



KAUAI DRIVE GUIDE *Invites You to*
Explore Paradise
'Imi Loa

The following stories were researched and written by Jill Engledow, award-winning author of several books and many articles about Hawaii, and presenter of the "Island Life 101" seminars, which introduce newcomers to the Hawaiian Islands. The feature on Niihau shell lei was written by Pamela Ka'ilikini Dow. 'Imi loa is Hawaiian for "seek far," or "distant traveler."

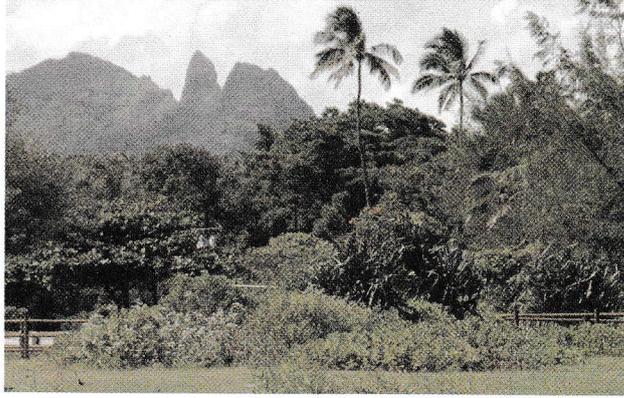
Age has only improved Kauai, the oldest of the Hawaiian Islands. In fact, many people think Kauai is the loveliest in a chain of islands renowned for its beauty. The single volcano that rose from the sea 6 million years ago eroded to produce majestic cliffs and dramatic valleys. A land rich in greenery and flowers, Kauai is also known as the Garden Isle. Citizens eager to preserve this beauty have decreed that no building can stand higher than a coconut palm. More than 60 movies have been filmed amid the stunning scenery of this 533-square-mile island, sometimes called "Hollywood's tropical back lot."

Kauai also was home to the menehune, often compared to leprechauns, who appeared in the night to magically create great works. These legendary people may

be named after the Manahune, the commoners of Tahiti, and perhaps were actually the original inhabitants of the island, displaced when voyagers from Tahiti arrived in Hawaii. The menehune worked only at night, when no one was watching, and finished big jobs in a single evening. Among the work credited to them is the 39-acre Alekoko Fishpond, supposedly built by passing rocks from man to man from a shoreline miles away.

Kauai's people have always been known for their spirituality and their independence. In the 14th century, the island's King Kukona used his small army to repel an invasion from the island of Hawaii, then sent the defeated warriors home with gifts rather than sacrificing them on the altars of the war god Ku. Kauai's people earned a reputation for religious devotion, and led a peaceful life under benevolent chiefs, far

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Brett Upchurch

from the bloody battles between rivals on Maui, Hawaii and Oahu.

When Kamehameha the Great, having conquered the other islands, attempted to invade Kauai, he was stymied first by stormy seas and then by an illness that struck down his army. Still, the conqueror made it clear that he fully intended to include Kauai in his kingdom. Kauai's King Kaumualii chose to surrender through treaty rather than risk his island's well-being. To this day, Kauai's people are proud that theirs is the only Hawaiian island that was not conquered by Kamehameha.

Winds of Change

Kauai was the site of first contact with Western explorers. In 1778, British Capt. James Cook, on his way to look for the Northwest Passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic, happened upon Kauai. He was pleasantly surprised, upon landing, to find that the natives of this island spoke a language similar to that of the other Polynesian islands he had visited. The natives, for their part, were astonished by ships with masts that looked like great branches, and by the quantities of iron they had previously seen only as fragments attached to drift wood. They interpreted Cook's arrival as the return of the long-lost god Lono.

This fateful visit was the beginning of overwhelming change for the Hawaiians. Among

the immediate impacts: When a British trading party was briefly stranded on the nearby island of Niihau, they introduced venereal disease, the first of many imported illnesses that would decimate the Hawaiian people.

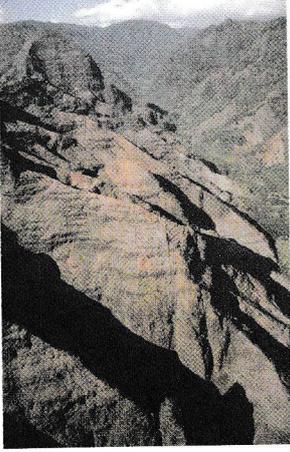
Other foreigners began to arrive, including a Russian adventurer who persuaded Kaumualii to pledge allegiance to Russia in 1816. The newcomer built three forts, all without the knowledge or support of the Russian government, and eventually was evicted from the island. The remnants of his Fort Elizabeth still exist near Waimea.

Like the other islands, Kauai changed radically over the next century. Sandalwood forests disappeared as chiefs sent their people to harvest the fragrant wood for trade with visiting ship captains. In 1835, the first commercial sugar plantation was established, and a mill was built at Koloa. Sugar was king, and planters cared little for preserving native ecosystems.

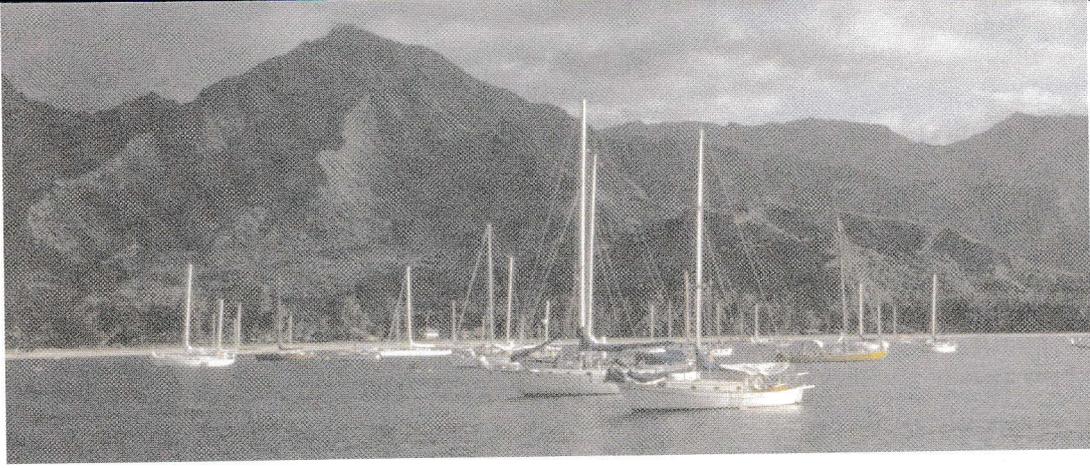
Twentieth-century environmentalists worried that, with the filling in of swampland, the razing of native forests and the spread of alien plant species, Kauai would lose its special qual-

*The nene,
Hawaii's
state bird*





Brett Uprichard



ities. Kauai's people rallied to protect their land, fighting inappropriate development and preserving the island's unique beauty.

Kokee State Park, established as a result of those efforts, includes more than 4,000 acres of forest filled with alpine plants, streams, rare birds and 45 miles of trails. The island's unique native plants are preserved in several other state parks, and in places like the 186-acre National Tropical Botanical Garden.

Kauai's unmatched natural features include Waimea Canyon, created when some cataclysmic event far back in time split the island. Visitors stand in awe at the edge of the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific," with its multicolored cliffs, soaring seabirds, drifting clouds and the serpentine line of the Waimea River far below.

The island's highest peak, Mount Waialeale, one of the wettest spots on Earth, is home to the 20-square-mile Alakai Swamp, boasting the highest elevation of any swamp on the planet. This isolated haven provides a home for species of plants and birds found nowhere else, and a boardwalk across the swamp makes it possible for visitors to see this boggy wonder. From the swamp's great store of water, Kauai's rivers flow down deep valleys to cascade in waterfalls from cliffs.

A Natural Beauty

The coastline of Kauai, 143 miles long, includes more than 50 miles of white sand beaches, with sunshine sufficient for the most luxurious of resorts. Hanalei has several of these

beaches, plus a beautiful bay and acres of the Hawaiian staple, taro, which provide more than half of the state's poi. On the amazing Na Pali Coast, towering green cliffs rise 2,000 feet along 15 miles of northwest Kauai, their steep valleys and waterfalls accessible only by boat or by the ancient Kalalau Trail.

Though Kauai's people have been able to control building on their island to keep it rural and green, they have no control over forces of nature such as Hurricane Iniki, which smashed into the island in 1992. The moviemakers then working on *Jurassic Park* holed up with everyone else while the winds destroyed homes, tore the leaves off trees and wiped out the famous Coco Palms Hotel, where Elvis Presley's cinematic wedding in *Blue Hawaii* took place in 1961.

Even disaster turned into something positive on Kauai. While Mother Nature repaired the damage to the island's greenery, neighbors helped each other to recover, building ties of caring that deepened the island's existing sense of aloha. Studies show that Kauai now leads the state in giving time and money to charities, a phenomenon that has become known as the Iniki Effect. On Kauai, clearly, beauty is more than skin deep.

Recommended reading: *Shoal of Time*, by Gavan Daws; *Surfing: The Sport of Hawaiian Kings*, by Ben Finney; *Hawaii Chronicles*, by Bob Dye; *Na Lei Makamae, The Treasured Lei*, by Marie A. McDonald and Paul R. Weissich; *Kauai: The Separate Kingdom*, by Edward Joesting.

