

**Big Island Visitors Bureau Media Contact:**

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## **HAWAI'I ISLAND'S FEEL-GOOD FACTOR**

*M\_lama ' \_ina/M\_lama kai (Care for the land/sea)*

**Hawai'i's Big Island** – Vacation on Hawai'i Island by mixing a great time with good deeds. Sojourners are frequently taking breaks from *l\_ 'au*, surf lessons and shopping to lend a hand to local causes. These voluntourists are spending their getaways combing the Wai\_hinu-Ka Lae coastline for marine debris alongside Hawai'i Wildlife Fund biologists, restoring dryland forests with Tropical Reforestation and Ecosystems Education Center Hawai'i, as well as recording endangered humpback whales sighted from shore during the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary's ocean counts. The motto is simple: *m\_lama ' \_ina/m\_lama kai*.

Those staying at the newly refurbished **Keauhou Beach Resort** ([www.KeauhouBeachResort-Hawaii.com](http://www.KeauhouBeachResort-Hawaii.com)) enjoy the sapphire sea of Kahalu'u Bay while contributing to the environmental improvement and cultural presence of one of the island's most popular attractions. They are taking away a sense of place and a feeling of investment by becoming part of the community.

At **Keauhou Resort**, a piece of Hawaiian history is being restored one rock at a time. Kamehameha Investment Corp., owner of the 309-room hotel, is rebuilding several *heiau* (ancient temples) and sacred sites along the shore. The restoration project allows visitors, students and residents to soak up the sunshine while perpetuating and learning about a cultural practice.

Resort staff also participate in weekly Reef Teach programs, emphasizing proper reef etiquette in the waters fronting nearby Kahalu'u Beach Park. Their enthusiasm and knowledge is contagious, often spread again by its guests and other beachgoers. This effort is part of the Keauhou Beach Resort's ongoing commitment to protect local resources and bring people closer to marine life in order to instill a strong appreciation of this special place. And, ongoing, free educational programs are offered to the public through an existing memorandum of agreement with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Travelers with noted eco-tour operator **KapohoKine Adventures** ([www.kapohokine.com](http://www.kapohokine.com)) are gaining greater insight into the places and people they visit on holiday. They leave with the satisfaction of getting off the grid, and directly supporting the farms and communities they visit. During its luxury excursion, **Secrets of Puna**, guests visit the remote Puna District, where lush jungle spills into the beautiful and wild coastline. They hear stories from former residents of Kalapana, who witnessed their homes being destroyed by K\_lauea's 1990 eruption, and then visit Kaim\_, the once-beautiful black sand beach now entombed in lava. At a working macadamia nut and honey farm, guests enjoy a private Hawaiian barbecue lunch, complete with locally grown ingredients and refreshments. Completing the experience, guests are treated to a brief DVD presentation on reef etiquette produced by the REEFTeach Program while en route to swim in an

oceanside black lava lagoon replete with tropical fish and the occasional sea turtle.

Some people think the beauty of the island of Hawai‘i lies in its pristine beaches, tumbling waterfalls and smoldering sunsets. Others like the rainforests of East Hawai‘i, the southern moonscapes of cinder cones and barren lava, or the paniolo country’s rolling green hillsides. But the true-blue naturalists at **Hawaii Forest & Trail** ([www.hawaii-forest.com](http://www.hawaii-forest.com)) reckon “there’s not a better place to witness the timeless battle between the elemental forces of fire and water than at **Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park**.”

For park managers, the alteration and degradation of Hawai‘i’s native ecosystems by non-native plants is an overriding resource challenge and staff work to control and reduce the impacts of invasive species, restore native ecosystems, and protect biological diversity. Hawaii Forest & Trail employees and guests have had an opportunity to learn first-hand how to successfully conserve Hawai‘i’s native forests and communicate their value. They have been actively involved in helping to preserve the spectacular natural environment inside the park. The company adopted two of the park’s Special Ecological Areas, or Stewardship Plots, which are designed for research on alien plant invasion. During its **K\_lauea Volcano Adventure**, Hawaii Forest & Trail gives its guests an opportunity to help the native rainforest by removing k\_hili ginger and other invasive plants in the plot.

**Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park** was established on August 1, 1916, the 15<sup>th</sup> U.S. National Park established in a system that now numbers 391 units. It is an International Biosphere Reserve and the **only World Heritage Site within the main Hawaiian Islands**. The park’s 333,086 acres encompass the summits and rift zones of two of the world’s most active volcanoes, K\_lauea and Maunaloa. They serve as habitat to endangered plant, insect, bird, bat, and sea turtle species, a spiritual reservoir for native Hawaiians, and a last vestige of Hawai‘i as it was hundreds of years ago. Nearly two million visitors explore the park each year on 66 miles of scenic roadways and 155 miles of marked trails. There is bicycling, camping, backpacking, bird watching, lava flow viewing, award-winning films and evening programs, and ranger-guided hikes. There are campsites and paved trails accessible to people in wheelchairs. The park recognizes the vital connections that the island’s first people have to sacred sites and provides a sanctuary for reclaiming ancient feelings of place. At times, throughout the year, the ethereal echo of *pu* (shell trumpets) and the heartfelt expression of chant and dance on the edge of Halema‘uma‘u Crater help reconcile Hawai‘i’s past with her future and remind us that the culture of Hawai‘i is very much alive.

Stephanie Donoho, Tourism Specialist for the County of Hawai‘i’s Research and Development department, says the purpose of the site is to publicize the eco- and sustainable tourism opportunities available on Hawai‘i Island.

“The Island of Hawai‘i is one of the world’s premier ecotourism destinations and we want to help travelers to craft their stay in the most sustainable manner possible—whether its by learning about eco-friendly accommodations, voluntourism activities and events, or how to recycle during their stay,” Donoho said.

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