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Kaua'i Today

Kaua'i strives to balance progress with preservation, isolation with integration. On one hand you have community and local interests that aim to protect local culture and the environment and build a brighter future for the island's children. On the other hand, mandates, social trends and politics infiltrate their way from mainland USA. As far as current trends indicate, Kaua'i continues to find balance in an unbalanced world.

Best on Film

The Descendants (2011) Contemporary island life, with all of its heartaches and blessings.

From Here to Eternity (1953) Classic WWII-era drama leading up to the Pearl Harbor attack.

The North Shore (1987) Glorious cheesy and highly quotable, this movie is bitchin! 'Yeah right barney, bitchin!'

50 First Dates (2004) Silly rom-com shot on gorgeous Windward O'ahu beaches.

Blue Hawaii (1961) Romp poolside with a ukulele-playing Elvis during Hawaii's tiki-tacky tourism boom.

Best in Print

Kaua'i Tales (Frederick B Wichman; 1985) Recounts 18 legends of Kaua'i.

Kaua'i: The Separate Kingdom (Edward Joesting; 1988) Strong historic storytelling.

The Story of Koloa (Donald Donoghugh; 2001) Localized account of plantation life in Koloa.

Shark Dialogues (Kiana Davenport; 1994) Multigenerational family saga, stretching from ancient times to the plantation era.

Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers (Lois-Ann Yamanaka; 1996) Novel about growing up local and speaking Hawaiian pidgin.

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

Economy, Politics & Community

The island has a love-hate relationship with tourism. About a third of the island's economic output comes from visitation and around a quarter of the population works in the industry. On any given day, the island's 71,000-odd residents work, play and jostle for position with over 24,000 visitors.

More tourism means more crowded roads and less affordable housing. It means greater energy usage and strains on land use. More tourism also means jobs and money for better schools, community programs and land protection initiatives.

There are several large construction works moving forward to make room for more visitors, including most notably the Timbers Resort redevelopment of the former Kaua'i Lagoons site and redevelopment of the Coco Palms in Wailua.

Many locals say the rise in tourist housing has made it harder and harder to afford to live here. Homelessness on Kaua'i and across the Hawaiian Islands has grown substantially in recent years, with around 400 homeless people on Kaua'i, a 30% jump from the year before.

The 2014 study 'Climate Change Impacts on Hawaii' commissioned by the Hawaii Tourism Authority suggested that sea-level rise could cost the state an estimated \$661 million per year in lost hotel revenue, with a yearly price tag topping \$2 billion.

A lack of high-performing schools, some chronic recidivism related to methamphetamine (ice) use, environmental issues, beach shutdowns, historic preservation, traffic jams, military drills at Barking Sands, who's-seeing-who and today's surf report round out the menu of talking points for most 'talk story' sessions at the local coffee shop or bentō joint.

In the end, Kaua'i is so far away – and so purposefully removed – that it tends to transcend politics. Life is about enjoying the sunrise and sunset, catching good waves and being with family. Life is good.