

# HE PUKE ALAKA‘I NO NĀ MALIHINI PONO I HAWAI‘I

*A Guidebook for Ethical Visitors to Hawai‘i*



## ***Huilua Loko I‘a (fishpond)***

*Ahupua‘a o Kahana, Moku o Ko‘olauloa, Mokupuni o O‘ahu*

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## Aloha 'oukou!

'O Tyler ko'u inoa, 'oihana au i ka mea kākau nū hou a mea noi'i i Hawai'i nei.

Ua ho'ākoakoa au i kēia puke alaka'i i kōkua iā 'oukou lilo ma'a i ka Hawai'i — ka 'āina, nā Kānaka, a ka mo'omeheu — ma mua o kā 'oukou kipa.

He kama'āina ho'i au i Hawai'i, he mea manawale'a no mau hui mālama 'āina, he haumana 'ōlelo Hawai'i a uhau humu pōhaku, a ua kālai kēlā mau 'ike i kēia puke alaka'i.

Mana'olana au e kōkua 'ana ia 'oukou pilina me kēia mau mokupuni a mau kānaka, a mana'o'i'o au e maliu mai kēia 'ōlelo a'o e kōkua 'ana 'oukou — a mea mau kipa kēia mua aku — hoihoi hou kā 'oukou kipa.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Tyler

## Greetings everyone!

*My name is Tyler, I work as a journalist and researcher here in Hawai'i.*

*I assembled this guidebook to help you get more familiar with Hawai'i — the land, the people, and the culture — before you visit.*

*I'm also a Hawai'i resident, a volunteer for several stewardship groups here, and a student of Hawaiian language and Hawaiian rock wall weaving, and these experiences have all shaped this guide.*

*I hope this helps you connect with these islands and people, and I believe that following these tips will ultimately help you — and future visitors — have a more enjoyable visit.*

*With warmest aloha,*

*Tyler*

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Mahalo nui to the following people for sharing their mana'o (perspectives) on this guide:

**Micky Huihui** | Executive Director, [Hawai'i People's Fund](#)

**Kimeona Kāne** | Director of Community Outreach, [808 Cleanups](#)

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# 01 | KILO: Learn about Hawai'i

**Kilo** = observe by watching closely

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*'A'ohē pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi*

*Not all knowledge is learned in one school*

If, like me, you were educated in schools on the US mainland, **you've probably learned about Hawai'i mostly through Hollywood, tourism industry ads, and social media.** Even if your history textbook briefly mentioned Hawai'i, it was almost certainly written by someone who isn't Hawaiian and doesn't speak 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

These sources have **painted Hawai'i primarily as a paradise and playground** for tourists and the ultra-wealthy, and its people as hospitality workers here to cater to them. They've also misinformed us about foreigners' track record on the islands.

The reality is that **centuries of colonialism and racism have taken — and continue to take — a devastating toll** on Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), the 'āina (land), and wai (water), and we are rarely shown this side of Hawai'i in our pop culture, media, or schools.

**You're not visiting a paradise, but a fragile island community facing existential threats:**

- 💧 **Water crisis:** 77% of O'ahu residents' water at risk of being contaminated by jet fuel
- 🍲 **Food crisis:** 90% of food imported, one hurricane could deplete our food stocks
- ⚡ **Energy crisis:** already high costs exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine
- 🏠 **Housing crisis:** 50% of Native Hawaiians displaced, \$1 million median home price
- 💰 **Economic crisis:** high cost-of-living, low-paying jobs, over-reliance on tourism and military
- 🌍 **Climate crisis:** rising temperatures, wildfires, ecosystem damage, erosion

These issues also disproportionately impact Kānaka Maoli, who face higher rates of [houselessness](#), [health disparities](#), [incarceration](#), and [poverty](#).

The goal of sharing this history is to help you **understand who and what paved the way for your upcoming vacation** and how **your presence here impacts current and future Hawaiians.**



# 3 Things to Know about Hawai'i That Your Hotel Won't Tell You

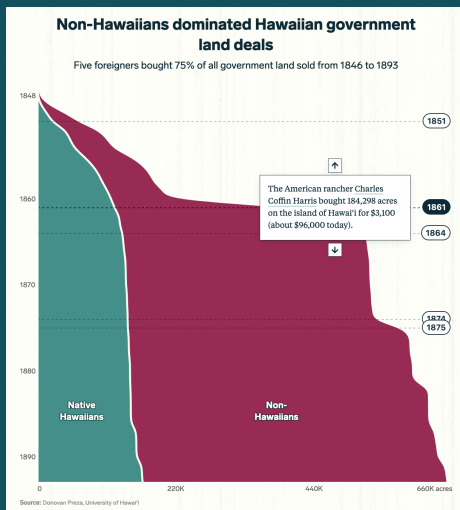
## 1 | America has illegally occupied Hawai'i for 129 years



[Ahupua'a Explained](#)

For more than 1,500 years, Kānaka Maoli have lived in Hawai'i, stewarding it based on the belief that people are [connected to the land](#), sharing it collectively and caring for it, not as property to be owned.

They built self-sufficient communities around ahupua'a: [land divisions and sustainable resource management practices](#) that once supported 800,000 Hawaiians with [virtually no environmental harms](#).



[Foreign land grabs in the 1800s](#)

Westerners arrived just 244 years ago, bringing diseases that [killed 90% of Hawaiians](#) within a century.

Driven in part by [profit, racism, and the backing of massive militaries](#), they persuaded the Hawaiian Kingdom to open up land to private ownership, which overwhelmingly benefit them, not Hawaiians.

Western plantation owners hoarded water, drying up sacred Hawaiian lo'i (taro patches) in a [practice that continues today](#), and exploited Asian and Portuguese migrant workers in a system a US diplomat once called ["the slave trade under another name."](#)

They also took over Hawaiian politics, in part through racist property and literacy requirements on voting.



[Overthrow conspirators](#)

In 1893, US businessmen, a rogue US diplomat, and an all-white militia [staged a coup](#), overthrowing Queen Lili'uokalani.

US President Cleveland called it an [illegal "act of war"](#) and tried to restore the queen, but Congress refused.

In 1898, [US lawmakers claimed Hawai'i](#) as a US territory via a process that violated the US Constitution and international law, wasn't agreed to by any Hawaiian Kingdom officials, and was opposed by [90% of Native Hawaiians](#).

**In the overthrow, US businessmen illegally seized 1.8 million acres, nearly 50% of Hawai'i.**

## 2 | The True Costs of the Military, Tourism, and Over-Development



Kaho'olawe bombings

The US overthrow continues to impact Hawai'i today.

The businessmen who took over sold the land they stole for cheap to the US military and their plantation industry cronies.

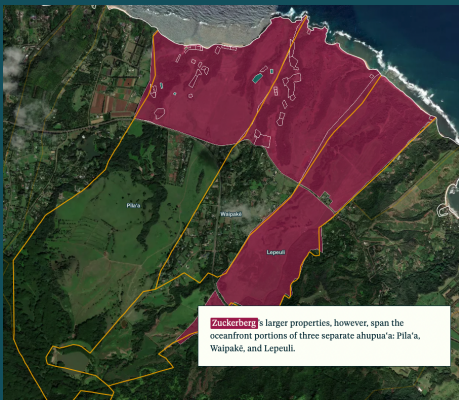
The military got 65-year leases for [massive swaths of land for \\$1 each](#), and went on to pollute sites like [Mākuā Valley](#), [Pōhakuloa](#), and the [island of Kaho'olawe](#) to the point that they have become uninhabitable.



Red Hill protests (Civil Beat)

Last year, the [Navy's underground fuel tanks](#) at Red Hill, near Pearl Harbor, again leaked jet fuel into the aquifer that supplies 77% of O'ahu residents, [sickening and displacing dozens of families](#). Despite decades of leaks and warnings, the Navy has [repeatedly lied](#) and [covered up](#) details.

The entire island has been told to [limit water use](#) due to the latest leak, and all [new construction could be halted](#).



Mark Zuckerberg's 1,400 acre Kauai estate

Plantations have since pivoted to more lucrative projects such as environmentally harmful [agribusinesses](#), [hotels](#), and [luxury real estate](#) that have fueled [soaring real estate prices](#) and [exacerbated socioeconomic inequality](#).

Hotels, vacation rental investors, [platforms like Airbnb](#), and ultra-wealthy individuals like [Mark Zuckerberg](#) and [Larry Ellison](#), have all exploited US-imposed legal and economic systems to displace Kānaka Maoli families, while benefiting massively from the state's regressive, [lowest-in-the-nation property taxes](#).

Meanwhile, the [US still legally owes land reparations to 46,255 Kānaka Maoli](#), and even those who have secured leases still often face extreme [environmental racism](#).

**The pandemic has massively exacerbated Hawai'i's housing crisis as more wealthy remote workers, investors, and retirees buy second homes and rental properties in Hawai'i.**

### 3 | A Hawaiian renaissance is driving a more equitable and sustainable future

For more than a century, Christian missionaries and other Western settlers tried to erase Hawaiian cultural practices, like [hula](#) and [lomilomi massage](#), forcing them underground and [banning 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in schools](#) from 1896-1986.

But in the 1970s, Kānaka Maoli started a movement to revive their language, culture, values and connection to 'āina amid a wave of [forced evictions](#) and [destruction](#) of their kulāiwi (homeland).

That movement sparked monumental [political and legal changes](#), and has grown since, with the pandemic further exposing the precarity of being so dependent on tourism, imported food, the military, and real estate speculation.

Residents are increasingly lobbying the state to spend more on things like [Hawaiian land reparations](#), [resource management rooted in Hawaiian values](#), [local food production](#), and [community-owned renewable energy](#), while putting limits on tourism, [vacation rentals](#), [development](#), and [real estate speculation](#).

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#### What does this mean for you as a visitor?

The biggest takeaways for visitors are:

1. **Acknowledge** these historical injustices and their continued impact today.
2. **Respect** the fact that you're a visitor here and treat your hosts with aloha.
3. **Give more than you take** to help preserve Hawai'i for future generations.

#### Follow on Instagram to learn more:

[@hawaiipeoplesfund](#)

[@ainamomona](#)

[@protectmaunakea](#)

[@kuekanaka](#)

[@alohaadvocacy](#)

[@kanaeokana](#)

[@thekuproject](#)

## 02 | PONO: Be a responsible visitor

**Pono** = goodness, righteousness, morality, equity, beneficial, necessary, proper procedure

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### *Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono*

*The sovereignty/life of the land is perpetuated through righteousness*

King Kamehameha III said this phrase on what became known as Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea ([Sovereignty Restoration Day](#), July 31, 1843), following a five-month takeover by rogue British naval officers.

Kamehameha's words are a reminder that, with [tourism reaching unsustainable levels](#), it's crucial to be pono in your actions to ensure Hawai'i and its people thrive into future generations.

But these tips are just a starting point: they're the **bare minimum** for being a responsible visitor.

### 1 | Give aloha



Aloha means love and [so much more](#), but importantly, it implies giving aloha first, not just expecting to receive it.

Yet [the tourism industry](#) has perverted aloha to look like smiling service workers catering to tourists' every want.

This may be your vacation, but it's these folks' lives and jobs — please be respectful and don't act entitled.

### 2 | Conserve water



You are visiting O'ahu during a water **EMERGENCY**.

We have to **reduce water use by 10-20%** this summer because of the Navy's fuel leak and expected droughts. If we don't, the state may impose daily water limits.

Hotels and golf courses are some of [the biggest users](#), and the more guests who come, the more they use.

Please conserve water. Here are a few [basic tips](#).



### 3 | Stay within approved areas



Dozens of tourists die every year hiking Hawai'i trails — both legal and off-limits trails — a problem that has gotten worse with social media encouraging people to defy warning signs and trespass. Heed all signs, stay on approved and marked trails, and bring proper gear.

There are also many wahi pana (sacred places) across the islands. For sites open to visitors, follow proper etiquette.

If you see signs marking kapu (forbidden) areas, do not enter.

### 4 | Respect the kai



Drowning has long been the leading cause of death for tourists in Hawai'i and has spiked in recent years. Strong currents, big wave breaks, and snorkeling can be fatal if you're not careful.

Respect the kai (ocean) by learning about ocean safety, going to lifeguarded beaches, heeding all signs, and staying alert when in the water.

### 5 | Mālama 'āina

Mālama 'āina, caring for the land, may be the most important thing you can do as a visitor.

That means picking up your (and even others') trash, not taking rocks/shells/flowers as souvenirs, using reef safe sunscreen and reusable water bottles/bags/etc., staying the legally required distances away from wildlife, and following rules about bringing foods/animals to Hawai'i.

But it also means understanding that — especially on an island — everything is interconnected, and that your actions have immediate ripple effects on everyone here.



## 03 | KĀKO‘O: Support local

**Kāko‘o** = support, assist, prop up

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### *I hele i kauhale, pa‘a pū‘olo i ka lima*

*When going to visit others' homes, always carry a gift in the hand*

### 1 | Support local businesses

In 1989, Hawai‘i hosted 6.7 million tourists, who spent an average \$2,730 each. By 2019, that jumped to 9.7 million tourists, but each only spent \$1,877 — meaning each [tourist is contributing 30% less to Hawai‘i’s economy](#) than they used to.

Also, much of the revenue generated by tourism goes not toward local businesses, but to large multinational corporations, who have made the industry [one of the lowest paying](#) in the state.

You can help reverse these trends by supporting locally-owned — and especially Native Hawaiian-owned — businesses and tour operators, which you can find below:

- [Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association](#)
- [Pop-Up Mākeke](#)
- [House of Mana Up](#)
- [Kanaka Economic Development Alliance Project](#)
- [Office of Hawaiian Affairs OHAWaiian Directory](#)

### 2 | Donate money to local nonprofits

Conservation International estimates that [Hawai‘i needs \\$886 million](#) annually to take care of our environment, yet we receive \$535 million from taxes and private funding sources.

CI said a \$38.50 per-tourist “green fee” — which has been super effective in environmentally fragile places like New Zealand and Palau — would help close that gap (though it likely underestimates the true “cost” per tourist).

Until that goes into effect, the best way to help preserve Hawai‘i’s delicate ecosystem is to donate to local “mālama ‘āina” organizations like the ones below:

- [Hawai‘i People’s Fund](#)
- [808 Cleanups](#)
- [Hawai‘i Land Trust](#)
- [Purple Mai‘a Foundation](#)

**Mahalo nui loa** (thank you so much) for taking the time to learn about Hawai'i, how you can be a responsible visitor, and how you can support an equitable and sustainable future.

If you want to dive deeper, check out these out:

## Readings

Hui o Hawai'i Pono'i | [Hawai'i History Timeline](#)

Haunani Kay-Trask | [From A Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i](#)

Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa | [Native Land, Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?](#)

Jon Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio | [Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887](#)

Noelani Goodyear Ka'ōpua, Craig Howes, Jon Osorio, Aiko Yamashiro | [The Value of Hawai'i 3](#)

Noelani Goodyear Ka'ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala | [A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty](#)

Queen Lili'uokalani | [Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen](#)

Mary Kawena Pukui | ['Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings](#)

Jon Van Dyke | [Who Owns The Crown Lands of Hawai'i?](#)

*Most of these are available for pickup at Native Books, an amazing Kānaka Wahine (Native woman-owned) bookstore that's worth visiting in person!*

## Native Books (Nu'uauu)

Arts & Letters Building

1164 Nu'uauu Ave.

Tuesday - Saturday • 11am - 5pm

Sunday • 10am - 4pm

808-548-5554

## Videos

Nā Maka o ka 'Āina | [Featured Videos](#)

Christopher Kahunahana | [Waikiki](#) (feature film)

Keli'ii Grace | [Ala Moana Boys](#) (short film, not currently screening)

Jude Weng | [Finding 'Ohana](#) (feature film)