



Moloka'i

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Why Go?

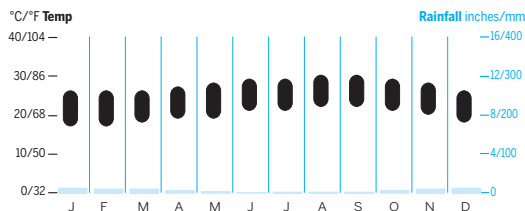
The popular local T-shirt proclaiming 'Moloka'i time is when I want to show up' sums up this idiosyncratic island perfectly: feisty and independent while not taking life too seriously.

Moloka'i is often cited as the 'most Hawaiian' of the islands, and in terms of bloodlines this is true – more than 50% of the residents are at least part Native Hawaiian. But whether the island fits your idea of 'most Hawaiian' depends on your definition. If your idea of Hawaii includes great tourist facilities, forget it.

But if your idea of Hawaii is a place that best celebrates the island's geography and indigenous culture, then Moloka'i is for you. It regularly ranks as one of the least spoiled islands worldwide; ancient Hawaiian sites in the island's beautiful, tropical east are jealously protected and restored, and island-wide consensus eschews development of the often sacred west.

When to Go

Kaunakaka



Best Places to Eat

- » Aunt Ruby's Cafe (p438)
- » Mana'e Goods & Grindz (p445)
- » Kualapu'u Cookhouse (p450)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hale Lei Lani (p444)
- » Aloha Beach House (p445)
- » Dunbar Beachfront Cottages (p445)

Nov–Mar Rain gear is needed in Kaunakakai and any place east, but it's otherwise balmy.

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

Sep–Oct Moloka'i enjoys lovely low 80s (°F) daytime temps with conditions just a tad cooler up high.

History

Moloka'i was possibly inhabited by the 7th century. Over the following years it was a vital locale within the Hawaii Islands and played a key role in local culture. It was known for its warriors, and its chiefs held great sway in the ever-shifting alliances between O'ahu and Maui. Much of the population lived in the east, where regular rainfalls, fertile soil and rich waters ensured abundant food.

Some of the most amazing historical sites in the islands can be found here, including the enormous 'Ili'i'opae Heiau (p444) and the series of fishponds just offshore (see p443).

At first European contact in 1786, the population was about 8000, close to today's total. Missionaries turned up in the east in the 1830s. Meanwhile the possibilities of the vast western plains drew the interest of early capitalists and colonists. By the 1900s there were large plantations of sugarcane and pineapples as well as cattle ranches. All the big pineapple players – Libby, Dole and Del Monte – had operations here, but had ceased all production by 1990. Given the large local population, relatively few immigrant laborers were brought to Moloka'i, one of the reasons the island population includes such a high proportion (50%) of Native Hawaiians.

Cattle were important for all of the 20th century. The Moloka'i Ranch owns much of the western third of the island, but changing investors coupled with some unsuccessful dabbles in tourism (see the boxed text,

p459) caused the ranch to shut down in 2008, throwing hundreds out of work.

Tourism plays a minor role in the local economy and, besides small-scale farming, the main employer now is Monsanto, which keeps a very low profile at its farms growing genetically modified (GM) seeds.

National, State & County Parks

The stunning Kalaupapa Peninsula, within **Kalaupapa National Historical Park**, and a tour of the leprosy settlement there are reason enough to visit Moloka'i. Verdant **Pala'au State Park** has views down to Kalaupapa and a range of attractions, from woody hikes to erotic rock formations.

The county's **Papohaku Beach Park**, which fronts one of Hawaii's longest and best beaches, is incentive enough to make the trek out west.

CAMPING

Moloka'i's most interesting place to camp, in terms of setting and set-up, is the county's Papohaku Beach Park (p458) on the untrammelled West End. Camping at the county's One Ali'i Beach Park is not recommended.

County permits (adult/child Monday to Thursday \$5/3, Friday to Sunday \$8/5) are issued by the **Department of Parks & Recreation** (Map p437; ☎553-3204; www.co.maui.hi.us; Mitchell Pauole Center, 90 Ainoa St, Kaunakakai; ☀8am-1pm & 2:30-4pm Mon-Fri), by phone or in person. Permits are limited to three consecutive days in one park, with a yearly maximum of 15 days.

MOLOKA'I IN...

Two Days

After checking out Kaunakakai, drive the gorgeous 27 miles east to the **Halawa Valley**, and hike out to the waterfall. Head down to Puko'o for some lunch and kicking back at **Mana'e Goods & Grindz** and a snorkel at **Twenty Mile Beach**. Wander along to **Kaunakakai** to gather vittles for a dinner under the stars at your rental pad. On your last day let the sure-footed mules give you the ride of your life to the **Kalaupapa Peninsula** and crack open some fun at **Purdy's Macadamia Nut Farm**.

Four Days

After the two days above, spend your third day in the ancient rain forests of **Kamakou Preserve**, followed by the island's best dinner at **Kualapu'u Cookhouse**. On the morning of day four, enjoy some locally grown coffee at **Coffees of Hawaii**, then head northwest to the culturally significant beaches of Mo'omomi, before finding the ultimate souvenirs at Maunaloa's **Big Wind Kite Factory**.

One Week

As above, but add in lots of time to do nothing at all. You're on Moloka'i time.