☎ 0845/010-9000 (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at www.hmce.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens: A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go*. For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ☎ 1300/363-263, or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

New Zealand Citizens: Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4*. For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs**, The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (☎ 04/473-6099 or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

Dentists In an emergency, contact **Dr. Craig C. Kimura** at Kamuela Office Center (☎ 808/885-5947); in Kona, call **Dr. Frank Sayre**, Frame 10 Center, behind Lanihau Shopping Center on Palani Road (☎ 808/329-8067); in Hilo, call **Hawaii Smile Center**, Hilo Lagoon Center, 101 Aupuni St. (☎ 808/961-9181).

Doctors In Hilo, the **Hilo Medical Center** is at 1190 Waiianuenue Ave. (☎ 808/974-4700); on the Kona side, call **Hualalai Urgent Care**, 75–1028 Henry St., across the street from Safeway (☎ 808/327-HELP).

Drinking Laws The legal drinking age in Hawaii is 21. Bars are allowed to stay open daily until 2am; places with cabaret licenses are able to keep the booze flowing until 4am. Grocery and convenience stores are allowed to sell beer, wine, and liquor 7 days a week. Proof of age is required and often requested at bars, nightclubs, and restaurants, so it's always a good idea to bring ID when you go out.

Do not carry open containers of alcohol in your car or any public area that isn't zoned for alcohol consumption. The

police can fine you on the spot. And nothing will ruin your trip faster than getting a citation for DUI (“driving under the influence”), so don’t even think about driving while intoxicated.

Driving Rules See “Getting Around,” p. 28.

Electricity Like Canada, the United States uses 110 to 120 volts AC (60 cycles), compared to 220 to 240 volts AC (50 cycles) in most of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Downward converters that change 220–240 volts to 110–120 volts are difficult to find in the United States, so bring one with you.

Embassies & Consulates All embassies are located in the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. Some consulates are located in major U.S. cities, and most nations have a mission to the United Nations in New York City. If your country isn’t listed below, call for directory information in Washington, D.C. (☎ 202/555-1212), or log on to www.embassy.org/embassies.

The embassy of **Australia** is at 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 (☎ 202/797-3000; www.austemb.org). There are consulates in New York, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

The embassy of **Canada** is at 501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (☎ 202/682-1740; www.canadianembassy.org). Other Canadian consulates are in Buffalo (New York), Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle.

The embassy of **Ireland** is at 2234 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (☎ 202/462-3939; www.irelandemb.org). Irish consulates are in Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and other cities. See the website for complete listing.

The embassy of **New Zealand** is at 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008 (☎ 202/328-4800; www.nzemb.org). New Zealand consulates are in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Seattle.

The embassy of the **United Kingdom** is at 3100 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (☎ 202/588-7800; www.britainusa.com). Other British consulates are in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Emergencies For ambulance, fire, and rescue services, dial ☎ 911 or call ☎ 808/961-6022. The **Poison Control Center** hot line is ☎ 800/362-3585.

Gasoline (Petrol) At press time, in the U.S., the cost of gasoline (also known as gas, but never petrol) is abnormally high. Taxes are already included in the printed price. One U.S. gallon equals 3.8 liters or .85 imperial gallons. Fill-up locations are known as gas or service stations.

Holidays Banks, government offices, post offices, and many stores, restaurants, and museums are closed on the following legal national holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), the third Monday in January (Martin Luther King, Jr., Day), the third Monday in February (Presidents' Day), the last Monday in May (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day), the first Monday in September (Labor Day), the second Monday in October (Columbus Day), November 11 (Veterans Day/Armistice Day), the fourth Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day), and December 25 (Christmas). The Tuesday after the first Monday in November is Election Day, a federal government holiday in presidential-election years (held every 4 years, and next in 2008).

For more information on holidays, see "When to Go," earlier in this chapter.

Hospitals Hospitals offering 24-hour urgent-care facilities include the **Hilo Medical Center**, 1190 Waianuenue Ave., Hilo (☎ 808/974-4700); **North Hawaii Community Hospital**, Waimea (☎ 808/885-4444); and **Kona Community Hospital**, on the Kona Coast in Kealahou (☎ 808/322-9311).

Legal Aid If you are "pulled over" for a minor infraction (such as speeding), never attempt to pay the fine directly to a police officer; this could be construed as attempted bribery, a much more serious crime. Pay fines by mail or directly into the hands of the clerk of the court. If accused of a more serious offense, say and do nothing before consulting a lawyer. Here the burden is on the state to prove a person's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and everyone has the right to remain silent, whether he or she is suspected of a crime or actually arrested. Once arrested, a person can make one telephone call to a party of his or her choice. International visitors should call their embassy or consulate.

Lost & Found Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit

card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. Visa's U.S. emergency number is ☎ **800/847-2911** or 410/581-9994. American Express cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ☎ **800/221-7282**. MasterCard holders should call ☎ **800/307-7309** or 636/722-7111. For other credit cards, call the toll-free number directory at ☎ **800/555-1212**.

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (☎ **800/325-6000**; www.westernunion.com).

Mail At press time, domestic postage rates were 26¢ for a postcard and 41¢ for a letter. For international mail, a postcard or first-class letter of up to 1 ounce costs 90¢ (69¢ to Canada and Mexico). For more information, go to www.usps.com and click on "Calculate Postage."

If you aren't sure what your address will be in the United States, mail can be sent to you, in your name, c/o General Delivery at the main post office of the city or region where you expect to be. (Call ☎ **800/275-8777** for information on the nearest post office.) The addressee must pick up mail in person and must produce proof of identity (driver's license, passport, and the like). Most post offices will hold your mail for up to 1 month and are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and Saturday from 9am to 3pm.

Always include zip codes when mailing items in the U.S. If you don't know your zip code, visit www.usps.com/zip4.

Maps See "Getting Around," p. 28.

Measurements See the chart on the inside front cover of this book for details on converting metric measurements to U.S. equivalents.

Passports For Residents of Australia: You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ☎ **131-232**, or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office**, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ **800/567-6868**; www.ppt.gc.ca). **Note:** Canadian children who travel must have their own passport. However, if you hold a valid Canadian passport issued before December 11, 2001, that bears the name of your child, the passport remains valid for you and your child until it expires.

For Residents of Ireland: You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office**, Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (☎ **01/671-1633**; www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (☎ **021/272-525**), or at most main post offices.

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the **Passports Office** at ☎ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children under 16), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency, or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ☎ **0870/521-0410** or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

Police Dial ☎ **911** in case of emergency; otherwise, call the **Hawaii Police Department** at ☎ **808/326-4646** in Kona, ☎ **808/961-2213** in Hilo.

Post Office All calls to the U.S. Post Office can be directed to ☎ **800/275-8777**. There are local branches in Hilo at 1299 Kekuanaoa Ave., in Kailua-Kona at 74-5577 Palani Rd., and in Waimea on Lindsey Road.

Smoking It's against the law to smoke in public buildings, including airports, shopping malls, grocery stores, retail shops, buses, movie theaters, banks, convention facilities, and all government buildings and facilities. There is no smoking in restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Most bed-and-breakfasts prohibit smoking indoors, and more and more hotels and resorts are becoming nonsmoking even in public area. Also,

there is no smoking within 20 feet of a doorway, window, or ventilation intake (no hanging around outside a bar to smoke—you must go 20 feet away).

Taxes The United States has no value-added tax (VAT) or other indirect tax at the national level. Every state, county, and city may levy its own local tax on all purchases, including hotel and restaurant checks and airline tickets. These taxes will not appear on price tags.

Telegraph, Telex, & Fax **Telegraph and telex services** are provided primarily by Western Union. You can telegraph money, or have it telegraphed to you, very quickly over the Western Union system, but this service can cost as much as 15% to 20% of the amount sent.

Most hotels have **fax machines** available for guest use (be sure to ask about the charge to use it). Many hotel rooms are even wired for guests' fax machines. A less expensive way to send and receive faxes may be at stores such as **The UPS Store** (formerly Mail Boxes Etc.).

Time The continental United States is divided into **four time zones**: Eastern Standard Time (EST), Central Standard Time (CST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), and Pacific Standard Time (PST). Alaska and Hawaii have their own zones. For example, when it's 9am in Los Angeles (PST), it's 7am in Honolulu (HST), 10am in Denver (MST), 11am in Chicago (CST), noon in New York City (EST), 5pm in London (GMT), and 2am the next day in Sydney.

Daylight saving time is in effect from 1am on the second Sunday in March to 1am on the first Sunday in November, except in Arizona, Hawaii, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Daylight saving time moves the clock 1 hour ahead of standard time.

Tippling Tips are a very important part of certain workers' income, and gratuities are the standard way of showing appreciation for services provided. (Tipping is certainly not compulsory if the service is poor!) In hotels, tip **bellhops** at least \$1 per bag (\$2–\$3 if you have a lot of luggage) and tip the **chamber staff** \$1 to \$2 per day (more if you've left a disaster area for him or her to clean up). Tip the **doorman** or **concierge** only if he or she has provided you with some specific service (for example, calling a cab for you or obtaining difficult-to-get

theater tickets). Tip the **valet-parking attendant** \$1 every time you get your car.

In restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, tip **service staff** 15% to 20% of the check, tip **bartenders** 10% to 15%, tip **checkroom attendants** \$1 per garment, and tip **valet-parking attendants** \$1 per vehicle.

As for other service personnel, tip **cab drivers** 15% of the fare; tip **skycaps** at airports at least \$1 per bag (\$2–\$3 if you have a lot of luggage); and tip **hairstylists** and **barbers** 15% to 20%.

Toilets You won't find public toilets or "restrooms" on the streets in most U.S. cities, but they can be found in hotel lobbies, bars, restaurants, museums, department stores, railway and bus stations, and service stations. Large hotels and fast-food restaurants are often the best bet for clean facilities. If possible, avoid the toilets at parks and beaches, which tend to be dirty; some may be unsafe. Restaurants and bars in resorts or heavily visited areas may reserve their restrooms for patrons.

Useful Phone Numbers

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: ☎ **202/647-5225** (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: ☎ **202/647-0518**

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: ☎ **404/332-4559**

Visas For information about U.S. visas, go to <http://travel.state.gov> and click on "Visas." Or go to one of the following websites:

Australian citizens can obtain up-to-date visa information from the **U.S. Embassy Canberra**, Moonah Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600 (☎ **02/6214-5600**), or by checking the U.S. Diplomatic Mission's website at <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular>.

British subjects can obtain up-to-date visa information by calling the **U.S. Embassy Visa Information Line** (☎ **0891/200-290**) or by visiting the "Visas to the U.S." section of the American Embassy London's website at www.usembassy.org.uk.

Irish citizens can obtain up-to-date visa information through the **Embassy of the USA Dublin**, 42 Elgin Rd., Dublin 4, Ireland (☎ **353/1-668-8777**) or by checking the "Consular Services" section of the website at <http://dublin.usembassy.gov>.

Citizens of **New Zealand** can obtain up-to-date visa information by contacting the **U.S. Embassy New Zealand**, 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington (☎ **644/472-2068**), or get the information directly from the website at **<http://wellington.usembassy.gov>**.

Weather For conditions in and around Hilo, call ☎ **808/935-8555**; for the rest of the Big Island, call ☎ **808/961-5582**. For marine forecasts, call ☎ **808/935-9883**.