

# 7 day itinerary for Hawai'i Island



A template itinerary for the Big Island by [Love Big Island](#)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

- 3**    *Introduction*
- 4**    *Kona and the Beach*
- 5**    *Ocean Views and Adventures*
- 7**    *The Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park*
- 9**    *Jungle and lava fields*
- 10**   *Hilo and Waterfalls*
- 12**   *The Hamakua Coast*
- 14**   *Waimea and Pololu Black Sand Beach*
- 15**   *Planning resources*

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## Introduction

# About the Big Island + itinerary instructions

The Big Island is one of the most beautiful and diverse islands you will ever visit. It hosts 8 out of 13 of the world's climate zones, stunning beaches, waterfalls and rainforests inhabited by species found nowhere else on the planet. It is also home to a series of majestic volcanoes that are constantly changing the island's landscape.

We recommend that you devote a few days of your itinerary to seeking out both the active and non-active volcanic sites which make the Big Island such a wonder of nature. This itinerary is meant primarily as a template. As tastes differ we encourage you to change it as much as you want to tailor your own perfect Hawaiian getaway.

We hope that you enjoy your time on the Big Island and ask that you help preserve this unique ecological and cultural gem by respecting local customs and paying heed to the golden proverb: "take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints."





## Day 1

# Kona and the Beach

*Start your trip by picking up your rental car from one of the car rental offices at the Kona Airport. Kona is the sunny outdoor capital of the Big Island and you will spend your first two days and nights here enjoying the beach.*

Drive into town and drop off your bags at your place of accommodation (if you have not yet booked, have a look here for [accommodations in Kona](#)). If arriving between December and April, sign up directly for a [whale-watching cruise](#) or if you feel even more adventurous, we recommend to find out more about the [Manta Ray night dive/snorkel](#). These tours are very popular and we suggest that you book at least 48 hours in advance. Afterward, drive north up Highway 11 to explore some of the beautiful west coast beaches such as [Kua Bay](#), [Beach 69](#), or [Hapuna](#). Or if you are short on time, stop by the pier fronting the King Kamehameha Hotel in the center of Kona for a quick dip or a bit of snorkeling.

Finish your day by watching the sunset and enjoying a mai tai at the Kona Inn or any of the beachfront restaurants on Ali'i Drive. Tomorrow will be a busy day, so don't go to bed too late and be prepared for and early start.

**PHOTO BY**

Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) / Heather Goodman



A tropical beach scene with palm trees, white sand, and blue water, framed by a white text box.

## Day 2 Ocean Views and Adventures

Get up early the following day. This should be easy since you still will be on mainland time. Have a relaxed breakfast in town with a view of the ocean or drive south toward Captain Cook and stop in at the Coffee Shack, a hot spot for locals and visitors alike. Don't forget to order yourself some fresh Kona coffee.



## Day 2 (continued)

# Ocean Views and Adventures

After breakfast continue south to the Pu'uhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park (also known as the City of Refuge or Honaunau Bay) to learn about the ancient practices and rituals of the native Hawaiians and finish up with some snorkeling at one of the best snorkeling spots on the island, Two Step (300 ft. from the park entrance). This is a favorite snorkeling spot for many locals and a culturally significant place for the Hawaiian people so remember to be respectful of both the animals and the surroundings.

Make sure to combine your activities of the day with the tours you possibly booked. Or if you don't feel like snorkeling, you can choose one of the many outdoor activities near Kona.



PHOTO (PREVIOUS AND THIS PAGE) BY

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## Day 3

# The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

*Day 3 is another early day so try packing your bags before you go out for breakfast and start your 2+ hour drive to [Volcano Village](#) directly after.*

Make sure to stop along the way to make the drive more enjoyable, for example at [South Point](#) (the southernmost point of Hawai'i and the 50 United States) or [Punalu'u black sand beach](#), which is famous for its status as a turtle nesting area. Once you reach Volcano Village drop your bags in a cozy vacation rental close to the [Hawaii Volcanoes National Park](#) (we recommend the rainforest houses from [Hawaii Volcano Vacations](#)), then head into the park for a few hours of hiking and sightseeing.





## Day 3 (continued) **The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**

Start your visit at the visitors' center and plan your day in the park from there. Watch the 30-minute educational video in the auditorium and talk to the park rangers about the current situation in the park, ranger-led (free) hikes, and tailor-made advice. Also, ask the rangers about the current viewing conditions for any possible active lava flows that are entering the ocean. Some "must see stops" in the park are the Thurston Lava Tube, Kilauea Iki Overlook, and the Chain of Craters Road. If you feel up for it, we recommend you hike the [Kilauea Iki trail](#), which descends from the beautiful Volcano rainforest into the caldera where you can see firsthand the effects of millions of years of volcanic activity.

Afterward, head back to Volcano Village to have dinner in one of the local restaurants and then relax in front of the fireplace or in the hot-tub at your vacation rental of choice. End your first day by returning to one of the many overlook spots around the caldera after dark to see the incredible glow of the Kilauea Volcano under the stars.

**PHOTO BY**

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## Day 4

# Jungle and Lava Fields

*Today you can choose to either return to the Hawaii Volcanoes National park and get in a solid day of hiking on the 100+ miles of trails inside the park or to drive down to lower Puna, a serene and simply breathtaking area that is home to Kalapana, once one of the most beautiful beaches in the world before it was overtaken by lava in the 1990s*

Currently, a new black sand beach is forming at Kaimu, allowing a glance into the constant processes of creation and destruction which reign supreme on the island. If you choose to head to Puna, we recommend you make an entire day of it to enjoy the many gems the district has to offer.

From Kaimu, head east down the famous Red Road, stopping for photo ops at MacKenzie State Park and Isaac Hale (Pohoiki to the locals). Afterwards, enjoy a well-deserved dinner in the quaint, colorful old town of Pahoehoe. We recommend any of the many restaurants along the main road, where you can enjoy pizza, Thai, Hawaiian-fusion cuisine and much more.

Finish your day by driving back up to Volcano Village to enjoy your last night in the peace and quiet of the rainforest. If you're not ready for bed just yet, head to the Volcano House just inside the national park for a stunning view of the glow at Halemaumau and a night cap.





## Day 5 Hilo and Waterfalls

*The following morning drive south one hour to the beautiful coastal town of Hilo and start your day with breakfast at Ken's Pancake House, an old American-style diner complete with window booths and smiling local waitresses that respond best when being called "auntie," as per local customs of respect.*

Afterward, head downtown to take a stroll through the many shops, galleries and boutiques and/or visit the Tsunami Museum. If it's market day (Wednesday or Saturday) stop at the Farmers Market to see how shopping is done local style. Pick up some souvenirs or some fresh fruit and bentos for lunch later in the day. Got a sweet tooth? You can also head over to Two Ladies kitchen (274 Kilauea Ave) for some fresh mochi, a Japanese delicacy in the islands which will leave you craving more (make sure to take cash!) After you've had your fill of exploring downtown, head out for a stroll through Lilioukalani Park and over the bridge to Coconut Island. Or, stop for a brisk swim at one the beaches in the majestic Keaukaha area. We recommend Carlsmith Beach Park (Four Mile to the locals) or Richardson's, both for the views of Hilo Bay and easy access (all beaches in Hilo).

**PHOTO BY**

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## Day 5 (continued)

# Hilo and Waterfalls

Afterward, head up to [Rainbow Falls](#) for a couple of photos and then continue up Kaumana Drive past Hilo Hospital to the Boiling Pots.

Now it is time to drive up Saddle Road to go stargazing at one of the best locations of the world: Mauna Kea. You can reach the visitor center where there are free stargazing programs offered just after sunset with any rental car but you'll need a 4WD if you want to visit the summit. There are also professional tours organized from Hilo that will take you up the mountain. More information and safety tips on [stargazing on Mauna Kea](#). Afterward head back to your accommodations in Hilo and get some much-needed rest.

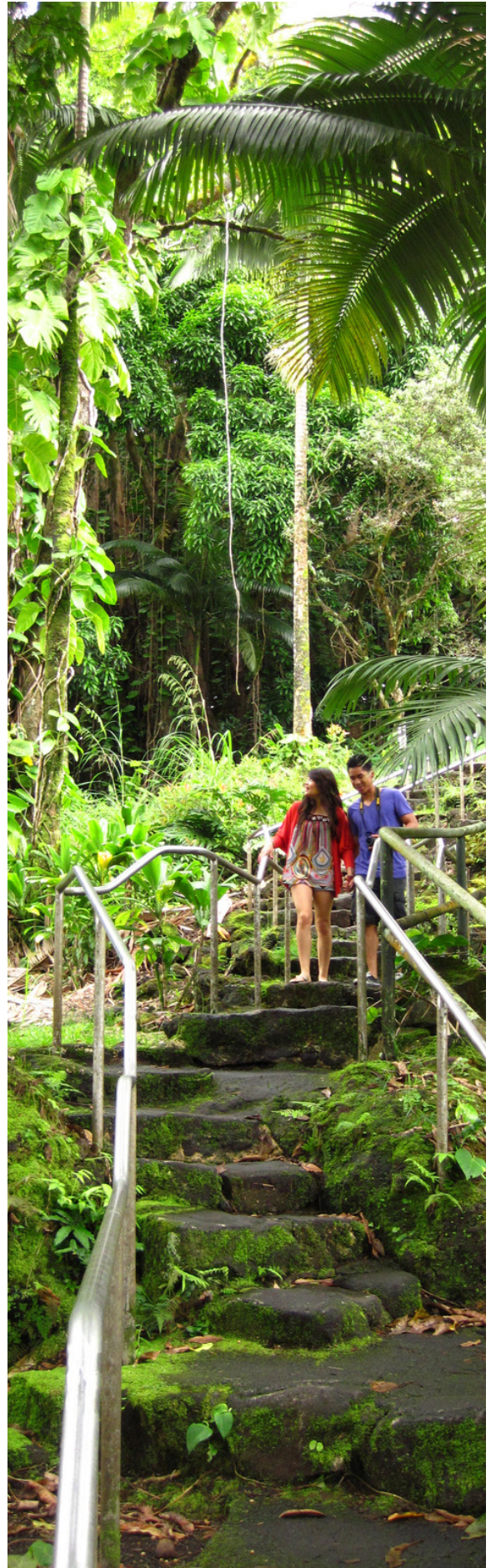


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Island of Hawaii Visitors Bureau (IHVB) / Kirk Lee Aeder





Day 6

# The Hamakua Coast

*Start your day with packing your bags and then enjoying a lazy breakfast in downtown Hilo while watching the sun rise over the bay. Afterward, head out to Highway 19 onto the Hamakua Coast and get ready for some breathtaking scenery!*

Start by turning on to the four-mile Scenic Route just a few minutes outside of Hilo and enjoy the winding, magical drive along the coast. You can also stop at the Hawaii Tropical Botanical Gardens for a short hike through lush fern forests. Once back on Highway 19, make sure you stop at the multi-tiered UmaUma Falls or the 'Akaka Falls State Park to see two of the most famous waterfalls in Hawaii.

**PHOTO BY**

Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) / Tor Johnson





## Day 6 (continued) **The Hamakua Coast**

Continue north to the historic town of Honoka‘a. This former cane sugar stronghold has an interesting collection of shops and galleries. It also is a great place to grab some lunch or a fresh, hot malasada at Tex Drive In. From here, it’s just a short drive to the Waipi‘o Valley overlook at the end of Highway 240, which will allow you a stunning view of the “Valley of Kings”, one of the most culturally significant spots for the native Hawaiians and a hot spot for the traditional cultivation of the locally prized “kalo” or taro crop.

If you have enough time, you can tour the valley on foot, but be prepared for a long, challenging and hot hike. Take plenty of drinking water, good hiking shoes and a hat or a cap against the sun. Afterward, continue to Waimea for a luxurious dinner at one of the locally renowned culinary gems (we recommend Merriman’s or Edelweiss) or continue a half hour to the Kawaihae harbor for sunset and dinner there before returning to Waimea for the night.

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Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) / Heather Goodman



## Day 7

# Waimea and Pololu Black Sand Beach

*Waimea is an old ranchers town and offers easy access to great hikes and beautiful beaches. This is a good place to spend a leisurely last day on the island before slowly making your way back down the coast toward the Kona airport.*

Take Highway 250 up to the historical colonial town of Hawi. From here it is a short trip to the beautiful valley and black sand beach of Pololu. Pololu is a GREAT place to see the sunrise if you are an early riser, and we remind you once again to take lots of drinking water and sunscreen for the short but steep hike in and out of the valley.

Return to Waimea and get yourself ready for the airport before driving south along the coastal Highway 270 to the Waikoloa resort or the King's Shops. Here you can stop for some local grinds to recharge or pick up any last-minute souvenirs on your way back toward Kona.

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## helpful information **Trip Planning Resources**

The [Love Big Island website](#) provides current, useful and real information to help plan your visit to the Big Island, while emphasizing the importance of buying local and traveling responsibly. Hawai'i is a unique, intricate and beautiful place, and our mission is to make sure it remains as such for current and future generations.

This free 7-day itinerary is an adaptation of the following itinerary on the Love Big Island website:  
<https://www.lovebigisland.com/seven-day-itinerary-for-big-island-hawaii/>

Several other **free resources** we provide that are especially relevant when using our itinerary are:

- Car rental tips: <https://www.lovebigisland.com/rent-a-car/>
- More itineraries: <https://www.lovebigisland.com/all-itineraries/>
- List of things to do on the Big Island: <https://www.lovebigisland.com/activities-to-do/>

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