



firstlook

THE OLDEST AMONG THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, KAUAI BOASTS A TOPOGRAPHY THAT VARIES FROM JAGGED PEAKS AND CALM WATERS TO A DENSE RAINFOREST AND RED ESCARPMENTS.

● Spouting Horn

Early Hawaiians once aptly called this attraction *puhi* or blowhole. Located near Po'ipū Beach on the island's south coast, water rushes into the hole and is forced through the narrow opening, shooting water skyward up to 50 feet high. Legends tell of a large *mo'o*, or lizard, caught in this *puhi*, which was formed when waves eroded softer, underlying rock. The best times to see this natural phenomenon are during high tide and high surf. Access to Spouting Horn is easy with ample parking and a breathtaking view from the lookout's edge. Watch for humpback whales during the winter season of December through February.

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Alaka'i Wilderness Area

Home to alpine bogs and located on a plateau near Mount Wai'ale'ale, Alaka'i Wilderness Preserve covers a more-than three mile trail that is often greeted by clouds of mist. Take your time through the Alaka'i Swamp trail and be on the lookout for such rare Hawaiian plants as the 'olapa tree and the hapu'u fern. The endangered curved beak 'akialoa bird has also been spotted here and the haunting call of the 'o'o, a diminutive forest bird, has been heard. At the end of the trail, take in the sweeping view that overlooks the majestic Hanalei Bay.

Honopū Valley

Known for its jagged edged mountain range and secluded beach, Honopū Valley has deserved its right to be a dream Hollywood film shoot destination for movies that include "South Pacific," "Acapulco Gold" and "Raiders of the Lost Ark." This hidden gem sits along the northwest shore of Kaua'i's Nāpali Coast and defines its own identity through the deep, narrow valleys that cut dramatically to the sea. Stone wall terraces can still be found on the valley bottoms where Native Hawaiians once lived and prospered. If there was ever an ideal location to be stranded, Honopū Valley would be the place since guavas and grapefruit grow in abundance along the coast.



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● Beaches

Like its mountains, Kauaʻi's beaches are dramatic and diverse. Perhaps the most notable is Hanalei Bay with its sweeping curve of white sand enveloped by mountains. At the end of Highway 56, where the Nāpali Coast begins, the waters off Kēʻē Beach teem with fish and corals that dazzle snorkelers and beachgoers. Poʻipū Beach is known for its idyllic swimming and snorkeling, and in Hanapēpē, Salt Pond Beach Park is calm and popular year-round.

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‘Opaeka‘a Falls

If you're ever on the east side of Kaua'i, heading up Kuamo'o Road, check out for signs that point out to 'Opaeka'a Falls — a cascading 151-foot waterfall that rushes over millions of years worth of cooled volcanic rock. A convenient stop along the road, 'Opaeka'a Falls' constant roaring waterfall makes for a nice photo opportunity any time of the year. The best time of the day to visit the Falls is when the sun is out and bright. The light hits the water like a darting sunbeam, causing for the waterfall to sheen off diamond-like sparkles. Walk across the street and take a look at the Wailua River that stretches across for miles through luscious greens.

Driving mauka (mountain) bound on Highway 56, mile marker 6 on Kuamo'o Road. Look for signs that read 'Opaeka'a Falls.

Hanakoa Stream

While at the six-mile mark of the infamous and dangerous Kalalau Trail, brave and adventurous-seeking hikers carefully cross the Hanakoa Stream. Along with native birds and whistling trees, it's silky and sometimes hearty flow downward is all that is heard for miles as it maneuvers through stumpy boulders, lightly covered trees and eventually spills out into a trickling waterfall crevice between Hanakoa Valley's mountains. During storms, visitors are warned to stay clear of the Hanakoa Stream as it is subject to torrential and dangerous flash floods.



(FROM TOP) ©JOLLYPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK; ©GARON NOBRIGA

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Kōloa Sugar Monument

Home to the first commercially successful sugar plantation in Hawai'i, Kōloa was designated as a National Historic Landmark on Dec. 29, 1962. Today Kōloa pays homage to its plantation roots with a sugar mill bronze monument made special by artist Jan Gordon Fisher. The half-circular wall carving is a tribute to the multi-ethnic men and women who worked tirelessly during the backbreaking times of the plantation era. Across the street from the monument, you'll see a lineup of old-fashioned storefronts and gift shops in the Old Kōloa Town shopping center, where visitors can get a feel (or souvenir) for the district's veritable past.

Waikanaloe Cave

Known to many as the "Blue Room," Waikanaloe's dome-shaped grotto was created by thousands of years of ocean waves pounding against the lava's stone. At the right time of day, the sun's reflection in the icy-cold waters of the cave causes for the reflection to beam off rays of blue streaks, creating a bubble of shimmering turquoise. The water collected in Waikanaloe is fed by the tide and springs that seep through the porous lava. There are two other caves not far from Waikanaloe known as the Waikapala'e and Maniniholo. Swimming is not recommended as no aquamarine life has been known to exist in the water.



Waimea Canyon

Hailed as "The Grand Canyon of the Pacific," this geological wonder stretches 14 miles long, one mile wide and more than 3,600-feet deep. The main road, Waimea Canyon Drive, leads to a lower lookout point and the main Waimea Canyon Overlook, which offers unobstructed views of Kaua'i's dramatic interior. The road continues into the mountains and ends at Kōke'e State Park, the launching point of numerous trails to traverse for beginners and seasoned hikers alike. The Waimea Canyon Lookout provides panoramic views of crested buttes, rugged crags, deep valley gorges and the cascading 800-foot Waipo'o Falls. *Call 808.245.6001 for weather information.*

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