

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

National Park Service  U.S. Department of the Interior

FIERY ISLANDS IN THE SEA

The Hawaiians of old told many myths and stories about Pele and her home, and they saw her as a goddess of fire, the maker of mountains, and originator of many other wonders of the earth. Pele is said to have lived in a mountain called Mauna Loa, which is about 13,796 feet above sea level. She is frequently mentioned in Hawaiian mythology as a mother goddess who gave birth to the gods and who rules over fire, volcanoes, and earthquakes. Pele is often depicted as a woman with long, flowing hair, who can be both fierce and beautiful. She is also a symbol of destruction and rebirth, as volcanoes can destroy old structures and create new ones.

LAVA-TAHOE

Lava lakes are large scale eruptions that occur when a volcano is no longer active. These lakes are composed of molten rock and can be very hot. When a volcano erupts, the magma inside it heats up and rises to the surface, where it cools and hardens to form lava. Over time, the lava lakes can become very large and deep. They can also vary in color from green to dark brown, depending on the composition of the rocks.

ERUPTION BULLETIN

You can get up to date information about ongoing eruptions or potential activity by calling (808) 967-7977 day or night. Automatic answering service is updated whenever Kilauea or Mauna Loa show signs of change. Because eruptions are the most exciting events at Hawaii Volcanoes, temporary road signs will direct you to access or vantage points where you can confront the power of these events when conditions are safe.

For your safety, be aware of these special hazards at Hawaii Volcanoes:

1. Be aware of these special hazards at Hawaii Volcanoes:

   a. Do not approach the lava flow.
   b. Stay at least 100 feet away from the active flow.
   c. Do not cross, climb, or trespass onto any closed roads or hiking trails.
   d. Do not venture near the edge of any active lava flow or steam vents.
   e. Do not attempt to cross any river mouth after dark.

   In summary, the key message is to stay safe and enjoy the beauty of these wonders responsibly.
SEAPARERS FIND THE ISLANDS

Pele may well have been one of the delegates who helped the first Hawaiians to find these islands. The gods of all seafarers aided the wanderers—those in the sea, the moon, the stars, those in the winds, clouds, ocean currents, even in the swirls of the winds of the kind of the air. But as they reached the island of Hawai'i, after weeks of sailing across the uncharted sea, Pele could have been the one that attracted them, for the glow of her fires, burning like beacons atop Mauna Loa and Kilauea can be seen for many kilometers out to sea. Even if Pele happened to be sleeping when a canoe approached from the south, the huge mountain she had raised would have guided these first Hawaiians home.

They came from islands to the south—Archeologists have concluded that those discoverers came from central Polynesia, probably from the Marquesas Islands, about 1,200 years ago. The voyagers had sailed across more than 3,000 sea miles and were guided by the stars, navigation aids they had devised, had they known that they would ever reach a shining shore. A group numbering as many as 50 men, women, and children may have made the voyage, living aboard a double-hulled ship.

For them to have discovered Hawai'i was fast enough. To have survived the difficult years after they landed on these inhospitable coasts was an even greater achievement. For a would-be Polynesian, the first thing he or she would have needed to know was how to find food. While the explorers had brought plenty of fish to eat and small shells which they could trade, they soon realized that they had fished them out, and now they had to learn to find food for themselves.

Within a few years, a few of these hapless navigators might have died from disease and others might have been eaten by wild animals. Only a few of them might have survived the first summer.

The islands bore distinctive flowers and fauna—Through local populations, the first Hawaiians discovered that they had found a wonderful new world. They had found a world that was not utterly barren. Despite their isolation from other mountains, she had raised would have guided those first Hawaiians when a canoe approached from the south, the huge mountain she had raised would have guided those first Hawaiians home.

The travelers brought many things from home—Unless the explorers of that first expedition came fully equipped to found a new colony, they would have had to force to home go ahead and gather up stacks of food animals and useful plants. The discoverers must have made the return voyage, probably did more than they had planned. In no other way can we explain the arrival of so many plants which are not dispersed by natural means across thousands of kilometers of ocean. With the plants and animals they introduced, they altered the face of the land. They began the processes of change caused by men to which these islands are still being subjected.

Of food animals, there were birds, fish, chicken, and dogs. Of plants, they brought seeds, roots, or stems of taro, breadfruit, sweet potato, yams, bananas, coconut, kahunat, mountain apple, ti, ginger, tumeric, sugar cane, paper mulberry, certain medicinal plants such as moni and aha, and undoubtedly an assortment of weeds.

They brought, too, invisible things that also took root and grew, the culture of the "widespread Polynesian race," as Captain James Cook called these astonishing new arrivals when he discovered them here. They brought language, customs, rituals, the social sanctions and the laws they knew as kapus, and their arts and handicrafts. Above all, they brought their spirits and guardian spirits, "the four great gods, the forty lesser gods, the four hundred, the four thousand, the forty thousand little gods," according to an ancient chant, to dwell in the land among them. And Pele would have been among them, good and bad, as they came ashore at the end of their long voyage.

Perhaps for a generation or two the discoverers kept in touch with homelands. Later, as the long-forgotten folk explored the coastline, and Hawai'i became the only place they could know, contact ceased. For several hundred years no one made the long and arduous journey, in either direction.

Conquerors came from other islands; then explorers from the continents—Some time between 1200 and 1400, someone in the south recalled the old tales about the land of Hawai'i. A new wave of Polynesians swept up from the south, this time from Tahiti and its neighboring islands. These later voyagers, arrogant and aggressive, took over the lands and the achievements of their gentler predecessors in Hawai'i. Claiming descent from the greatest gods, the invaders became the conquerors and rulers of Hawai'i. These all and their descendants, and the priests who worked with them, ruled Hawai'i until 1778, visitors from a new race arrived. Those empires from Europe, the men who sailed with Captain Cook, ended forever the isolation that had protected for so long these remote islands and their sheltered people, plants, and animals.

Traces of early Hawaiian settlement remain on the land—In Pele's rain today, little evidence of the early Hawaiians can be found. They did not intrude much upon the landmarks near the summit of Kilauea, probably because they feared her. The ruins of only two religious heiaus, or temples, have been reported near the calderas: one upon the Pu'u o Kukuku, "the place of gently weeping," where the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory now stands, the other on Waldron Ledge, the high wall above Byron Ledge. At the southern end of the park, however, near the Kalapana entrance, the ruins of several fishing villages lie among alien woods. This coastal area was more suitable for Hawaiians to live in, both sea and land provided all they needed to prosper. And here, too, they lived far enough away from Pele's lair to be able to dodge her wrath whenever she sent rivers of lava down the mountainside.

Adjoining the park museum at the Kalapana entrance, stands the remnant of one ancient Hawai'i's most sacred shrines. Wahāna Heau, the Temple of the Red-mouthed God. According to tradition, it was built in the 13th century, in the new-walled style prescribed by Pūʻuloa, chief prior to the conquering all. In the same spirit of their forefathers, theخفضى ى أر پو، introduced several novelties: a red-feathered god for a ruling chief to wear as a sign of his office; the abatement of prostitution for commoners when in the presence of the chief's; the glancing, red-feathered image of the god of war Ku-Kioloa, the Kahu-Dei-of-Lands; and the sacrifice of human beings to that same bloodthirsty deity.

HAWAII VOLCANOES TODAY

Today, this national park, created primarily to preserve the natural setting of Mauna Loa and Kilauea, is also a refuge for these natural wonders and the amazing encroachments of civilization.

Kilauea, the Old Volcano

Kilauea may be the most studied volcano on earth. For more than 20 years, scientists have studied the processes and effects of its lava flows. Lava flows from Kilauea have altered the landscape near the park and have provided a living laboratory for geologists. The lava flows have been studied by scientists at the University of Hawaii and by several other institutions.

Kilauea is an active volcano, and the lava flows are constantly changing. The lava flows are monitored by scientists at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, who work with the National Park Service and other agencies to ensure the safety of visitors to the park.

Volcanic activity at Kilauea is not only a scientific curiosity, but also an important resource for the people of Hawaii. The lava flows provide a source of heat for buildings and homes, and they also provide a source of energy for electrical power generation.

Kilauea is also a popular destination for tourists. The park offers a variety of activities, including hiking, camping, and sightseeing.

Mauna Loa, the Sleeping Giant

Mauna Loa is one of the largest volcanoes in the world. It is located in the northern part of Hawaii and is surrounded by a national park. Mauna Loa is a dormant volcano, meaning that it is not currently active.

However, Mauna Loa is still a source of scientific interest. Scientists continue to study the volcano in order to understand its past and future behavior. For example, they monitor the volcano's seismic activity, which is a sign of potential volcanic eruptions.

Visiting the park

Visitors to the park can experience the beauty and power of both Kilauea and Mauna Loa. They can hike along the National Park Service trails, visit the park's visitor center, and learn about the history and science of the area from interpretive programs and displays.

For more information about the park, visitors can visit the park's website or contact the park headquarters. The park is open year-round, and visitors are encouraged to plan their visits in advance to ensure the best possible experience.