

Understand Honolulu, Waikiki & O‘ahu

O‘AHU TODAY 272

Growing pains are par for the course in paradise, where self-reliance and sustainability point the way forward.

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From Polynesian wayfarers and Hawaiian royalty to missionaries, sugar barons and the US military, this is O‘ahu’s story.

PEOPLE OF O‘AHU 283

Bust the myths and stereotypes about island life, far from ‘da mainland’ at this multicultural Pacific crossroads.

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Learn to speak the secret language of these fragrant garlands, symbolizing the spirit of aloha that animates the islands.

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Delicate coral reefs, sandy beaches, pounding surf, verdant mountains and volcanic cones – it’s O‘ahu.

O'ahu Today

O'ahu is a mosaic of cultures, both East and West, but underneath it all beats a Hawaiian heart. It's one of the most multiethnic places on the planet, with no particular group in a majority; those who live here have an attitude of tolerance that, when mixed with natural Hawaiian aloha, produces a mid-Pacific cultural paradise. O'ahu has its problems, but everyone believes in aloha and that wins the day.

Best on Screen

The Descendants (2011) O'ahu father (George Clooney) comes to terms with his wife's betrayal after her critical accident.

Blue Hawaii (1961) Elvis Presley on Waikiki Beach.

Highwater (2009) Action-filled doco about the Triple Crown surfing competition.

50 First Dates (2004) Romantic comedy filmed near Moli'i Fishpond.

From Here to Eternity (1953) Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr embrace in the surf.

Magnum PI, Hawai'i Five-O and **Lost** TV programs to look out for.

Best in Print

Shark Dialogues (Kiana Davenport; 1995) Multigenerational novel spanning the decades from Western contact through to the plantation era.

House of Thieves (Kaui Hart Hemmings; 2005) Local author's short stories about upper-class families in Hawaii.

Hotel Honolulu (Paul Theroux; 2001) Satirical tale about a washed-up writer managing a run-down Waikiki hotel.

Legends and Myths of Hawaii (King David Kalakaua; 1888) Magically mixes history with mythology.

Hawaiian Journeys (Joseph G Mullins; 1978 & 2008) Classic history, illustrated with fascinating old photos.

The Hawaiian Renaissance

In the 1970s, Hawaiian culture, battered by colonization, commodified and peddled to tourists, was ready for a revival; it just needed the spark. In 1976 a replica of the ancient Polynesian sailing canoe *Hokule'a* successfully sailed to Tahiti using only the sun, stars, wind and waves for guidance, bringing a burst of cultural pride. That same year a group of Hawaiian activists occupied Kaho'olawe, which the US government had used for bombing practice since WWII. A Native Hawaiian rights movement soon emerged.

When the state of Hawaii held its landmark Constitutional Convention in 1978, it passed a number of amendments, such as making Hawaiian an official state language (along with English) and mandating that Hawaiian culture be taught in public schools. In the community, traditional arts such as *lauhala* (a type of traditional Hawaiian leaf weaving), *kapa* (bark cloth) making, wood carving, hula and *la'au lapa'au* (plant medicine) experienced a revival. Heiau (ancient stone temples) and fishponds started being restored as well.

Traditional Hawaiian culture remains an important part of island life and identity, reflected in ways both large and small: in spontaneous hula dancing on an airplane, an *oli* (chant) sung before political ceremonies in Honolulu or a *lomilomi* (traditional Hawaiian massage; known as 'loving touch') at a healing spa.

The *Hokule'a* and *Hikianalia* Polynesian voyaging canoes completed their Malama Honua worldwide voyage in June 2012, sailing 47,000 nautical miles to 85 ports in 26 nations using only celestial navigating techniques. The aim was to grow the global movement toward a more sustainable world, display Polynesian navigation techniques, and to take Hawaiian culture to the world and help fuel the cultural renaissance. All Hawaiians feel pride in their efforts.