



Lana'i

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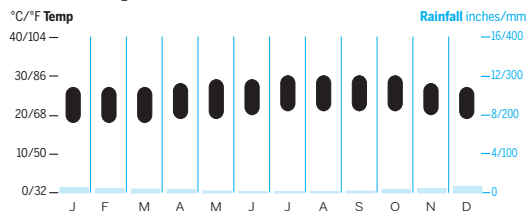
Why Go?

Although Lana'i is the most central of the Hawaii islands – on a clear day you can see five islands from here – it is also the least 'Hawaiian' of the islands. Now-closed pineapple plantations are its main historic legacy, and the locals are a mix of people descended from immigrant field workers from around the world. The relatively few buildings mostly hew to a corporate plantation style and the miles of red-dirt roads see few tourists.

Its signature (imported) Norfolk Island and Cook pines give the island an other-worldly feel that could just as well come from a remote corner of the South Pacific. And therein lies the charm of Lana'i: the entire island is the ultimate off-the-beaten-path destination. Hidden beaches, archaeological sites, oddball geology and a sense of isolation are perfect for those who don't want to go far to get away from it all.

When to Go

Lana'i City



Nov–Mar Jackets needed at night in lofty, temperate Lana'i City, while the beaches stay balmy.

Apr–Aug Winter rains have stopped and the entire island enjoys breezy tropical comfort.

Sep–Oct Lana'i City stays in the sunny 70s (°F), while Hulopo'e Beach is a lovely low 80s.

History

Among its translations, Lana'i is thought to mean 'day of conquest,' and although there is debate about this, it seems appropriate. This small island (at its widest point only 18 miles across) has been affected more than anything by waves of conquest, from the first Hawaiians (who set up fishing villages around the coast) to 19th-century goats (who ate all the trees), 20th-century tycoons (who covered the place in pineapples) and modern-day visitors (looking for respite at luxury resorts).

Evil spirits were thought to be the only inhabitants of Lana'i prior to about 1400. Then a chief's son from Maui is credited with chasing off the evil-doers and making things safe for others from his home island. Little recorded history exists but there are traces of a thriving fishing culture along the coasts, especially to the north and east. Raiding parties from other islands were a frequent terror.

Colonialism largely bypassed Lana'i, although diseases brought by the odd missionary decimated the population from several thousand to 200 by the 1850s. Sporadic efforts were made at ranching and sugar growing by outsiders, but everything changed when George Gay began buying up the place in 1902. Within a few years he owned 98% of the island (a holding that has remained almost unbroken through various owners to this day). In 1922 Lana'i passed

into the hands of Jim Dole, who fatefully started a pineapple plantation that was soon the world's largest.

Under Dole (and later its corporate successor, Castle & Cooke), Lana'i was not just a company town but a company island. Early managers were de facto dictators, who were known for spying on residents from their hillside mansion and ordering guards to discipline any deemed to be slackers.

In the 1980s Castle & Cooke and its hard-driving main shareholder, David Murdoch, made plans to shift Lana'i's focus from pineapples to tourists. The final harvest of the former occurred in 1992, the first resorts for the latter opened in 1990. The company continues to try to find a sustainable and profitable future for the island.

Activities

Lana'i has no national, state or county parks, but its finest beach, Hulopo'e Beach (p423), is run by Castle & Cooke as a free public park. There is good snorkeling and diving from this beach. The ridge that cuts across Lana'i's hilly interior offers good hiking opportunities with top-notch views from the Munro Trail (p422). There are also two world-class golf courses.

Guests at the island's two resorts tend to book their activities through the hotels. However, there are also excellent independent operators.

LANA'I IN...

A Day Trip

Take the early morning **ferry** from Lahaina on Maui; keep an eye out for schools of dolphins as the boat approaches **Manele Bay**. Catch the shuttle into **Lana'i City** and pour your own coffee for breakfast at **Blue Ginger Café**, before strolling the town's shops and superb **Culture & Heritage Centre**. In the afternoon, snorkel at **Hulopo'e Beach** or dive at **Manele Bay** before heading back to Maui on the sunset ferry.

Two Days

If you have an extra day, rather than heading back to Maui, wander back into town and watch the sun set over the majestic Norfolk Island pines at **Dole Park**. On the second day rent a mountain bike or put on your hiking boots and head up the **Munro Trail** for a sweeping view of everything Lana'i has to offer.

Four Days

With another couple of days, get a jeep and do some beachcombing along **Shipwreck Beach** and then explore the road to **Naha**. That night enjoy a superb meal at **Lana'i City Grille**. On day four choose from one of the old-time **eateries** on Dole Park before a day exploring the **Garden of the Gods**, the **Luahiwa Petroglyphs** and the ancient village of **Kaunolu**.