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SEAFARERS FIND THE ISLANDS

Pele may well have been one of the deities who helped the first Polynesians discover the island of Hawaii. The gods of all seafarers anecdored the wanderers—those in the sun, the moon, the sea, the wind, the cloud, owls, dreams, even in the wreck of the sea and the birds of the air. But as they neared the island of Hawaii, a series of omens caused them to pause. Pele, by Phoebe Snow, may have been the one that attracted them, for the glow from her fires, burning like the ocean's depths, could be seen from many kilometers out to sea. Even if Pele happened to be sleeping when a cause approached from the west, the mountains she had raised would have guided those first Hawaiian voyagers.

They came from islands to the south—Archaeologists have concluded that the first Polynesians came from eastern Polynesia, probably from the Marquesas Islands, about 1,200 years ago. The voyagers had sailed across more than 3,800 kilometers (2,400 miles) of open sea, not certain that they would ever see land coming into view. A group numbering as many as 50 men, women, and children may have made the voyage, living a great deal closer to the edge of civilization. For them to have discovered Hawaii's first fish was a great feat.

To have survived the difficult years after they landed upon these inhospitable coasts was an even greater achievement. The islands they found were not utterly barren. Despite their isolation from other continents and islands, their Hawaiian relatives have managed to survive and thrive.

To the uninitiated, the Impressive Polynesian sites of Kilauea, Pu'u O'o, and Mauna Loa are easy to visit, for the park has improved access for tourists. For the ardent and the art lover, the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory is an enticing place to visit. Here is where the volcano maintains a watchful eye upon the lava flows, the ash, and the land.

The travelers brought many things from home—Unlike the explorers of that first expedition, who were fully equipped to find a new colony, they would have been forced to go home again to gather up more of the tools and animals and useful plants. The voyagers must have made the return voyage, and probably did so more than once. 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.

Food animals, they brought pigs, chickens, and dogs.

Plants, they brought seeds, roots, or stems of tree, breadfruit, sweet potato, yam, bananas, coconut, kava root, mango, apple, ginger, turmeric, sugar cane, papaya, mulberry, ornamental plants and flowers including ferns and flowers, and the plants and animals—except for mammals. Only bats and seals preceded man to these islands.

Botanists believe that all of the 1,700 species evolved by ocean currents, high winds, or far-flying birds. Very few of those hapless migrants survived in that brutal new environment.

But these native plants and animals, while they added to the flora and fauna of the islands, they still have not found their own unique species. Despite their isolation from other continents and islands, their Hawaiian relatives have managed to survive and thrive.

HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK EXTENDS FROM MAUNA LOA TO THE COASTALK NEAR KALAPANA

In the late 18th century, the first European explorers of Hawaii discovered the islands and their inhabitants. In the early 19th century, they were followed by missionaries who established missions on the islands, and by a growing number of tourists who came to enjoy the natural beauty of the islands. In the late 19th century, the Hawaiian government established a park on the island of Hawaii, and in the early 20th century, the park was expanded to include the island of Molokai.

Today, the park is a national monument, and is managed by the National Park Service. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Hawaii, and is a popular destination for both tourists and researchers.

In the park, visitors can explore the diverse ecosystem of the islands, including the volcanic landscapes, the forests, and the beaches. They can also learn about the cultural history of the island, including the traditions and customs of the Native Hawaiian people.

The park is home to a variety of plants and animals, including the native Hawaiian plants and animals that are unique to the islands. The park is also home to a number of rare and endangered species, including the Hawaiian duck, the Hawaiian crow, and the Hawaiian green sea turtle.

The park is open to the public, and offers a variety of activities, including hiking, camping, and Guided tours. The park is open all year round, and is accessible to people of all ages and abilities.