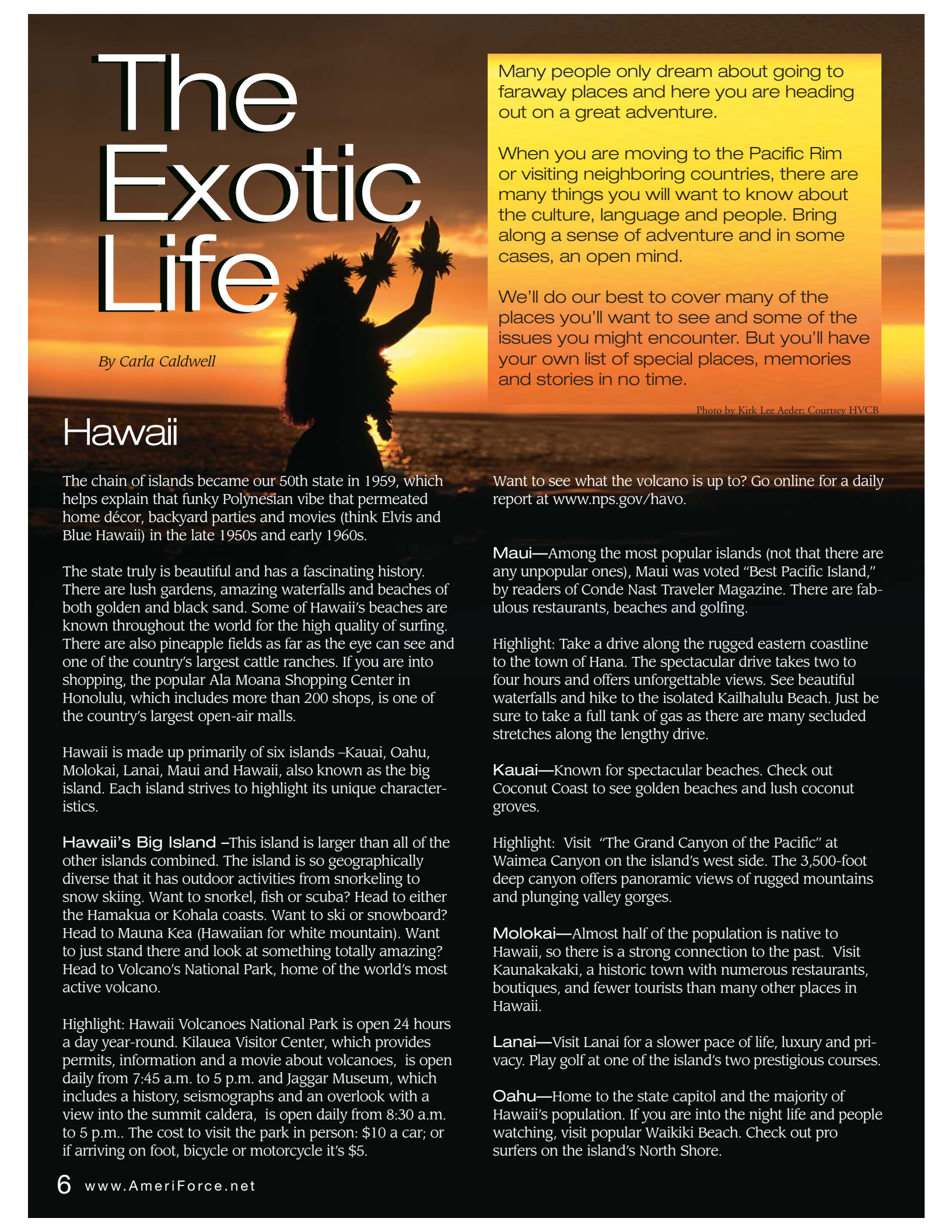


# The Exotic Life



By Carla Caldwell

## Hawaii

The chain of islands became our 50th state in 1959, which helps explain that funky Polynesian vibe that permeated home décor, backyard parties and movies (think Elvis and Blue Hawaii) in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The state truly is beautiful and has a fascinating history. There are lush gardens, amazing waterfalls and beaches of both golden and black sand. Some of Hawaii's beaches are known throughout the world for the high quality of surfing. There are also pineapple fields as far as the eye can see and one of the country's largest cattle ranches. If you are into shopping, the popular Ala Moana Shopping Center in Honolulu, which includes more than 200 shops, is one of the country's largest open-air malls.

Hawaii is made up primarily of six islands—Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Maui and Hawaii, also known as the big island. Each island strives to highlight its unique characteristics.

**Hawaii's Big Island**—This island is larger than all of the other islands combined. The island is so geographically diverse that it has outdoor activities from snorkeling to snow skiing. Want to snorkel, fish or scuba? Head to either the Hamakua or Kohala coasts. Want to ski or snowboard? Head to Mauna Kea (Hawaiian for white mountain). Want to just stand there and look at something totally amazing? Head to Volcano's National Park, home of the world's most active volcano.

Highlight: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is open 24 hours a day year-round. Kilauea Visitor Center, which provides permits, information and a movie about volcanoes, is open daily from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Jaggar Museum, which includes a history, seismographs and an overlook with a view into the summit caldera, is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.. The cost to visit the park in person: \$10 a car; or if arriving on foot, bicycle or motorcycle it's \$5.

Many people only dream about going to faraway places and here you are heading out on a great adventure.

When you are moving to the Pacific Rim or visiting neighboring countries, there are many things you will want to know about the culture, language and people. Bring along a sense of adventure and in some cases, an open mind.

We'll do our best to cover many of the places you'll want to see and some of the issues you might encounter. But you'll have your own list of special places, memories and stories in no time.

Photo by Kirk Lee Aeder; Courtesy HVCB

Want to see what the volcano is up to? Go online for a daily report at [www.nps.gov/havo](http://www.nps.gov/havo).

**Maui**—Among the most popular islands (not that there are any unpopular ones), Maui was voted "Best Pacific Island," by readers of Conde Nast Traveler Magazine. There are fabulous restaurants, beaches and golfing.

Highlight: Take a drive along the rugged eastern coastline to the town of Hana. The spectacular drive takes two to four hours and offers unforgettable views. See beautiful waterfalls and hike to the isolated Kailhalulu Beach. Just be sure to take a full tank of gas as there are many secluded stretches along the lengthy drive.

**Kauai**—Known for spectacular beaches. Check out Coconut Coast to see golden beaches and lush coconut groves.

Highlight: Visit "The Grand Canyon of the Pacific" at Waimea Canyon on the island's west side. The 3,500-foot deep canyon offers panoramic views of rugged mountains and plunging valley gorges.

**Molokai**—Almost half of the population is native to Hawaii, so there is a strong connection to the past. Visit Kaunakakaki, a historic town with numerous restaurants, boutiques, and fewer tourists than many other places in Hawaii.

**Lanai**—Visit Lanai for a slower pace of life, luxury and privacy. Play golf at one of the island's two prestigious courses.

**Oahu**—Home to the state capitol and the majority of Hawaii's population. If you are into the night life and people watching, visit popular Waikiki Beach. Check out pro surfers on the island's North Shore.

## South Korea

At 5,000 years old, Korea has a lot of history and not all of it pleasant. The country continues to be divided between the North and South, and U.S. relations with the communist North remain strained. The country is incredibly beautiful and hugely popular with tourists.

**Highlight:** The DMZ, also known as the Korean Demilitarized Zone, is the military demarcation line of separation between the north and south. The July 27, 1953 Armistice Agreement established the DMZ along the approximate line of ground contact between the opposing forces at the time the truce ended the Korean War.

The area, which is not populated by civilians, serves as a wildlife refuge for animals and is home to rare plants.

There are several tours available. A tour of the DMZ fence area allows views of North Korea and North Korean guard stations. There is also a tour of Panmunjeom—the only location inside the DMZ where the South and the North are in contact on a daily basis. To sign up for a tour, or for more information, visit [www.Tour2Korea.com](http://www.Tour2Korea.com), a site that also features information about the various other activities mentioned here.

Elsewhere, in South Korea, the emphasis is often on peace. There are numerous temples that are open for tours and there are many ceremonies that celebrate tranquility and well-being.

If you are looking for something more strenuous, South Korea is also a haven for sports enthusiasts. The country's four distinct seasons, celebrated by numerous festivals, provide for both winter and summer sports. Rafting is extremely popular as is snow skiing. Korea is also the birthplace of Taekwondo. Demonstrations and classes are widely available.

**Highlight:** Raft the same river that hosted the International Rafting Federation World Rafting Championship in the summer of 2007. The site—a mountainous region of Gangwon Province, east of Seoul—is known throughout the world for its easy river access, clean water and swift rapids.

Other suggestions for visitors and new residents:

Visit a tea plantation and take in a tea ceremony. Set aside plenty of time to see South Korea's capitol city of Seoul. And while you are setting aside time, save a large chunk for a food tour. Korean barbecue is hard to beat, as are other dishes native to the country.

## Guam

The island's beauty and climate have made it a top tourism destination for residents of numerous Asia/Pacific countries including Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

On a pleasant, sunny island day, it can be hard to imagine the hardships the island's people have endured.

The island has been ruled by numerous countries and years ago, was harassed by pirates. In 1941, the island was taken over by Japan and islanders were forced to give up many traditional customs. On July 21, 1944, known locally as Liberation Day, American forces landed on Guam and after three weeks of brutal war that claimed the lives of thousands of natives (Chamorros) and Americans, the island was safe and under American rule.

But it wasn't until 1962 that the U.S. Navy lifted the World War II security clearance for travel to and from Guam, which allowed commerce and tourism to develop. Activities for visitors and military who locate to Guam often center around the sea. Diving, beach-going and festivals are extremely popular.

When venturing to Guam or any other areas in the Pacific Rim, remember to relax when you can. We all have enough work on our plates. You, however, can with just a few steps outside your door take in the scenery that people sitting behind florescent-lighted desks are only dreaming about.

Enjoy! ●

Carla Caldwell is a freelance writer living in Georgia.

Some websites to help you learn more about your new home:

### Hawaii

State Government: [www.hawaii.gov](http://www.hawaii.gov)

Visitors Info: [www.visit.hawaii.org](http://www.visit.hawaii.org), [www.gohawaii.com](http://www.gohawaii.com)

### Okinawa

U.S. Consulate: <http://naha.usconsulate.gov>

Local Government and Info: [www.pref.okinawa.jp/english/index.html](http://www.pref.okinawa.jp/english/index.html)

Visitors Info: [www.okinawa.com](http://www.okinawa.com)

### Japan

U.S. Embassy: <http://japan.usembassy.gov>

Travel and Living Guide: [www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)

Visitors Info: [www.japantravelinfo.com](http://www.japantravelinfo.com)

### Guam

Local Government and Info: [www.guam.gov/](http://www.guam.gov/)

Visitors Info: [www.visitguam.org/main/](http://www.visitguam.org/main/)

