Kaloko-Honokōhau

The partly shaded Ala Hele Kahakai, or Coastal Trail, has spectacular coastal scenery.

'Ai'ōpio fishtrap was constructed of lava rock by Hawaiians. Fish swam into the bay at high tide and were trapped inside the walls as the tide fell.

Honu, or green sea turtles, like to bask in the sun. They are endangered and are protected by law. Please do not disturb them.

The kuapā, or rock wall, now being reconstructed, separates Kaloko fishpond from the ocean.

Anchialine ponds, either natural or hand-dug, provide special habitat for endangered species and much-needed drinking water.

Despite the modern development nearby, here at Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park the ancient world surrounds you. Established in 1978, this park preserves the coastal sections of two ahupua'a (traditional land divisions)—Kaloko and Honokōhau. In the past hundreds of Hawaiians lived here. Extended family groups fished, farmed, and lived self-sufficiently.

Hawaiian society was highly stratified; ali'i (chiefs) and priests ranked highest, followed by warriors, tradespeople, and commoners. They were governed by the konohiki (land managers) who were accountable to their ali'i. Strict principles of land and ocean conservation were enforced through kapu, religious laws.

Look mauka, up toward the mountain Hualālai. Then look makai—out to sea. The ahupua'a extended from the upper slopes of the volcano down to the coast and even out into the ocean. Most necessities for survival were found within the boundaries of the ahupua'a.

The volcano produced two types of lava: the smooth, ropy flows called pāhoehoe, and the rough chunks of 'a'ā. In the park you will see what look like piles of rock protruding from the lava field. Take a closer look; they are ancient structures that survive today because of the engineering skills of the Hawaiians. Some of the ahu (large rock cairns) you see served as dividers between ahupua'a. Formal boundaries ensured that sufficient resources were available to the people of each ahupua'a.

Also built from lava rock were agricultural, fishing, and religious structures. On the road to Kaloko fishpond you can see elevated planters used to cultivate sweet potatoes, gourds, and other crops. An old heiau stands at the southern end of the park beside 'Ai'ōpio fishtrap. Throughout Hawaii heiau (religious temples) were built as tribute to the gods and for religious ceremonies dedicated to war, agriculture, fishing, ocean navigation, and medicine. Hawaiians gave offerings of prayers, plants, goods, chants, dance, and song.

Hawaiians had many different methods of fishing depending on the character of the coastal terrain. Nets were made of plant fiber, while fishhooks and lures were made from bone, shell, and rock. The coastal trail will lead you past the Kaloko and 'Aimakapā fishponds and the 'Ai'ōpiō fishtrap. Kaloko fishpond is an excellent example of traditional aquaculture. Fish were raised here to sustain the population. The kuapā, or fishpond wall, separates the pond from the ocean.

Many coastal dwellers shared the ocean's bounty with their families in the uplands and, in return, received mountain products. Fish, salt, and coconuts were collected from coastal areas while ulu (breadfruit), kalo (taro), and wauke (paper mulberry) were cultivated higher up the mountain.

Water is precious in this arid environment. Fresh groundwater flows downslope and mixes with salt water near the ocean. Where this brackish water is exposed at natural pits or hand-dug wells, it is known as an anchialine pond. The water level of these ponds fluctuates with the tide, reminding us of their underground connection to the sea. In times past they provided drinking water for humans. Now these ponds create habitat for plant and animal life found nowhere else.

Near 'Aimakapā fishpond is the hōlua, or stone slide. The hōlua was used as a form of sport for the ali'i. Its surface was lined with grasses in preparation for use. Riders would race toboggan-like sleds to the bottom of the slide. The length of this hōlua is about 150 feet, and it was wide enough for two sledders at a time.

As you walk through this ancient homeland, keep in mind that not everything you see is from the past. You may see offerings left recently at certain sites, a reminder that traditional Hawaiian practices keep the spirit of the past very much alive at Kaloko-Honokōhau.

Mālama Ka 'Āina—Care for the Land

Much has changed here since ancient times. Introduced invasive plants and animals thrive in this coastal area, often at the expense of native species. Removal of invasive species, monitoring of native species, and public education are some of the ways in which the National Park Service is attempting to continue the practice of mālama ka 'āina, "care for the land."

A careful look may reward you with sightings of some native species. The 'alae ke'oke'o (Hawaiian coot, *top left*) and the ae'o (Hawaiian black-necked stilt, *top right*) are found only in Hawaii and are endangered. These birds nest along the edge of 'Aimakapā fishpond.

The pua pilo (*above left*) is a fragrant native flower that blooms in the early morning and fades by the afternoon. The plant was traditionally used for medicinal purposes.

The yellow blooms of the 'ilima (*above right*) are often strung into beautiful leis and are used in traditional medicine.

The pohuehue (beach morning glory, *below*) is commonly seen against the salt-and-pepper (coral and lava rock) sand of the Hawaiian islands.

Planning Your Visit

Getting to the Park Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is located on the west coast of the island of Hawai'i, between Kona International Airport and Kailua-Kona.

Stop first at Hale Ho'okipa, the park's visitor information center, located 4.2 miles south of the airport via Hawaii 19. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. There is an information desk and sales area.

To drive to the beach area, turn right from the parking lot onto Hawaii 19 and go 0.6 mile south. Turn right on Kealakehe Parkway, take the next right, and follow the road to the park entrance.

Things to Do Because of its undeveloped state, the park has few visitor facilities but many opportunities for exploring on your own. There is no food service in the park. You are welcome to picnic, but open fires and glass containers are not allowed.

Park trails are unpaved and cross areas of soft sand and loose, jagged 'a'ā lava. If you plan to hike, wear thick-soled shoes, carry water, and prepare for unshaded terrain. Even on a short hike, it is easy to get lost out on the lava. To help protect fragile park resources, please stay on the trails.

The 0.5-mile Ala Hele Ike Hawai'i trail leads from the main parking area to the beach. It connects with the Ala Hele Kahakai, or Coastal Trail, which runs north-south beside the ocean and takes you along the sand beach and fishponds and through areas of dense vegetation. Two historic trails, the Māmalahoa, dating from the 1830s, and the Ala Hele Hu'e Hu'e (an old ranch road), cross the lava fields.

Regulations This area is considered sacred; please treat it as such. All cultural and natural objects within the park are protected by federal law. Do not climb on or deface walls, pick plants or flowers, or remove artifacts or rocks. Open fires and glass containers are not permitted.

Related Sites There are two other National Park Service areas on the west coast of the island of Hawai'i where you can explore traditional life. Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park is 22 miles south of Kailua-Kona. Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site is 27 miles north of Kona International Airport.

More Information Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is one of over 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

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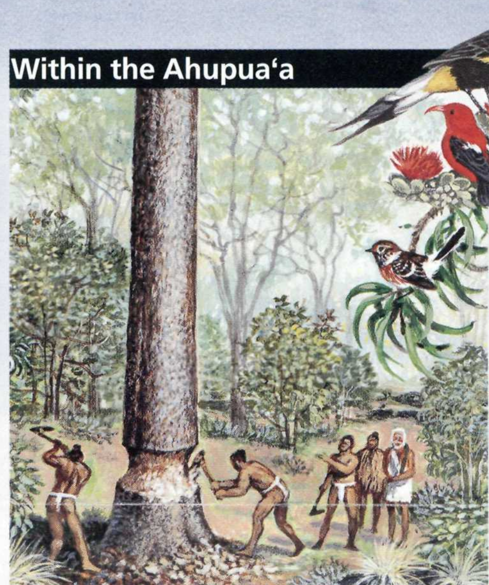
The Spirit of Kaloko-Honokōhau

Within the Ahupuaʻa

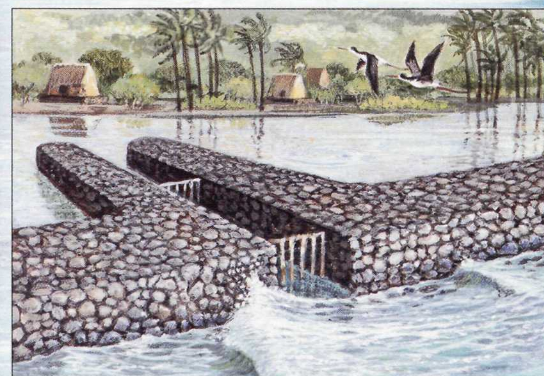


Forest

The forest was restricted to all but a few, such as the kahuna. The forest held a wealth of plants collected for food and medicines and timber *(above)* for houses and canoes. Areas were cleared near the forest to cultivate bark-fiber plants (wauke) and upland food plants like breadfruit and taro. Pigs were raised for food or to pay taxes. Feathers from birds such as the ʻōʻō and ʻiʻiwi *(top right)* were collected and made into capes and headdresses, marks of royalty for the highest of the aliʻi.

Lava flats

Scant rainfall made large-scale agriculture impossible on the Kona Coast. Instead, people used lava rock to build raised planters *(above)* on the lava flats. They grew taro, sweet potatoes, and gourds. The husks of dry coconuts, soaked in water, were placed around the plants' roots to provide moisture and protection from the sun. The walls of the planters protected crops from drying winds.



Coast

The coastal zone was an area of high productivity. Crops were cultivated, the ocean's bounty was harvested through a variety of fishing methods, fresh water was available, and many people made their homes here. They built fishtraps and fishponds—walled-in areas along the shore where fish were raised. Pictured above is the kuapā (wall) and mākāhā (sluice gate). Fishponds belonged to the aliʻi, who distributed fish when needed to feed the common people or the court.

Native Hawaiians sometimes speak of a moʻo, a water-dwelling guardian spirit, who rests on a rock as it watches over Kaloko fishpond. As long as the pond is cared for and treated with respect, the moʻo will allow bountiful fishing. But if the pond is disrespected, the moʻo will take the fish away, punishing not just those who brought harm to the sacred waters but everyone else as well.

In the past, the lava flows from Hualālai volcano were home to a community of hundreds of people. They lived within the ahupuaʻa, a land division extending from the mountaintop to the shoreline and into the ocean. Hawaiians thought of the land not just as a place to live but as an entity that possessed mana—spiritual power. Today at Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, the spirit of mālama ka ʻāina, "care for the land," continues.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

ILLUSTRATION NPS / JOHN DAWSON

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park preserves the coastal areas of two ahupuaʻa in Kona district on the island of Hawaiʻi. The illustration above by artist John Dawson shows how the shoreline of today's park might have looked in ancient times. Inset illustrations roughly correspond to elevations where they occur on the landscape. Numbers are keyed to the labels at right.

1 Forest: many species of timber and birds
2 Planters for crops
3 Niu (coconut) palms
4 Kahua kapa (women's workyard)
5 Hālau (long house) with waʻa (canoe)
6 Pounding taro for poi
7 Hale aliʻi (house of the chiefs)
8 Loko iʻa (fishpond)
9 Lawaiʻa (fishermen)
10 Gathering limu (edible sea plants)
11 Making fishhooks and nets
12 Kōlea (golden plover)
13 Basins carved in lava
14 Hīnaʻi (fish basket)
15 Honu (green sea turtle)