hawai'i

history

early inhabitants

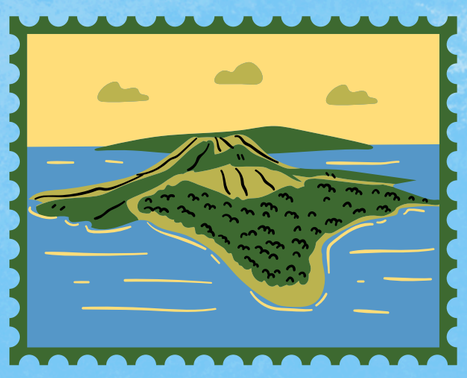
Between **800 and 1200 AD**, early Polynesian voyagers from the Marquesas Islands and Tahiti navigated thousands of miles of open ocean in double-hulled canoes to settle on the Hawaiian Islands. They developed a complex society organized around the **ahupua'a** system, dividing land from uplands to shoreline to ensure access to fresh water and resources.

European contact and the kingdom

In **1778**, Captain James Cook arrived in Kaua'i, marking the first recorded European contact. Until the 1800s, Hawai'i wasn't a coherent entity, but rather fragmented into islands with ruling chiefs (ali'i). That changed when **Kamehameha I** set out to unify the islands. In **1810**, he successfully unified the archipelago into a single kingdom, marking the beginning of the **Kamehameha Dynasty**. In **1820**, American Protestant missionaries arrived, introducing profound cultural and religious shifts. Hawaii's plantation era began in the **1830s** with the establishment of the first commercial sugar plantation and expanded rapidly from there. The plantations brought in immigrants from China, Japan, Portugal, the Philippines, and Korea, reshaping Hawai'i into one of the most multiethnic places on earth. From **1874 - 1891 King Kalākaua ("the Merrie Monarch")** reigned, bringing a vibrant cultural revival of hula and Native Hawaiian language.

annexation

In **1893**, a group of American and European businessmen, backed by U.S. Marines, overthrew **Queen Lili'uokalani**, the kingdom's last reigning monarch. Five years later, the United States annexed Hawai'i, and in **1900** it became a U.S. territory.



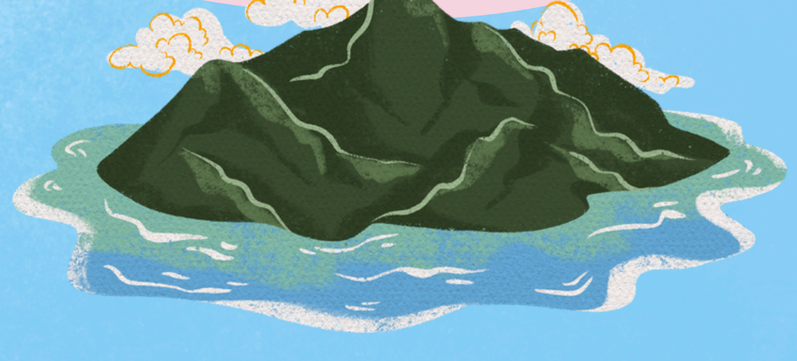
pearl harbor and statehood

On **December 7, 1941,** Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at **Pearl Harbor**, driving the United States into World War II. The islands spent the next three years under martial law, with civil liberties suspended for residents of every background. Today the site is the **Pearl Harbor National Memorial**, one of the most visited places in the state.

In **1959**, Hawai'i became the 50th state. Today, many Native Hawaiians continue to advocate for cultural preservation and, in some cases, for the restoration of sovereignty.

language

'Ōlelo Hawai'i, the Indigenous Polynesian language of Hawai'i, is an official state language. Written with just five vowels and eight consonants (including the 'okina, a glottal stop), it was nearly lost due to 19th century policy, but has since been revived. Words run long because every syllable is a vowel or a consonant plus a vowel. An excellent example is the word humuhumunukunukuāpua'a, which translates literally to "triggerfish with a pig's snout".

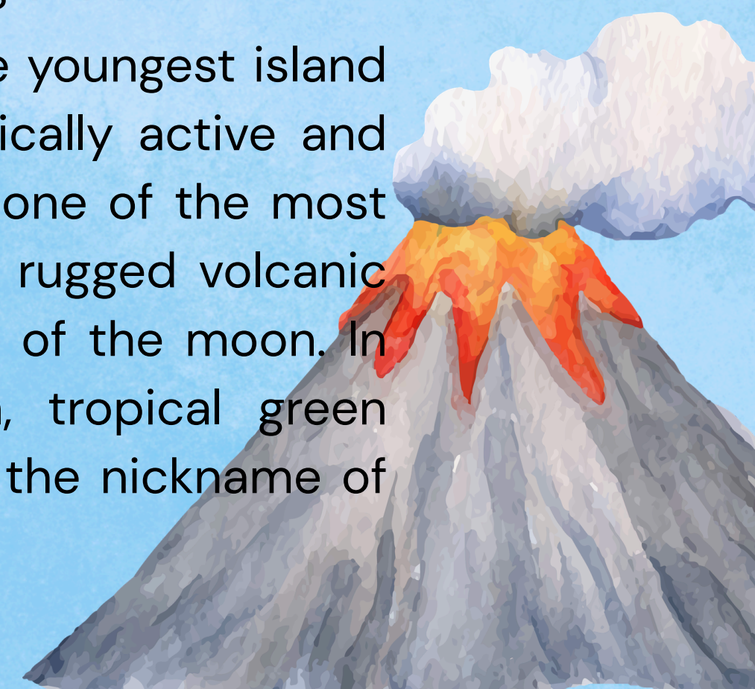


geography



Sitting approximately 2, 400 miles from the nearest continent, Hawai'i is the **most isolated population center** on Earth. The archipelago has eight main islands, and boasts an extraordinary range of biomes — rainforest, desert, alpine summit, and beach, sometimes within a single island.

The **Big Island** (Island of Hawai'i) is the youngest island of the archipelago, and is still volcanically active and growing today. It is home to **Kīlauea**, one of the most active volcanoes in the world, and its rugged volcanic landscape closely mimics the surface of the moon. In sharp contrast, **Kaua'i** features lush, tropical green landscapes and rainforests, earning it the nickname of "**The Garden Isle**".



teachAAPI

folklore & mythology

Native Hawaiian culture had no written language before European contact, relying instead a rich **oral tradition** centered on a pantheon of powerful **akua** (gods and goddesses) who represent and control the forces of nature. Passed down generationally through **oli** (chants) and **hula** (dance), Native Hawaiians used these stories to record history, explain natural phenomena, and educate their children.

Pele, the goddess of fire and volcanoes, is perhaps the most famous figure in Hawaiian folklore. She is said to reside in the Halema'uma'u crater at the summit of **Kīlauea**, and her fiery, passionate personality is often used to explain volcanic eruptions and the ongoing creation of new land.



the significance of kalo



*Legend says that the first **kalo** (**taro**) plant sprouted from a stillborn child of the sky father and earth mother. Their second child **Hāloa** is the first ancestor of the Hawaiian people. Because kalo shares bloodlines with the first human, Native Hawaiians view the plant as their elder brother (**kua'ana**). The structure of the plant—where smaller shoots (oha) grow out of the main parent tuber (makua)—directly inspired the Hawaiian word for family, **'ohana**.*









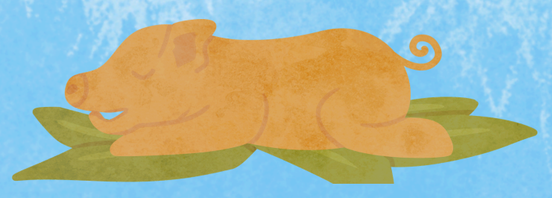
cultural values

Hawaiian culture rests on **nā waiwai**, values built around respect, responsibility, and harmony. **Aloha** is love and mutual respect embodied daily. **Mālama 'āina** means caring for land and the ocean, while **kuleana** encapsulates personal and communal responsibility. **'Ohana** extends family bonds past blood relatives to neighbors and friends, and **laulima** translates to "many hands" working together.









food

Traditional Native Hawaiian foods include **kalo** (taro), **'ulu** (breadfruit), **'uala** (sweet potato), and **coconut**, eaten with reef fish and **limu** (seaweed). Pounded **kalo** makes **poi**, the base of nearly every traditional meal. **Laulau** is steamed pork in taro and ti leaves; **kālua pig** cooks all day in an **imu**, an underground oven. You might have also tried **poke** (raw fish cubed with sea salt and limu).



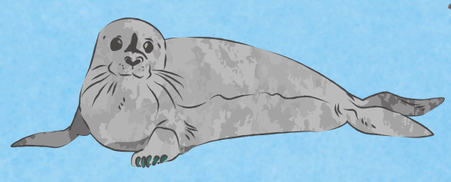






Meanwhile, many island comfort foods that many associate with Hawai'i date back to its **plantation era,** which spanned between 1850 and 1930. Waves of immigrant laborers from China, Portugal, Japan, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines shared and swapped food in the sugar cane and pineapple fields, which marked the advent of the "**plate lunch." Shave ice** also became popular during this time. Later, with the influx of American military personnel during WWII, **spam** became massively popular, especially in **musubi** form.

native wildlife





The Hawaiian Islands are home to many incredible species found nowhere else on Earth. The **nēnē**, or Hawaiian goose, is the state bird. In the ocean, the **honu**, or Hawaiian green sea turtle, holds deep significance as a symbol of longevity, good fortune and endurance. The Hawaiian **monk seal** lives nowhere else on Earth, and is critically endangered – only around 1,500 remain in the wild. The coral reef sustains much of this wildlife, including the state fish, the **humuhumunukunukuāpua'a.** Its long name roughly translates to "triggerfish that grunts like a pig." **Spinner dolphins**, **manta rays** and **humpback whales** also dwell in the temperate waters around Hawai'i.

