GENERAL

hawaii the big island revealed the ultimate guidebook 2019

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Hawaii the Big Island Revealed: The Ultimate Guidebook 2019

When you think of Hawaii, images of powder soft beaches, swaying palm trees, and crystal clear waters usually come to mind. Yet the Big Island, the largest and most geologically diverse of the Hawaiian archipelago, offers far more than the postcard view. In 2019, the island unveiled a new wave of attractions, cultural experiences, and natural wonders that made it a must visit destination for travelers worldwide. This comprehensive guidebook takes you on a journey through the Big Island's hidden gems, practical travel tips, and the best ways to experience its volcanic heart, lush rainforests, and vibrant local culture.

Getting There: Flights and Transportation

Direct Flights from Major Hubs

Honolulu's Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (HNL) is the main gateway to the Big Island, with direct flights from cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. In 2019, airlines like Hawaiian, United, and Alaska expanded their schedules, offering more frequent departures and convenient connections.

Alternative Airports

For travelers seeking a quieter arrival experience, consider the Hilo Airport (ITO) or Kahului Airport (OGG) on Maui. Both airports serve smaller carriers and provide a more intimate introduction to the islands. From these airports, you can take a short interisland flight to Kona or Hilo.

Ground Transportation

- Rental Cars: The most popular way to explore the Big Island, especially for visiting remote sites like the Mauna Kea summit or the Akaka Falls. In 2019, rental agencies offered competitive rates and a wide range of vehicles, from compact cars to 4WD SUVs.
- Shuttle Services: Companies such as Island Hoppers and Big Island Bus provide scheduled routes between major towns, airports, and tourist attractions.
- Public Transit: The Kona Transit System offers bus routes that connect Kailua-Kona, Hilo, and the surrounding communities, ideal for budget travelers.

Where to Stay: Hotels, Resorts, and Unique Accommodations

Luxury Resorts

The Big Island's luxury scene thrives in places like the **Four Seasons Resort Hualalai** and the **Mauna Kea Beach Hotel**. These resorts feature world class amenities, private beaches, and award winning restaurants.

Mid Range Hotels

For travelers seeking comfort without breaking the bank, the **Kailua Shores Resort** and **Hilo Bay Resort** offer well equipped rooms, on site dining, and easy access to local attractions.

Unique Stays

Experience the island's culture by staying in a traditional **pu+·V†öàua (heritage house)** or a renovated **lava rock**

cottage. In 2019, several boutique hotels opened, such as the **Hilo Lava Rock Lodge**, providing an immersive stay right in the heart of the island's volcanic landscape.

Camping and Glamping

Outdoor enthusiasts can camp at **Ka+±k Beach Park** or explore the **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park** campground. For a more luxurious outdoor experience, the **Big Island Glamping** offers tents with comfortable beds, Wi Fi, and stunning views.

Exploring the Volcanoes: A Journey into Earth's Furnace

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is the crown jewel of the Big Island. In 2019, the park celebrated the 50th anniversary of Kilauea's eruption, marking it as a living laboratory of volcanic activity. Visitors can walk the **Chain of Craters Road** and witness the stark contrast between lush rainforests and blackened lava fields.

Mauna Kea Summit

Mauna Kea, the tallest mountain in the world when measured from its base on the ocean floor, offers stargazing opportunities unrivaled on Earth. In 2019, the **Mauna Kea Observatories** opened new visitor centers, allowing guests to learn about astronomy and the cultural significance of the summit to native Hawaiians.

Pu+·R » Â» Ò 7& FW

Pu+·P +±L+±M, a fissure vent that has been erupting since 1983, continues to shape the island's landscape. In 2019, the park introduced guided hikes that take visitors through the crater's lava tubes and along the rim, providing an up-close look at the island's dynamic geology.

Beaches: Sun, Sand, and Surf

Waimea Bay

Known for its massive waves during the winter months, Waimea Bay also offers calm waters in the summer, perfect for swimming and snorkeling. The beach's iconic black sand and towering cliffs make it a photographer's paradise.

Hapuna Beach

Often dubbed the "White Sand Beach," Hapuna is one of the largest on the Big Island. Its soft, powdery sand and clear waters make it ideal for family outings, beach volleyball, and sunset picnics.

Akaka Falls

While not a beach, Akaka Falls is a must visit waterfall that plunges 442 feet into a lush rainforest. The 0.4 mile loop trail offers a serene walk through tropical foliage, culminating in a breathtaking view of the falls.

Secret Beaches

For those seeking solitude, the **Secret Beach (H Öæ Væ R & yl** offers a hidden cove accessible via a short hike. The beach's secluded setting is perfect for a quiet day away from the crowds.

Cultural Experiences: Embracing the Spirit of Hawai+¶•

Traditional Luau

Experience Hawaiian hospitality at a luau, where you'll enjoy hula performances, fire dancing, and a buffet featuring kalua pig, laulau, and fresh tropical fruits. In 2019, the **Hawaiian Cultural Center** introduced a "Luau with a

Purpose” program, where proceeds support local community projects.

Polynesian Cultural Center

Located in Laie, this center offers an immersive journey through Polynesian history and culture. Visitors can watch live demonstrations of ancient crafts, watch a reenacted battle, and explore interactive exhibits.

Mauna Kea Cultural Heritage Tours

Learn about the island’s indigenous history through guided tours that discuss the sacredness of Mauna Kea, the significance of the **pu+·V†öàuê** (places of refuge), and traditional navigation techniques.

Local Markets

The **Kona Farmers Market** and **Hilo Farmers Market** are vibrant hubs where local farmers sell fresh produce, handmade crafts, and artisanal foods. In 2019, the markets expanded to include pop up stalls featuring local musicians and artists.

Food: A Culinary Adventure

Seafood

The Big Island’s waters are teeming with fresh fish. Try **poke bowls** at *Hawaiian Fish Co.* or savor a grilled **mahi mahi** at *Fish House*. In 2019, the island’s seafood scene incorporated sustainable practices, ensuring a fresh and responsible dining experience.

Local Cuisine

Don’t miss **poi**, a staple made from taro root, or **kuli kuli** a sweet and spicy sauce often served with pork. For a unique taste, visit *Ka+·VÆ ¶—F6'Vè*, where chefs blend traditional flavors with modern techniques.

Coffee

The Kona coffee region is renowned worldwide. In 2019, the **Kona Coffee Living History Farm** opened a new tasting room, allowing visitors to sample different roasts and learn about the coffee cultivation process.

Island Desserts

Indulge in **shave ice** with flavors like guava, mango, and coconut. The *Hawaiian Shave Ice Shop* in Kailua-Kona offers a wide range of syrups, and in 2019, they introduced a “DIY Shave Ice” station for kids.

Activities: Adventure for Every Traveler

Hiking

1. Mauna Kea Summit Trail – A challenging 11 mile roundtrip hike that rewards you with panoramic views of the island’s volcanic landscape.
2. Waipio Valley Lookout – A scenic drive and short walk that offers breathtaking vistas of the valley’s lush green terraces.
3. Kealakekua Bay Trail – A 1.5 mile loop that takes you through tide pools and coastal cliffs.

Water Sports

- Snorkeling at Kealakekua Bay – Known for its clear waters and abundant marine life.
- Surfing at Hulihe+¶R & y – Ideal for beginners and intermediate surfers.
- Kayaking in Honaunau Bay – Paddle along the shoreline and spot sea turtles.

Golf

The Big Island hosts several world class golf courses. The **Hualalai Golf Club** offers a challenging 18 hole course with stunning ocean views. In 2019, the island opened a new course, **Mauna Kea Golf Resort**, featuring a unique layout that incorporates volcanic rock formations.

Wildlife Watching

Embark on a whale watching tour from Kailua-Kona between November and May. In 2019, the **Big Island Whale Watch** introduced a new “Night Whale Watching” experience, offering a unique perspective on the marine giants.

Practical Tips for 2019 Travelers

Best Time to Visit

The Big Island’s climate is tropical year round, but the best months for beach activities are December through April, while the peak volcanic activity season runs from June to August.

Weather Preparedness

Pack layers. The island’s temperatures vary dramatically from the sunny coast to the cooler highlands. A light rain jacket is essential for hikes in the rainforest.

Respecting the Environment

Follow the *Leave No Trace* principles. Stay on marked trails, respect wildlife, and dispose of waste properly. In 2019, the park introduced a new educational campaign to promote sustainable tourism.

Safety Guidelines

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