

Facts About Hawaii:

Hawaii is the name of the largest of the Hawaiian Islands, which is a collection of 7 islands: Hawai'i, Maui, Lana'i, Moloka'i, Koho'olawe, O'ahu, and Kaua'i. Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States of America in 1959 and is located about 2,160 miles from California. In 1998 the State of Hawaii reported 1,193,001 people living there. Almost 7 million people visit the islands each year. Less than 1% of Hawaii's population is pure Hawaiian, meaning they are descendants from peoples who populated the Hawaiian islands prior to 1776, before contact with non-Hawaiians.

Only one island is volcanically active in the Hawaiian Islands--Hawaii--also known as the Big Island. Mauna Loa is an active volcano on the Big Island. Kilauea has been erupting there non-stop since 1989, but it isn't shooting magma up in the air all that time as you might imagine.

In Hawaii there are white sand, black sand, gray sand, and green sand beaches, but not all types of sand are found on each island. The color depends what the sand was created from. In Hawaii the term black sand beach is used only for beaches with a high concentration of grains of black volcanic glass. The black volcanic glass is created by molten lava flows entering the cool ocean causing the glassy rinds to shatter. Green sand beaches are created from grains of a semi-precious gem called olivine. White sand beaches are created from bits of shells, calcareous algae, sea urchins, and coral. Gray sand beaches are created from gray basalt. The beaches range from powdery soft to sharp shards depending on the erosion that occurs in the area.

Because the Hawaiian Islands have lots of different environments (rainforest, beach, desert) there are lots of different climates. In places like Waikiki, Kailua-Kona, Kihei, and other beach towns it is nice and warm almost all year round. The rain forest region is located up in the mountains where the rain clouds collect after the moisture evaporates. This region is cooler and wetter due to the rain and tree coverage and also where you will find lots of waterfalls! The desert regions are very hot and dry and you can even find cactus growing, there is very little rain. On the Big Island fields of lava from past eruptions look like huge parking lots. There are three mountains that get snow, Mauna Kea (13,796 ft) and Mauna Loa (13,680 ft) on the Big Island and Mt. Haleakala (10,023 ft) on Maui. Because these mountains are so tall it will snow on these summits and at the same time be sunny and 80 degrees at the beach. Mauna Kea is actually the tallest mountain in the world when measured from the sea floor to the summit.

Hawaiian Leis are given any time as a symbol of love and/or appreciation. At some Hawaiian weddings the parents of the groom adorn the bride with a lei and the parents of the bride adorn the groom with a lei as a symbol of welcoming them into the family.

Although Hawaiian words may look challenging to pronounced they're typically easy to say if you sound out the word by each syllable. The Hawaiian language utilizes the 5 vowels a,e,i,o,u and the 7 consonants h,k,l,m,n,p,w. Please note that sometimes the "W" is pronounced the same as "V" as in Hawai'i.

Sample word: Kepenekela Sounded out: Ke-pe-ne-ke-la

Stressed vowels: a - ah, as in car: aloha; e - a, as in may: nene; i - ee, as in bee: honi; o - oh, as in so: mahalo; u - oo, as in spoon: kapu

Unstressed vowels a - a, as in about: ali'i; e - eh, as in met: kane

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