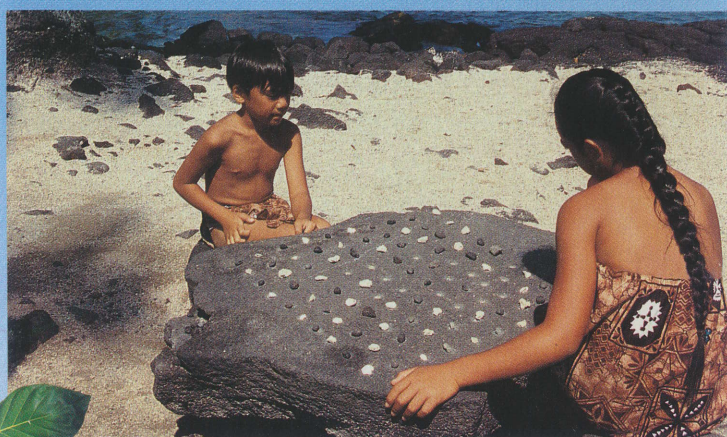


Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historical Park
Hawaii





On the black lava flats of the southern Kona Coast, Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau preserves aspects of traditional Hawaiian life. Hōnaunau Bay, with its sheltered canoe landing and availability of drinking water, was a natural place for the *ali'i*—royal chiefs—to establish one of their most important residences. Separated from the royal grounds by a massive wall was the *pu'uhonua*, a place of refuge for defeated warriors, noncombatants in time of war, and those who violated *kapu*, the sacred laws. This place was used for centuries. Then in 1819, Kamehameha II abolished traditional religious practices, and many of the old religious sites and structures were destroyed or abandoned. The temples of the *pu'uhonua* were left to the extremes of sun, wind, and sea. In the 1920s, the area was set aside as a county park. In 1961 it became a national historical park to maintain a setting where old Hawaiian ways continue in the modern world.

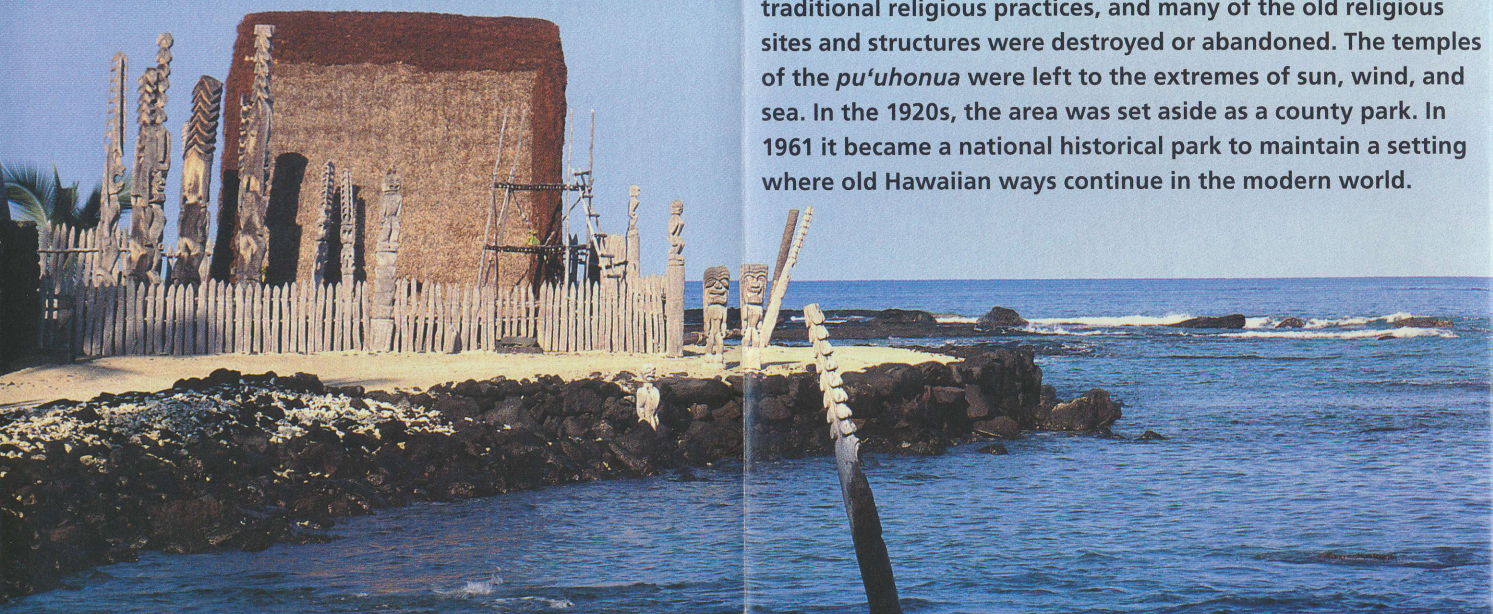
Royal Grounds

This was the home of the *ali'i* of the Kona District on the island of Hawai'i. The royal grounds were within the *ahupua'a* of Hōnaunau, a political subdistrict that descended the slope of Mauna Loa into the ocean. This mountain-to-sea method of land division gave residents areas for farming, collecting drinking water, and fishing.

The royal residence consisted of 10 or more thatched buildings in the coconut palm grove. Attendants and servants performed daily tasks, hurrying from hut to hut, serving the chief or perhaps preparing fish taken from the

royal fishponds. The *ali'i* might have been engaged in negotiating war or peace or in recreational activities like playing *kōnane* or riding wooden sleds down the *hōlua* course outside the village.

Like the royal grounds, the beach canoe landing was only for the chief and his attendants; a wooden image in the water warned others of the *kapu*. But beyond the Great Wall, on the ocean side, was a place that—if someone could reach it—was open to all.





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© LAURENCE PARENT (LEFT), NPS, Kī PLANT (RIGHT), © DOUGLAS FEEBLES (BACKGROUND PHOTO)



Left to right: noni (Indian mulberry) leaves and fruit; *kōnane* players; royal grounds; aerial view of the *pu'uhonua*; two *kī'i*, guardians of the place of refuge; *kī* plant.

Background photo: Hale o Keawe with Keone'ele cove in foreground.

Place of Refuge

A massive stone wall, built in about 1550 and still standing, separates the royal grounds from the *pu'uhonua*. It was not the stone wall that bestowed sanctity to the area but the chiefs' sacred bones. Tradition holds that the *ali'i* possessed *mana*, spiritual power.

Hale o Keawe, the newest *heiau* in the *pu'uhonua*, was built about 1650 to honor Keawe'ikekahiali'iokamoku, great-grandfather of Kamehameha I. After Keawe died, his bones were placed in the temple. The *mana* of Keawe, an important chief, was believed to protect

the *pu'uhonua*, a sanctuary that gave people a second chance.

Blood could not be shed within its confines. But who sought new life here and what had they done? Some were noncombatants during war. The object of war, to exterminate the enemy, included everyone on the opposing side. Those too old, too young, or unable to fight sought safety here. Defeated warriors came to the *pu'uhonua*, where they waited until the battle ended; their allegiance then pledged to the victor. In the 1782 Battle of Moku'ōhai, an enemy of Kamehameha sought

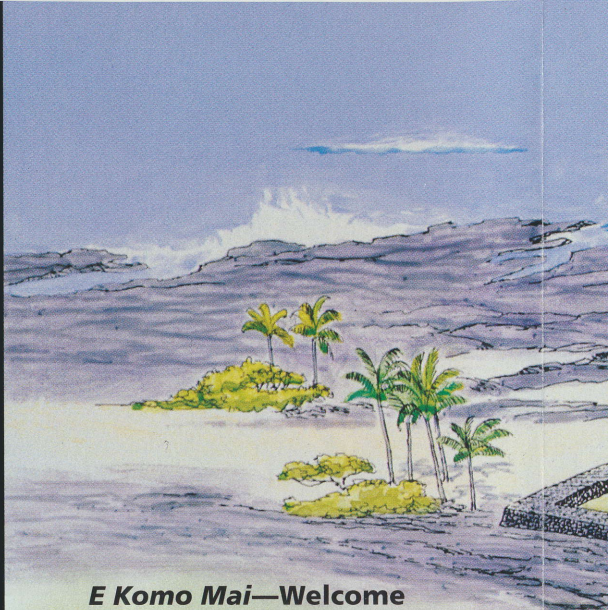
refuge here, later becoming the king's prime minister.

What were some of the sacred laws? According to *kapu*, commoners could not look at or approach the chief, let their shadow fall on the palace grounds, walk in the chief's footsteps, or touch his possessions. *Kapu* regulated everyday activities. Women could not eat food reserved as offerings to the gods. They could not prepare meals for men or eat with them. Seasons for fishing, killing animals, and gathering timber were strictly controlled.

If a *kapu* was broken the penalty could mean death. Otherwise the gods might react with violence: volcanic eruptions, tidal waves, famine, or earthquakes. To protect themselves from catastrophes the people chased *kapu* breakers until they were caught—or until they made it to a *pu'uhonua*. If they reached the *pu'uhonua*, the *kahuna pule* (priest) performed a ceremony of absolution, and the offenders could return home safely. The spirit of the *pu'uhonua* was respected by all.



Exploring the Park



E Komo Mai—Welcome

This conception by artist Herb Kawainui Kane shows the *pu'uhonua*, the royal grounds, and area partially enclosed by the Great Wall. The scene is based on the park's appearance today, although some elements have been recreated to show how Hawaiians used these places centuries ago.

You are invited to take the ½-mile self-guiding tour through the royal grounds and the *pu'uhonua*. Except for the sandy area near the cove, the tour route is accessible to persons in wheelchairs; service animals are welcome. Please stay on the trail within the *pu'uhonua*.

Be Safe and Protect the Park

Bring water, sturdy walking shoes, hat, and sunscreen. Stone structures are fragile; do not climb or walk on them. It is unlawful to disturb or remove any structures, artifacts, plants, or wildlife. For firearms and other regulations, check the park website.

Remember, this is a sacred place; please be respectful.



Nei Kāwainui Kāne

Visitor Center

Enjoy Your Walking Tour

Points of interest are marked with numbered posts.

1 Royal Grounds Imagine the scene: Warriors keep watch while workers pound taro and take fish from the ponds. Two courtiers play *kōnane*. Suddenly activity ceases as the high chief, his wives, and warriors arrive by canoe and step ashore. If you are a commoner, you cannot go inside the royal grounds or even cast your shadow within. The penalty for violating *kapu* could mean death.

2 Temple Model The framework for this half-size reconstruction of the Hale o Keawe temple is 'ōhi'a wood tied with coconut-fiber. *Kī* leaves form the roof thatching.

3 Kōnane Pebbles for this traditional Hawaiian game are arranged on a replica *papamū*, a stone surface. If you wish to play, ask for rules at the visitor center.

4 Kānoa Bowls carved into the rock may have been used to hold dye, evaporate ocean water to make salt, or pound the 'awa root to make a ceremonial drink.

5 Tree Mold Over 1,000 years ago lava from Mauna Loa surrounded everything in its path and knocked down a tree. Do you see other tree molds?

6 Keone'e This cove, the royal canoe landing, was forbidden to commoners. Watch for sea turtles, but do not approach them.

7 The Great Wall A wall up to 10 feet high and 17 feet thick separated the royal compound from the *pu'uhonua*. Workers stacked stones so tightly that the walls needed no mortar. Built around 1550 the wall has been stabilized and repaired.

8 Hale o Keawe *Ki'i* (wooden images) stand watch over this rebuilt temple and mausoleum that once held the bones of 23 *ali'i* (noble chiefs). *Ho'okupu* (offerings) were placed on the *lele* (tower).

9 Pu'uhonua Imagine another scene: You have broken a *kapu*. You swim across the bay, pursued by warriors. As they close in you reach the *pu'uhonua* shore. You are safe! No one may shed blood here, and you thank the gods. Soon you will be absolved by a priest and allowed to go home.

10 Keōua Stone Mark Twain reported in his *Letters from Hawaii* that the stone was the favorite resting place of Keōua, high chief of Kona. Holes at the base may have supported posts for a canopy.

11 'Āle'ale'a When it was the principal *heiau* for the *pu'uhonua*, this platform likely had *ki'i* and thatched huts. It was built in seven stages.

12 Ka'ahumanu Stone Legend holds that Queen Ka'ahumanu, favorite wife of Kamehameha I, swam to the *pu'uhonua* after a quarrel with her husband. She hid under this stone, but her barking dog gave her away. Her husband found her, and they made up.

13 Papamū This is an original stone used in the game of *kōnane*.

14 Old Heiau Site These stones are all that remain of a temple, its name lost over time. One of the oldest structures in the *pu'uhonua*, it has been ravaged for centuries by ocean waves.

Continue your tour through the opening in the Great Wall.

15 Heleipālala This spring-water and saltwater pond held fish to be eaten by the *ali'i*.

16 Hālau *Kī* leaves hang from the roof of this structure. Workers tied *kī* to ropes, forming a net used to drive fish into the shallows—a fishing method called *hukilau*.

Planning Your Visit

Getting There The park is on the Kona Coast of the island of Hawai'i. Take HI 11 (Hwy. 11) to HI 160 (Hwy. 160), after milepost 104; go downhill to the entrance.

Visitor Center Begin at the visitor center, open daily, for information, publications, exhibits, and a gift shop.

Things To See and Do Get immersed in ancient Hawaiian culture as you explore the park. Activities include a self-guiding tour of the grounds (*map at left*), picnicking, and fishing. You may hike to Ki'ilae Village, two miles round-trip, to see volcanic features, ocean views, and the remains of ancient structures. On the weekend nearest July 1, the park hosts a festival celebrating traditional Hawaiian ways.

More Information

Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park
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808-328-2326
www.nps.gov/puho

Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at www.nps.gov.