Foundation Document Overview
Kalaupapa National Historical Park
Hawai‘i

Contact Information
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Purpose

Kalaupapa National Historical Park honors the moʻolelo (story) of the isolated Hansen’s disease (leprosy) community by preserving and interpreting its site and values. The historical park also tells the story of the rich Hawaiian culture and traditions at Kalaupapa that go back at least 900 years.

Significance

Significance statements express why Kalaupapa National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Kalaupapa National Historical Park preserves the only intact historic institutional settlement in the United States created for the sole purpose of isolating Hansen’s disease (leprosy) patients from the rest of society.
- Kalaupapa National Historical Park’s surviving (and deceased) Hansen’s disease population, with its material culture, oral histories, and intact cultural landscape, is the only community of its kind in the United States.
- Kalaupapa National Historical Park is the site of renowned work by Saint Damien de Veuster, Saint Marianne Cope, Brother Dutton, Jonathan Napela, and Ambrose Hutchison that has brought widespread attention to the segregation and care of those afflicted with leprosy. Their work inspired many religious leaders, medical professionals, and lay people to serve the Hansen’s disease community.
Significance

• Kalaupapa National Historical Park’s history and landscape document at least 900 years of native Hawaiian life, activities, and cultural heritage prior to 1866 when the first patients arrived. The vast number of archeological resources and variety of site types make the park one of the richest and most valuable archeological complexes in Hawai‘i.

• Many who come to Kalaupapa recognize mana or spiritual power that Hawaiian people acknowledge in everything. The ‘āina (land), a vital source that links us to spirit, is sacred and connects us to the continued presence of all who lived out their lives on this peninsula. The ‘āina’s mana (spiritual essence) connects us to each other.

• Kalaupapa National Historical Park presents an exemplary geologic and scenic panorama of towering sea cliffs and a flat leaf-shaped peninsula that was created by a cataclysmic landslide and subsequent volcanic eruption.

• From uka to kai (mountain to sea), Kalaupapa National Historical Park preserves and interprets some of the last remaining examples of fragile Hawaiian Island plant and animal communities found nowhere else in the world.

• Kalaupapa National Historical Park preserves robust and diverse nearshore marine resources due to its geographic remoteness, locally restricted access, and controlled subsistence practices.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

• Patients
• Kama‘āina
• Saint Damien, Saint Marianne, Brother Dutton, and Kōkua (Patient Helpers)—Their Work with Hansen’s Disease Patients
• Stories, Oral Histories, and Mana
• Native Hawaiian Traditional Cultural Use
• Historic Buildings, Structures, Cultural Landscapes, and Archeological Features Associated with the Hansen’s Disease Settlement
• Museum Collections
• Educational Values
• Geological Features and Unobstructed Viewshed
• Soundscapes and Dark Night Skies
• Terrestrial Ecosystem
• Marine Ecosystem
• Waikolu Stream

Kalaupapa National Historical Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

• Molokai Light Station Historic District
Kalaupapa National Historical Park was established by Congress on December 22, 1980. It was established to preserve and interpret Kalaupapa for the education and inspiration of present and future generations. It was also established to provide a well-maintained community in which the Hansen’s disease (leprosy) patients were guaranteed that they could remain at Kalaupapa as long as they wished, to protect the patients’ current lifestyle and privacy, and to provide limited visitation by the general public.

The primary story being told at Kalaupapa is the forced isolation from 1866 until 1969 of people from Hawai‘i afflicted with Hansen’s disease to the remote northern Kalaupapa peninsula. The establishment of an isolation settlement at Kalaupapa tore apart Hawaiian society. The impacts of broken connections with the ‘āina (land) and of family members “lost” to Kalaupapa are still felt in Hawai‘i today.

Structural remnants built and used over centuries are everywhere within the park and illustrate how early Native Hawaiians lived their daily lives in Kalaupapa, prior to the Hansen’s disease settlement. Hawaiian culture continues to be a core value of Kalaupapa’s living community.

Access to Kalaupapa is severely limited with no roads to the peninsula from “topside” Molokai. Land access is via a steep trail, and a commuter class aircraft provides air access to Kalaupapa.

Kalaupapa National Historical Park differs significantly from most other national parks in that almost all of the area within the boundaries is in nonfederal ownership yet managed by the National Park Service. Most of the land and facilities are owned by State of Hawai‘i departments; a small private holding is at the top of the cliffs. The National Park Service owns 23 acres that includes the Molokai Light Station.