



Big Island Visitors Bureau Media Contact:

Jessica Ferracane, Irondog Communications, (808) 895-5740, jessica@irondogpr.com

WHY HILO?

New nonstop flights take you to the heart of Hilo and open the door to countless adventures all over the eastside of Hawai'i Island

Hawai'i Island (May 23, 2011) – The news that United Airlines (operated by Continental Airlines) is adding **two new nonstop flights into Hilo** this June raises an interesting question: Why Hilo?

First, there is fun, funky, historic Hilo town itself. Bright, handsomely restored clapboard and stucco buildings near the bayfront are home to flower and antique shops, boutiques featuring the creations of local aloha wear designers, exotic ethnic restaurants and fun hole-in-the-wall eateries with favorite Hawai'i dishes. A lively farmers market offers exotic fruits, Hawaiian coffees, and vegetables, as well as local crafts, all at great prices – and even massage.

The East Hawai'i Cultural Center features always intriguing exhibits by local artists. The Pacific Tsunami Museum tells the dramatic stories of the 1946 and 1960 tsunamis that hit Hilo and the rest of Hawai'i and the Lyman Mission House and Museum, features Hawaiian artifacts and natural history collections in a house built in 1839 by American Christian missionaries. The 'Imiloa Astronomy Center features stunning shows in its planetarium, and memorable exhibits that explain (in English and Hawaiian) the importance of the stars to the early Polynesian voyagers who first discovered these islands. The interactive displays at the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center open a window onto the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in

the remote Northwest Hawaiian Islands. The Monument is Hawai‘i’s second UNESCO World Heritage Site (the only other one is Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park, just up the hill from Hilo town).

Hilo is no “tourist town.” It is an authentic community whose friendly long-time residents go back generations to sugar plantation workers who were immigrants largely from Japan and the Philippines. But there’s plenty for a visitor to do here.

After all, Hilo is the gateway to all of East Hawai‘i, a sometimes overlooked adventurer’s paradise that stretches from the isolated Ka Lae peninsula – the southern-most point in the U.S. and a National Historic Landmark – where ocean-faring Polynesians first made landfall in Hawai‘i; to Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park, where Kīlauea volcano has been erupting since 1983; to the glistening jungles that tumble down-slope to the Puna coastline, where lava-heated ponds and clear tidepools speckle the shore. This diverse region is also where you find the only rainforest zoo in the U.S. (it’s free!), and the only winery on Hawai‘i Island.

East Hawai‘i continues to the summit of Maunakea, the world’s tallest mountain (measured from its base beneath the sea), and along the Hāmākua Coast where silvery waterfalls, lush botanical gardens, and old sugar plantation towns lead to the raw beauty of Waipi‘o Valley.

Within this vast, diverse landscape, spirited travelers can choose from a menu of adventures or create their own, whether on foot, in the water, up in the air, harnessed to a zipline, on horseback, behind the wheel, seated at a table – or all of the above! They can get a good taste of East Hawai‘i Island in just two or three days, but a week could easily be filled with exciting fun.

What Hilo town and the outlying districts are *not* is partly what makes the area so appealing. Instead of grand five-star resorts, the Hilo area offers a variety of excellent inns, bed & breakfast cottages, hostels and good family-friendly hotels, as well as comfortable cabins and campgrounds.

There are no broad, manicured white sand beaches in East Hawai‘i, but no one seems to miss

them. Hilo town locals flock to the little coves and beach parks along Kalanianaʻole Avenue in Keaukaha for picnicking, snorkeling and splashing in the tidepools. Farther afield, around East Hawaiʻi, there are black sand beaches and secret snorkel spots to explore along the dramatic, lava-rock shorelines of the Puna and Hāmākua coasts.

So, why Hilo? Just come, and you'll never ask that question again.

Getting Here: Two new direct flights begin service to Hilo this June. United Airlines (operated by Continental Airlines) will offer daily nonstop service from Los Angeles (LAX) to Hilo International Airport (ITO) starting June 9, and weekly flights from San Francisco (SFO) to ITO on Saturdays starting June 11. Rates and information at www.continental.com and www.united.com. Other direct flights from the mainland on major carriers serve the Kona International Airport, a 2-1/2 hour drive from Hilo. All major carriers and interisland aircraft provide connecting flights from Honolulu to Hilo and Kona.

East Hawaiʻi Fast Facts:

- Kīlauea is the world's most active volcano, and has been flowing almost continuously since Jan. 3, 1983
- Hawaiʻi's human history began at Ka Lae in the Kaʻū District where the Marquesans first made landfall between 500 A.D. and 800 A.D.
- King Kamehameha the Great launched 800 canoes from Hilo Bay, from where he set sail on his quest to conquer Kauaʻi
- Hilo is home to the world's largest and most beloved hula competition, the Merrie Monarch Festival, which comes to town each year the week following Easter Sunday
- East Hawaiʻi produces 95 percent of the state's papayas, and 65 percent of the world's macadamia nuts
- One of the world's most accessible lava tubes, Thurston Lava Tube (Nāhuku), is found at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes National Park
- Hilo is beautified by an average of 130 inches of rain a year, resulting in waterfalls, lush foliage and abundant rainbows

For more about Hilo town and outlying areas go to www.gohawaii.com/big-island/regions-neighborhoods/hilo

Special note to media: The Big Island Visitors Bureau (BIVB) recognizes the use of the ‘okina [‘] or glottal stop, one of the eight consonants of the modern Hawaiian language; and the kahakō [ā] or macron (e.g., in place names of Hawai‘i such as Kīlauea). However, BIVB respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

For more information on Hawai‘i Island, please visit www.gohawaii.com/big-island.

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