

# 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.

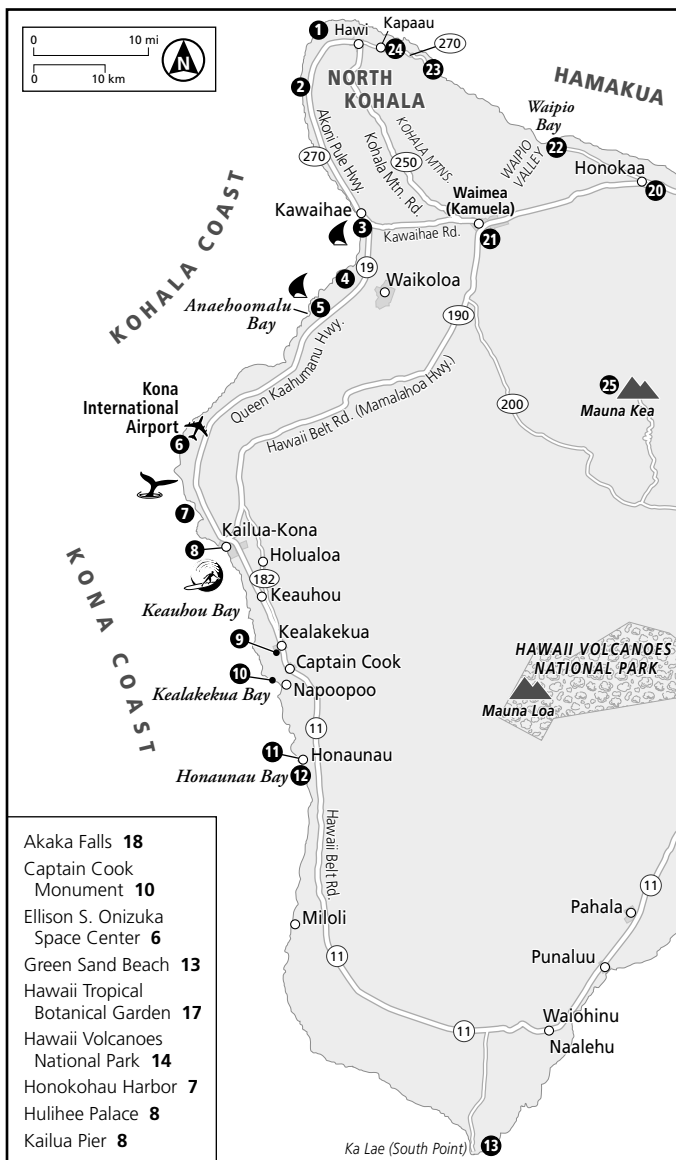
The Big Island is the largest island in the Hawaiian chain (4,038 sq. miles—about the size of Connecticut), the youngest (800,000 years), and the least populated (with 30 people per sq. mile). It has the highest peaks in the Pacific, the most volcanoes of any Hawaiian island, and the newest land on earth.

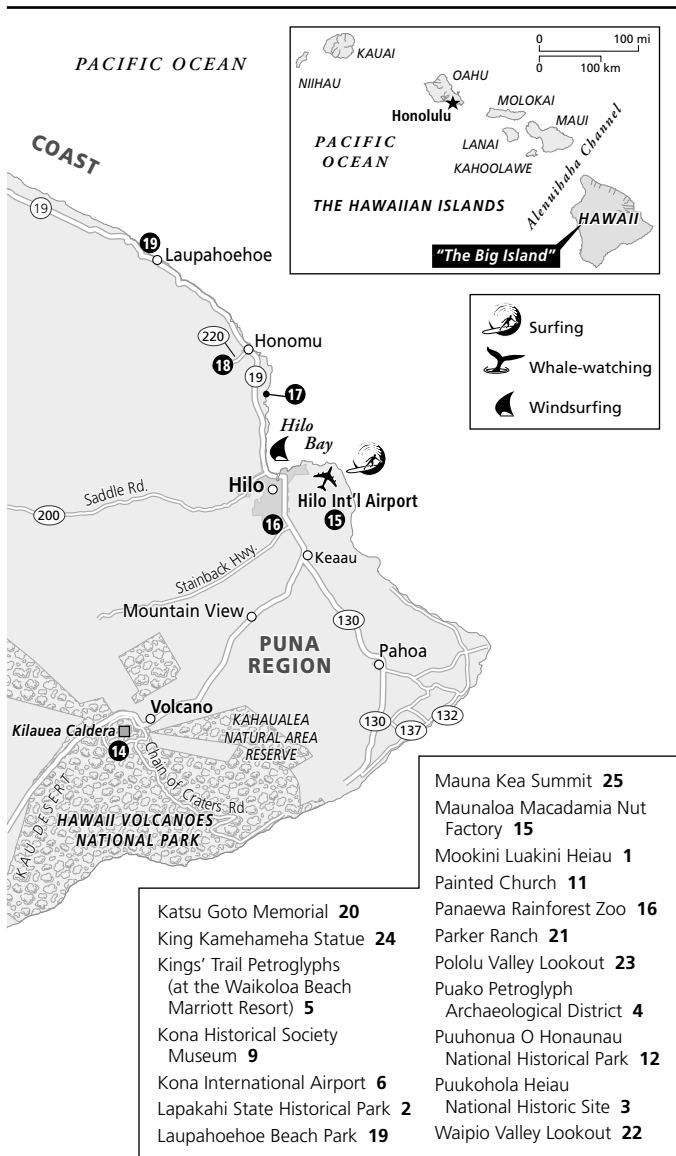
Five volcanoes—one still erupting—have created this continental island, which is growing bigger daily. At its heart is snowcapped Mauna Kea, the world's tallest sea mountain (measured from the ocean floor), complete with its own glacial lake. Mauna Kea's nearest neighbor is Mauna Loa (or "Long Mountain"), 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), the burial caves scattered in the cliffs, the 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 sight of stark fields of lava or black-sand beaches. You must remember

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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, swim with dolphins, ponder the stars from the world's tallest mountain, 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.

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## 1 ORIENTATION

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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.)

### ARRIVING

The Big Island has two major airports for jet traffic between the islands, in Kona and Hilo.

The **Kona International Airport** receives direct overseas flights from Japan on **Japan Airlines** (☎ 800/525-3663; [www.jal.co.jp/en](http://www.jal.co.jp/en)) and from Vancouver on **Air Canada** (☎ 888/247-2262; [www.aircanada.com](http://www.aircanada.com)). Carriers from the mainland include **American Airlines** (☎ 800/433-7300; [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)), with flights from Los Angeles; **Delta Air Lines** (☎ 800/221-1212; [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)), with nonstop flights from Salt Lake City (originating in Atlanta); **Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800/225-2525; [www.nwa.com](http://www.nwa.com)), with flights from Seattle; **U.S. Airways/American West** (☎ 800/428-4322; [www.usairways.com](http://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 from Chicago.

The **Hilo International Airport** used to have a direct flight from Oakland via ATA, but with the demise of that airline, it is now served only by interisland carriers.

If you cannot get a direct flight to the Big Island, you'll have to pick up an interisland flight in Honolulu. **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com) and **go!** (☎ 888/I-FLY-GO-2; www.iflygo.com) offer jet service to both Big Island airports.

All major rental companies have cars available at both airports; see "Getting There & Getting Around" (p. 16) for details on interisland travel, insurance, and driving in Hawaii. For shuttle services from the Kona Airport, see "Getting Around Hawaii," later in this chapter.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

The **Big Island Visitors Bureau** (☎ 800/648-2441; www.bigisland.org) has two offices on the Big Island: one at 250 Keawe St., Hilo, HI 96720 (☎ 808/961-5797; fax 808/961-2126) and the other at 65-1158 Mamalahoa Hwy., Suite 37-B, Kamuela, HI 96743 (☎ 808/885-1655).

On the west side of the island, there are two additional sources to contact for information: the **Kohala Coast Resort Association**, 68-1310 Mauna Lani Dr., Suite 101, Kohala 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 ISLAND IN BRIEF

### 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 the Four Seasons at Hualalai, one of Hawaii's luxury retreats.

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 historical 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 sights 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 Wai-koloa, 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 **Mookini 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 lots 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" on p. 11). 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 (elevation 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.

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## 2 WHEN TO GO

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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, interisland 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.

## Tips Travel Tip

Your best bet for total year-round sun on the Big Island is the **Kona-Kohala Coast**.

## 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.

## 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; for a list, see “Holidays” in the Fast Facts section at the end of this chapter.

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 that involve no closing of federal, state, and county offices are the Chinese New Year (which can fall in Jan or Feb), 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 (Sept–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 listed here, check <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

**Kona Brewers 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** ([www.konabrewersfestival.com](http://www.konabrewersfestival.com)). Mid-March.

**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** ([www.konachocolatefestival.com](http://www.konachocolatefestival.com)). Mid- to late March.

### 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. It takes place the week after Easter,

## **Tips** Daylight Saving Time

Since 1966, most of the United States has observed daylight saving time from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in 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. **Note that Hawaii does not observe daylight saving time.** So when daylight saving time is in effect in most of the U.S., Hawaii is 3 hours behind the West Coast and 6 hours behind the East Coast. When the U.S. reverts to standard time in November, Hawaii is 2 hours behind the West Coast and 5 hours behind the East Coast.

but tickets sell out by January 30—reserve early. Call ☎ **808/935-9168** ([www.merriemonarchfestival.org](http://www.merriemonarchfestival.org)). April 5 to 12, 2010.

### MAY

**Outrigger Canoe Season**, all islands. 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](http://www.y2kanu.com) for this year's schedule of events.

**Lei Day Celebrations**, various locations on all islands. May Day is Lei Day in Hawaii, celebrated with lei-making contests, pageantry, and arts and crafts. Call ☎ **808/886-1655** for Big Island events. May 1.

### JUNE

**King Kamehameha Celebration**, all islands. This state holiday (officially June 11, but celebrated on different dates on each island) features a massive floral parade, *hoolaulea* (party), and much more. Call ☎ **808/886-1655** for Big Island events, or visit [www.state.hi.us/dags/kkcc](http://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** ([www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com](http://www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com) or [www.dolphindays.com](http://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.

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

## SEPTEMBER

**Queen Liliuokalani Canoe Race**, Kailua-Kona to Honaunau. It's the world's largest long-distance canoe race, with hundreds participating. Call ☎ **808/331-8849** ([www.kaiopua.org](http://www.kaiopua.org)). Labor Day weekend.

**Parker Ranch Rodeo**, Waimea. This is a hot rodeo competition in the heart of cowboy country. Call ☎ **808/885-7311** ([www.parker-ranch.com](http://www.parker-ranch.com)). Labor Day weekend.

**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** ([kahokuproductions@yahoo.com](mailto:kahokuproductions@yahoo.com)). Early September.

**Aloha Festivals**, various locations on all islands. Parades and other events celebrate Hawaiian culture and friendliness throughout the state. Call ☎ **808/589-1771** ([www.alohafestivals.com](http://www.alohafestivals.com)).

**Aloha Festivals' Poke Contest**, Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel. 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** ([www.pokecontest.com](http://www.pokecontest.com)).

## OCTOBER

**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/Alīi Drive; the first finisher can arrive as early as 2:30pm, and the course closes at midnight. Call ☎ **808/329-0063** ([www.ironman.com/world-championship](http://www.ironman.com/world-championship)).

## NOVEMBER

**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** ([www.konacoffeefest.com](http://www.konacoffeefest.com)). Events throughout November.

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

**Invitational Wreath Exhibit**, Volcano Art Center, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Thirty-two artists, including painters, sculptors, glass artists, fiber artists, and potters, produce both whimsical and traditional “wreaths” for this exhibit. Park entrance fees apply. Call ☎ **866/967-7565** or 808/967-7565 ([www.volcanoartcenter.org](http://www.volcanoartcenter.org)). Mid-November to early January.

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## 3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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### PASSPORTS

Virtually every air traveler entering the U.S. is required to show a passport. 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. U.S. and Canadian citizens entering the U. S. at land and sea ports of entry from within the western hemisphere will need to present government-issued proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, along with a government issued photo ID, such as a driver’s license. A passport is not required for U.S. or Canadian citizens entering by land or sea, but it is highly encouraged to carry one.

For information on how to obtain a passport, see “Fast Facts,” at the end of this chapter.

### VISAS

For information on obtaining a visa, please see “Fast Facts,” at the end of this chapter.

The U.S. State Department has a **Visa Waiver Program (VWP)** allowing citizens of the following countries 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, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Citizens of Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania,

Malta, Republic of Korea, and Slovakia are soon to be admitted to the VWP. (**Note:** This list was accurate at press time; for the most up-to-date list of countries in the VWP, consult <http://travel.state.gov/visa>.) Even though a visa isn't necessary, in an effort to help U.S. officials check travelers against terror watch lists before they arrive at U.S. borders, visitors from VWP countries must register online through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before boarding a plane or a boat to the U.S. Travelers will complete an electronic application providing basic personal and travel eligibility information. The Department of Homeland Security recommends filling out the form at least 3 days before traveling. Authorizations will be valid for up to 2 years or until the traveler's passport expires, whichever comes first. Currently, there is no fee for the online application. **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. 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 <http://travel.state.gov/visa>. Canadian citizens may enter the United States without visas; they will need to show passports (if traveling by air) and proof of residence, however.

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 U.S., and (2) a tourist visa.

## CUSTOMS

### What You Can Bring into the U.S.

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 forbidden to bring into the country almost any meat products (including canned, fresh, and dried meat products such as bouillon, soup mixes, and so on). Generally, condiments including vinegars, oils, spices, coffee, tea, and some cheeses and baked goods are permitted. Avoid rice products, as rice can often harbor insects. Bringing fruits and vegetables is not advised, though not prohibited. Customs will allow produce depending on

**16** where you got it and where you're going after you arrive in the U.S. International visitors 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** ([www.customs.gov](http://www.customs.gov)).

## What You Can Take Home from Hawaii

You cannot take home fresh fruit, plants, or seeds (including some leis) unless they are sealed. You cannot seal and pack them yourself.

For information on what you're allowed to bring home, contact one of the following agencies:

**U.S. Citizens:** U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (☎ **877/287-8667**; [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)).

**Canadian Citizens:** Canada Border Services Agency (☎ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; [www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca)).

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

**Australian Citizens:** Australian Customs Service at ☎ **1300/363-263**, or log on to [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au).

**New Zealand Citizens:** New Zealand Customs, The Custom-house, 17-21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (☎ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; [www.customs.govt.nz](http://www.customs.govt.nz)).

## 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.

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# 4 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

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## GETTING TO HAWAII

### By Plane

Most major U.S. and many international carriers fly to **Honolulu International Airport** (HNL), on Oahu. Some also offer direct flights to **Kona International Airport** (KOA), near Kailua-Kona on the Big Island. If you can fly directly to the Big Island, you'll be spared a 2-hour layover in Honolulu and another plane ride.



**United Airlines** offers the most frequent service from the U.S. mainland, with flights to Honolulu as well as nonstop service from Los Angeles and San Francisco to the Big Island, Maui, and Kauai. **Alaska Airlines** offers daily flights from Anchorage to Seattle to Maui during the high season (April to October), and twice-weekly flights on the same run all other times. **American Airlines** offers flights from Dallas, Chicago, San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and St. Louis to Honolulu, plus several direct flights to Maui and Kona.

**Continental Airlines** offers the only daily nonstop from the New York area (Newark) to Honolulu. **Delta Air Lines** flies nonstop from the West Coast and from Houston and Cincinnati. **Hawaiian Airlines** offers nonstop flights to Honolulu from several West Coast cities (including new service from San Diego). **Northwest Airlines** has a daily nonstop from Detroit to Honolulu.

Airlines serving Hawaii from places other than the U.S. mainland include **Air Canada**; **Air New Zealand**; **Qantas Airways**; **Japan Air Lines**; **All Nippon Airways** (ANA); the Taiwan-based **China Airlines**; **Air Pacific**, which serves Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific; **Korean Air**; and **Philippine Airlines**. **Hawaiian Airlines** also flies nonstop to Sydney, Tahiti, and American Samoa.

## Arriving at the Airport

**IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS CLEARANCE** International visitors arriving by air 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 September 11, 2001, and clearing Customs and Immigration can take as long as 2 hours.

**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.

## GETTING AROUND HAWAII

### Interisland Flights

Since September 11, 2001, the major interisland carriers have cut 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.

## Cruising Through the Islands

If you're looking for a taste of several islands in a single week, consider **Norwegian Cruise Line** (☎ 800/327-7030; www.ncl.com), the only cruise line that operates year-round in Hawaii. NCL's 2,240-passenger ship *Pride of Aloha* circles the Hawaiian Islands, stopping on the Big Island, Maui, Kauai, and Oahu; some itineraries even go to Fanning Island in the Republic of Kiribati before returning to Honolulu. The disadvantage of a cruise is that you won't be able to see any of the islands in depth or at leisure; the advantage is that you can spend your days exploring the island where the ship is docked and your nights aboard ship sailing to the next port of call.

Hawaii has three major interisland carriers: **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com); **go!** (☎ 888/I-FLY-GO-2; www.iflygo.com); and **Mokulele Airlines** (☎ 808/426-7070; www.mokuleleairlines.com).

Visitors to Molokai and Lanai have three commuter airlines to choose from: **Island Air** (☎ 800/323-3345; www.islandair.com), **Mokulele Airlines** (☎ 808/426-7070 or www.mokuleleairlines.com), or **PW Express** (☎ 888/866-5022 or 808/873-0877; www.pacificwings.com/pwexpress), which all serve Hawaii's small interisland airports on Maui, Molokai, and Lanai. However, I have to warn you that I have not had stellar service on Island Air and recommend that you book another carrier if possible.

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

Hawaii has some of the lowest car-rental rates in the country. (An exception is the island of Lanai, where they're very expensive.) 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:** If you're visiting from abroad and plan to rent a car in the United States, keep in mind that 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 most of the island airports, you'll find most major car-rental agencies, including **Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz,**

**National**, and **Thrifty**. It's almost always cheaper to rent a car at the airport than 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** Hawaii state law mandates that all car passengers must wear a **seat belt** and all infants must be strapped into a car seat. 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** The best and most detailed maps for activities are published by **Franko Maps** ([www.frankosmaps.com](http://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 visitor publication available on Oahu, the Big Island, Maui, and Kauai. For even greater detail, check out **Odyssey Publishing** (☎ 888/729-1074; [www.hawaii-mapsource.com](http://www.hawaii-mapsource.com)), which has very detailed maps of East and West Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai.

Another good source 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](http://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).

If you're visiting from abroad and plan to rent a car in the United States, keep in mind that foreign driver's licenses are usually recognized in the U.S., but you may want to consider obtaining an international driver's license.

**BY CAR** You'll need a rental car on the Big Island; not having one will really limit you. All major car-rental firms have agencies at the airports and at the Kohala Coast resorts.

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, **Mamalahoa Highway** (Hwy. 190), or the speedier “lower” road, **Queen Kaahumanu Highway** (Hwy. 19). The road that links east to west is called **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.

**BY TAXI** Taxis are readily available at both Kona and Hilo airports. In Kailua-Kona, call **Kona Airport Taxi** (☎ 808/329-7779). In Hilo, call **Ace-1** (☎ 808/935-8303). 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 shuttle services that will come when you call them, as well as 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 **SpeediShuttle** (☎ 808/329-5433; [www.speedishuttle.com](http://www.speedishuttle.com)). Some sample per-person rates from the airport: \$25 to Kailua-Kona, \$24 to the Four Seasons, and \$46 to the Mauna Lani Resort.

The islandwide bus system, the **Hele-On Bus** (☎ 808/961-8744; [www.co.hawaii.hi.us/mass\\_transit/heleonbus.html](http://www.co.hawaii.hi.us/mass_transit/heleonbus.html)), offers the best deal on the island—it’s free—but, unfortunately, does not serve either airport. The recently created Kokua 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 Pahoia to Hilo. Visitors can pick up the free, air-conditioned bus from the Kohala hotels and ride south to shopping destinations like Costco, Lanihau 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 Keauhou Bay, Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa, Kona Country Club, Keauhou Shopping Center, Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort, and Kahaluu 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 the concierge at either the Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa (☎ 808/930-4900) or the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort (☎ 808/322-3411).

## 5 MONEY & COSTS

### The Value of US\$ vs. Other Popular Currencies

US\$	Can\$	UK£	Euro (€)	Aus\$	NZ\$
1	C\$1.17	£.65	€.74	A\$1.32	NZ\$1.69

Frommer's lists exact prices in the local currency. The currency conversions quoted above were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency exchange website such as [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic) to check up-to-the-minute rates.

### 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, Longs Drugs, and Honolulu International Airport, and in some resorts and shopping centers. The **Cirrus** (☎ 800/424-7787; [www.mastercard.com](http://www.mastercard.com)) and **PLUS** (☎ 800/843-7587; [www.visa.com](http://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](http://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.

**22** 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.

Credit cards are accepted everywhere except TheBus (on Oahu), taxi cabs (all islands), and some small restaurants and bed-and-breakfast accommodations.

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## 6 HEALTH

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### STAYING HEALTHY

#### Insects & Scorpions

Like any tropical climate, Hawaii is home to lots of bugs. Most of them won't harm you. However, watch out for mosquitoes, centipedes, and scorpions, which do sting and may cause anything from mild annoyance to severe swelling and pain.

**MOSQUITOES** These pesky insects are not native to Hawaii but arrived as larvae stowed away in water barrels on the ship *Wellington* in 1826, when it anchored in Lahaina. There's not a whole lot you can do about them, except to apply commercial repellent, which you can pick up at any drugstore.

**CENTIPEDES** These segmented bugs with a jillion legs come in two varieties: 6- to 8-inch-long brown ones and 2- to 3-inch-long blue guys. Both can really pack a wallop with their sting. Centipedes are generally found in damp, wet places, such as under wood piles or compost heaps; wearing closed-toe shoes can help prevent stings. If you're stung, apply ice at once to prevent swelling. See a doctor if you experience extreme pain, swelling, nausea, or any other severe reaction.

**SCORPIONS** Rarely seen, scorpions are found in arid, warm regions; their stings can be serious. Campers in dry areas should always check their boots before putting them on and shake out sleeping bags and bed rolls. Symptoms of a scorpion sting include shortness of breath, hives, swelling, and nausea. In the unlikely event that

you're stung, apply diluted household ammonia and cold compresses to the area of the sting and seek medical help immediately.

## Hiking Safety

In addition to taking the appropriate precautions regarding Hawaii's bug population, hikers should always let someone know where they're heading, when they're going, and when they plan to return; too many hikers get lost in Hawaii because they don't let others know their basic plans. And make sure you know how strenuous the route and trail you will follow is—don't overestimate your ability.

Before you head out, always check weather conditions with the **National Weather Service** (☎ 808/973-4381 on Oahu). Do not hike if rain or a storm is predicted; flash floods are common in Hawaii. Hike with a pal, never alone. Plan to finish your hike at least an hour before sunset; because Hawaii is so close to the equator, it does not have a twilight period, and thus it gets dark quickly after the sun sets. Wear hiking boots, a sun hat, clothes to protect you from the sun and from getting scratches, and high-SPF sunscreen on all exposed areas of skin. Take plenty of water, basic first aid, a snack, and a bag to pack out what you pack in. Stay on the trail. Watch your step. It's easy to slip off precipitous trails and into steep canyons. Many experienced hikers and boaters today pack a cellphone in case of emergency; just dial ☎ 911.

## Vog

The volcanic haze dubbed *vog* is caused by gases released when molten lava—from the continuous eruption of Kilauea volcano on the Big Island—pours into the ocean. Some people claim that long-term exposure to the hazy, smoglike air has caused bronchial ailments, but it's highly unlikely to cause you any harm in the course of your visit.

There actually is a vog season in Hawaii: the fall and winter months, when the trade winds that blow the fumes out to sea die down. The vog is felt not only on the Big Island, but also as far away as Maui and Oahu.

**One more word of caution:** If you're pregnant or have heart or breathing problems, you should avoid exposure to the sulfuric fumes that are ever present in and around the Big Island's Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

## Ocean Safety

Because most people coming to Hawaii are unfamiliar with the ocean environment, they're often unaware of the natural hazards it holds. With just a few precautions, your ocean experience can be a safe and happy one. An excellent book is *All Stings Considered: First Aid and*

## Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Sharks

The Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources has launched a website, [www.hawaiiisharks.com](http://www.hawaiiisharks.com), that covers the biology, history, and culture of these carnivores. It also provides safety information and data on shark bites in Hawaii.

*Medical Treatment of Hawaii's Marine Injuries*, by Craig Thomas and Susan Scott (University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

**SHARKS** Note that sharks are not a big problem in Hawaii; in fact, they appear so infrequently that locals look forward to seeing them. Since records have been kept, starting in 1779, there have been only about 100 shark attacks in Hawaii, of which 40% have been fatal. Most attacks occurred after someone fell into the ocean from the shore or from a boat; in these cases, the sharks probably attacked after the person was dead. But general rules for avoiding sharks are: Don't swim at sunrise, at sunset, or where the water is murky due to stream runoff—sharks may mistake you for one of their usual meals. And don't swim where there are bloody fish in the water, as sharks become aggressive around blood.

**SEASICKNESS** The waters in Hawaii can range from as calm as glass (off the Kona Coast on the Big Island) to downright frightening (in storm conditions); they usually fall somewhere in between. In general, expect rougher conditions in winter than in summer. Some 90% of the population tends toward seasickness. If you've never been out on a boat, or if you've been seasick in the past, you might want to heed the following suggestions:

- The day before you go out on the boat, avoid alcohol, caffeine, citrus and other acidic juices, and greasy, spicy, or hard-to-digest foods.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before.
- Take or use whatever seasickness prevention works best for you—medication, an acupressure wristband, gingerroot tea or capsules, or any combination. But do it **before you board**; once you set sail, it's generally too late.
- While you're on the boat, stay as low and as near the center of the boat as possible. Avoid the fumes (especially if it's a diesel boat); stay out in the fresh air and watch the horizon. Do not read.
- If you start to feel queasy, drink clear fluids like water, and eat something bland, such as a soda cracker.



## **Tips** Enjoying the Ocean & Avoiding Mishaps

The Pacific Whale Foundation has a free brochure called *Enjoying Maui's Unique Ocean Environment* that introduces visitors to Hawaii's ocean, beaches, tide pools, and reefs. Although written for Maui (with maps showing Maui's beaches), it's a great general resource on how to stay safe around the ocean, with hints on how to assess weather before you jump into the water and the best ways to view marine wildlife. To get the brochure, call ☎ **808/244-8390** or visit [www.pacificwhale.org](http://www.pacificwhale.org).

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET SICK AWAY FROM HOME

If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack prescription medications in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise, they won't make it through airport security. Visitors from outside the U.S. should carry generic names of prescription drugs. For U.S. travelers, most reliable health-care plans provide coverage if you get sick away from home. Foreign visitors may have to pay all medical costs up front and be reimbursed later. See “Insurance,” in the “Fast Facts” section at the end of this chapter.

We list additional **emergency numbers** in the “Fast Facts” section, as well as listings of local **doctors, dentists, hospitals**.

## 7 SAFETY

Although tourist areas are generally safe, visitors should always stay alert, even in laid-back Hawaii (and especially in Waikiki). It's wise to ask the island tourist office if you're in doubt about which neighborhoods are safe. Avoid deserted areas, especially at night. Don't go into any city park at night unless there's an event that attracts crowds—for example, the Waikiki Shell concerts in Kapiolani Park. Generally speaking, you can feel safe in areas where there are many people and open establishments.

Avoid carrying valuables with you on the street, and don't display expensive cameras or electronic equipment. Hold on to your pocketbook, and place your billfold in an inside pocket. In theaters, restaurants, and other public places, keep your possessions in sight.

Oahu has seen a series of purse-snatching incidents, in which thieves in slow-moving cars or on foot have snatched handbags from female pedestrians. The Honolulu police department advises women to carry purses on the shoulder away from the street or, better yet, to wear the strap across the chest instead of on one shoulder. Women with clutch bags should hold them close to their chest.

Remember also that hotels are open to the public and that in a large property, security may not be able to screen everyone entering. Always lock your room door—don't assume that once inside your hotel, you're automatically safe.

Recently, burglaries of tourists' rental cars in hotel parking structures and at beach parking lots have become more common. Park in well-lighted and well-traveled areas, if possible. Never leave any packages or valuables visible in the car. If someone attempts to rob you or steal your car, do not try to resist the thief or carjacker—report the incident to the police department immediately. Ask your rental agency about personal safety, and get written directions or a map with the route to your destination clearly marked.

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## 8 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

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In addition to the destination-specific resources listed below, please visit [Frommers.com](http://Frommers.com) for additional specialized travel resources.

### 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.

**Out in Honolulu** ([www.outinhololulu.com](http://www.outinhololulu.com)) is a website with gay and lesbian news, blogs, features, shopping, classified and other info.

For the Big Island, Oahu, Maui, and Kauai, check out the website for **Out in Hawaii** ([www.outinhawaii.com](http://www.outinhawaii.com)), which calls itself the "Queer Resources and Information for The State of Hawaii," with vacation ideas, a calendar of events, information on Hawaii and even a chat room.

For more gay and lesbian travel resources, visit [frommers.com](http://frommers.com).

### TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling in the U.S. Thanks to provisions in the Americans with Disabilities Act, most public places are required to comply with disability-friendly regulations. 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 visually impaired people 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](http://www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm) or call the United States Geological Survey (USGS), which issues the passes, at ☎ 888/275-8747.

For more on organizations that offer resources to travelers with disabilities, go to [frommers.com](http://frommers.com).

## FAMILY TRAVEL

Hawaii is paradise for children: beaches to run on, water to splash in, and unusual sights to see. To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly child-friendly, refer to the “Kids” icon throughout this guide. And look for *Frommer’s Hawaii with Kids* (Wiley Publishing, Inc.).

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 kids 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 the Big Island, call ☎ 808/329-7101, or visit [www.patchhawaii.org](http://www.patchhawaii.org).

**Baby's Away** ([www.babysaway.com](http://www.babysaway.com)) rents cribs, strollers, high-chairs, playpens, infant seats, and the like; on the Big Island, call ☎ **800/996-9030** or 808/987-9236. The staff will deliver whatever you need to wherever you're staying and pick it up when you're done.

Recommended family-travel websites include **Family Travel Forum** ([www.familytravelforum.com](http://www.familytravelforum.com)), a comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning; **Family Travel Network** ([www.familytravelnetwork.com](http://www.familytravelnetwork.com)), an online magazine providing travel tips; and **TravelWithYourKids.com** ([www.travelwithyourkids.com](http://www.travelwithyourkids.com)), a comprehensive site written by parents for parents offering sound advice for long-distance and international travel with children. For a list of more family friendly travel resources, turn to the experts at [frommers.com](http://frommers.com).

## 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.

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](http://www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm) or call the United States Geological Survey (USGS), which issues the passes, at ☎ **888/275-8747**.

[Frommers.com](http://frommers.com) offers more information and resources on travel for seniors.

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## 9 STAYING CONNECTED

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### TELEPHONES

Generally, hotel surcharges on long-distance and local calls are astronomical, so you're better off using your **cellphone** or a **public pay telephone**. Many convenience groceries and packaging services sell **prepaid calling cards** in denominations up to \$50; for international visitors, these can be the least expensive way to call home. Many public pay phones at airports now accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards. **Local calls** made from pay phones in most locales cost 50¢ (no pennies, please).

All calls on-island are local calls; calls from one island to another via a landline are long distance and you must dial "1," then the Hawaii area code, 808, then the phone number.

Most long-distance and international calls can be dialed directly from any phone. **For calls within the United States and to Canada**, dial 1 followed by the area code and the seven-digit number. **For other international calls**, dial 011 followed by the country code, city code, and number you are calling.

Calls to area codes **800, 888, 877**, and **866** are toll-free. However, calls to area codes **700** and **900** (chat lines, bulletin boards, "dating" services, and so on) can be very expensive—usually a charge of 95¢ to \$3 or more per minute, and they sometimes have minimum charges that can run as high as \$15 or more.

For **reversed-charge or collect calls**, and for person-to-person calls, dial the number 0 and then the area code and number; an operator will come on the line, and you should specify whether you are calling collect, person-to-person, or both. If your operator-assisted call is international, ask for the overseas operator.

For **local directory assistance** ("information"), dial 411; for long-distance information, dial 1, then the appropriate area code, and 555-1212.

### CELLPHONES

Just because your cellphone works at home doesn't mean it'll work everywhere in the U.S. (thanks to our nation's fragmented cellphone system). It's a good bet that your phone will work in major cities, but take a look at your wireless company's coverage map on its website before heading out; T-Mobile, Sprint, and Nextel are particularly weak in rural areas. If you need to stay in touch at a destination where you know your phone won't work, **rent** a phone that does from **InTouch USA** (☎ **800/872-7626**; [www.intouchglobal.com](http://www.intouchglobal.com)) or a rental-car location, but be aware that you'll pay \$1 a minute or more for airtime.

If you're not from the U.S., you'll be appalled at the poor reach of our **GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) wireless network**, which is used by much of the rest of the world. Your phone will probably work in most major U.S. cities; it definitely won't work in many rural areas. To see where GSM phones work in the U.S., check out [www.t-mobile.com/coverage/national\\_popup.asp](http://www.t-mobile.com/coverage/national_popup.asp). And you may or may not be able to send SMS (text messaging) home.

## INTERNET/E-MAIL

### Without Your Own Computer

To find cybercafes in your destination, check [www.cybercaptive.com](http://www.cybercaptive.com) and [www.cybercafe.com](http://www.cybercafe.com).

Most major airports have **Internet kiosks** that provide basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices. Check out copy shops like **Kinko's** (FedEx Kinkos), which offer computer stations with fully loaded software (as well as Wi-Fi).

### With Your Own Computer

More and more hotels, resorts, airports, cafes, and retailers are going Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity), becoming "hotspots" that offer free high-speed Wi-Fi access or charge a small fee for usage. Wi-Fi is even found in campgrounds, RV parks, and entire towns. Most laptops sold today have built-in wireless capability. To find public Wi-Fi hotspots at your destination, go to [www.jiwire.com](http://www.jiwire.com); its Hotspot Finder holds the world's largest directory of public wireless hotspots.

For dial-up access, most business-class hotels in the U.S. offer dataports for laptop modems, and a few thousand hotels in the U.S. and Europe now offer free high-speed Internet access.

Wherever you go, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

For information on electrical currency conversions, see "Electricity," in the "Fast Facts" section below.

### **Fast Facts** The Big Island

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

**Area Codes** All the Hawaiian Islands are in the **808** area code. Note that if you're calling one island from another via a landline, you have to dial "1-808" before the local number.

**ATM Networks/Cashpoints** See "Money & Costs" on p. 21.

**Automobile Organizations** Motor 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 a motor 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**; [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com)). 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 from 10am to 5:30pm, and Sunday from noon to 5 or 6pm.

**Dentists** In an emergency, contact **Dr. Craig C. Kimura** at Kamuela Office Center (☎ **808/885-5947**). In Kona, call **Dr. Frank Sayre** at 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 Waiianu-enu 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 age for purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages is 21; 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.

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.

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. Don't even think about driving while intoxicated.

**Driving Rules** See "Getting There & Getting Around," p. 16.

**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 check [www.embassy.org/embassies](http://www.embassy.org/embassies).

The embassy of **Australia** is at 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 (☎ **202/797-3000**; [usa.embassy.gov/au](http://usa.embassy.gov/au)).

The embassy of **Canada** is at 501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (☎ **202/682-1740**; [www.canadianembassy.org](http://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](http://www.irelandemb.org)). Irish consulates are in Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and other cities. See website for complete listing.

The embassy of **New Zealand** is at 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008 (☎ **202/328-4800**; [www.nzembassy.com](http://www.nzembassy.com)). 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](http://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. At this writing, average prices for regular gas in Hawaii range from \$3.55 in Honolulu to \$3.95 on Maui and a whopping \$4.60 on Lanai. Taxes are already included in the printed price. One U.S. gallon equals 3.8 liters or .85 imperial gallons.

**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 2012).

State and county offices are also closed on local holidays. For more information, go to "Big Island Calendar of Events" in the "When to Go" section on p. 9.

**Hospitals** Hospitals offering 24-hour urgent-care facilities include the **Hilo Medical Center**, 1190 Waiuanueue 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).

**Insurance** Travel insurance is a good idea if you think for some reason you may be cancelling your trip. It's cheaper than the cost of a no-penalty ticket and it gives you the safety net if something comes up, enabling you to cancel or postpone your trip and still recover the costs.

For information on traveler's insurance, trip-cancellation insurance, and medical insurance while traveling please visit [www.frommers.com/planning](http://www.frommers.com/planning).

**Internet Access** On every island, branches of the **Hawaii State Public Library System** have free computers with Internet access. To find your closest library, check [www.libraries.hawaii.org/sitemap.htm](http://www.libraries.hawaii.org/sitemap.htm). There is no charge for use of the computers, but you must have a Hawaii library card, which is free to Hawaii residents and members of the military.

Visitors have a choice of two types of cards: a \$25 nonresident card that is good for 5 years (and may be renewed for an additional \$25) or a \$10 visitor card (\$5 for children 18 and under) that is good for 3 months but may not be renewed. To download an application for a library card, go to [www.libraries.hawaii.org/services/libcard.htm](http://www.libraries.hawaii.org/services/libcard.htm).

To find Internet cafes in your destination, check [www.cybercaptive.com](http://www.cybercaptive.com) or [www.cybercafe.com](http://www.cybercafe.com). Or try the **Epitopia Internet and Business Center**, at the Royal Kona Hotel, 75-5852 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona (☎ 808/331-8999). Hours vary, so call to confirm.

If you have your own laptop, every **Starbucks** in Hawaii has Wi-Fi. For a list of locations, go to [www.starbucks.com/retail/find/default.aspx](http://www.starbucks.com/retail/find/default.aspx). To find other public Wi-Fi hotspots in your destination, go to [www.jiwire.com](http://www.jiwire.com); its Hotspot Finder holds the world's largest directory of public wireless hotspots.

**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 your embassy or consulate.

**Mail** At press time, domestic postage rates were 28¢ for a postcard and 44¢ for a letter. For international mail, a first-class letter of up to 1 ounce costs 98¢ (75¢ to Canada and 79¢ to Mexico); a first-class postcard costs the same as a letter. For more information go to [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).

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 so on). 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](http://www.usps.com/zip4).

**Newspapers & Magazines** Daily newspapers in Hawaii are as follows: on Oahu, the *Honolulu Advertiser* ([www.honoluluadvertiser.com](http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com)) and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* ([www.honolulustarbulletin.com](http://www.honolulustarbulletin.com)); on the Big Island, *West Hawaii Today* ([www.westhawaii.com](http://www.westhawaii.com)) for the Kailua/Kona side, and the *Hawaii Tribune-Herald* ([www.hilohawaii.com](http://www.hilohawaii.com)) for the Hilo/Puna side; on Maui, the *Maui News* ([www.maui.com](http://www.maui.com)); and on Kauai, the *Garden Island* ([www.kauai.com](http://www.kauai.com)).

Publications for visitors include *This Week Oahu*, *This Week Big Island*, *This Week Maui*, and *This Week Kauai* ([www.thisweek.com](http://www.thisweek.com)); *Oahu Visitor Magazine*, *Big Island Visitor Magazine*, *Maui Visitor Magazine*, and *Kauai Visitor Magazine* ([www.visitormagazines.com](http://www.visitormagazines.com)); and *101 Things to Do* (with separate versions for Oahu, Big Island, Maui, and Kauai).

Lifestyle magazines include *Honolulu Magazine* ([www.honolulumagazine.com](http://www.honolulumagazine.com)); business publications include *Pacific Business News* ([www.bizjournals.com/pacific](http://www.bizjournals.com/pacific)) and *Hawaii Business* ([www.hawaiibusiness.com](http://www.hawaiibusiness.com)).

**Passports** See [www.frommers.com/planning](http://www.frommers.com/planning) for information on how to obtain a passport. See “Embassies & Consulates,” above, for whom to contact if you lose yours while traveling in the U.S. For other information, please contact the following agencies:

**For Residents of Australia** Contact the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ☎ **131-232**, or visit the government website at [www.passports.gov.au](http://www.passports.gov.au).

**For Residents of Canada** Contact the central **Passport Office**, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ **800/567-6868**; [www.ppt.gc.ca](http://www.ppt.gc.ca)).

**For Residents of Ireland** Contact the **Passport Office**, Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (☎ **01/671-1633**; [www.irlgov.ie/iveagh](http://www.irlgov.ie/iveagh)).

**For Residents of New Zealand** Contact the **Passports Office** at ☎ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to [www.passports.govt.nz](http://www.passports.govt.nz).

**For Residents of the United Kingdom** 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](http://www.ukpa.gov.uk).

**For Residents of the United States** To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the **National Passport Information Center** toll-free number (☎ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

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

**Post Office** All calls to the U.S. Postal Service 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 areas. Also, there is no smoking within 20 feet of a doorway, window, or ventilation intake (so no hanging around outside a bar to smoke—you must go 20 ft. 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.

Hawaii state general excise tax is 4%. The tax you'll pay on a hotel room is currently 11.25%, though after much political hand wringing, the Hawaii State Legislature voted (and overrode the governor's veto) to increase the hotel tax by 1% in July 2009 (to 12.25%), and another 1% in July 2010 (to 13.25%). In addition to the taxes noted above, the City and County of Honolulu (which is the entire island of Oahu) adds an additional .5% on anything purchased there (including a hotel room). These taxes will not appear on price tags.

**Telephones** See "Staying Connected," p. 29.

**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** and **bartenders** 15% to 20% of the check, 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 **hairdressers** 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. Restaurants and bars in resorts or heavily visited areas may reserve their restrooms for patrons.

**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](http://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 "Visas to the U.S." 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>.

**Visitor Information** For information about traveling in Hawaii, contact the **Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau (HVCB)**, Waikiki Business Plaza, 2270 Kalakaua Ave., Suite 801, Honolulu, HI 96815 (☎ **800/GO-HAWAII** or 808/923-1811; [www.gohawaii.com](http://www.gohawaii.com)). The bureau publishes the helpful *Accommodations and Car Rental Guide* and supplies free brochures, maps, and *Islands of Aloha* magazine, the official HVCB magazine. For information about working and living in Hawaii, contact the **Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii**, 1132 Bishop St., Suite 402, Honolulu, HI 96813 (☎ **808/545-4300**; [www.cochawaii.com](http://www.cochawaii.com)).

**Information on Hawaii's Parks** Hawaii has several national parks and historical sites. The Big Island has four: **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**, P.O. Box 52, Hawaii National Park, HI 96718 (☎ 808/985-6000); **Puuhonua O Honaunau National Historical Park**, P.O. Box 129, Honaunau, HI 96726 (☎ 808/328-2326); **Puukohola Heiau National Historic Site**, P.O. Box 44340, Kawaihae, HI 96743 (☎ 808/882-7218); and **Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park**, 72-4786 Kanalani St., Kailua-Kona, HI 96740 (☎ 808/329-6881).

To find out more about Hawaii's state parks, contact the **Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources**, 1151 Punchbowl St., No. 130, Honolulu, HI 96813 (☎ **808/587-0300**; [www.hawaii.gov](http://www.hawaii.gov)). The office can provide you with information on hiking and camping at the parks and will send you free topographic trail maps.

**Hawaii on the Web** Listed below are some of the most useful Hawaii websites.

- Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau: [www.gohawaii.com](http://www.gohawaii.com)
- Hawaii State Vacation Planner: [www.hshawaii.com](http://www.hshawaii.com)
- The Hawaiian Language Website: [www.geocities.com/~olelo](http://www.geocities.com/~olelo)
- Planet Hawaii: [www.planet-hawaii.com](http://www.planet-hawaii.com)
- Big Island's Kohala Coast Resort Association: [www.kohala.coastresorts.com](http://www.kohala.coastresorts.com)
- Big Island Visitors Bureau: [www.bigisland.org](http://www.bigisland.org)

**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**.