



Big Treasures Abound in Maui's Small Towns

Sprinkled throughout the island in pockets of history and charm, Maui's small towns have their own authentic character. The centers of commerce and social life, Maui's small towns continue to thrive as family businesses are passed down to new generations and the old finds harmony with the new. You will see this mix of past and present in the traditional storefronts and architecture that blend with contemporary structures.

Central Maui, the Island's Heartland

Wailuku's hilly streets and plantation architecture wear a blend of the old and new. A commercial center and the seat of the Maui County government, Wailuku is nestled at the foot of the dramatic Mauna Kahālawai (West Maui Mountains) at the gateway to lush 'Īao Valley, once considered the sacred burial grounds of worthy Hawaiian chiefs. Known as the home of the "Mom & Pops," Wailuku's wooden storefronts house family businesses that have been in continuous operation for generations.

A stroll along Market Street, where Mark Twain once lived, reveals some of the island's secret treasures at bargain prices. Shoppers and foodies get equal time here. In addition to its boutiques and cafes, Wailuku is home to many manufactured and homegrown products that are enjoyed throughout the world, such as manju, mochi, coffee, sushi, pastries, jams and jellies, and dried fish.

The 'Īao Theater, built in 1927, is the oldest of its kind in the state and an enduring symbol of community spirit. After years of neglect, it was renovated through the pure love of the community and is now home to a local performing arts group.

The theater is just one of 23 fascinating historic assets featured in a Rediscover Wailuku walking tour developed by Wailuku Main Street Association. Among the town's historical and cultural attractions are the Bailey House Museum, Pihanakalani Heiau, 'Īao Needle, Tropical Gardens, the Hawai'i Nature Center, and the Kepaniwai Heritage Gardens.

Mā'alaea, a small fishing village, is the site of the only remaining Shinto Japanese shrine in Hawai'i dedicated to the fishing god Ebisu Sama. Surrounded by fields of sugar cane and the Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge, Mā'alaea is on a bay favored by Maui's special winter visitors, the humpback whale. Mā'alaea is also home of the acclaimed Maui Ocean Center, the largest tropical reef aquarium in the Western Hemisphere, and the Maui Golf & Sports Park with its miniature golf courses, rock-climbing towers and Hawai'i's only bumper boat lagoon.



Upcountry, a Piece of Heaven

Upcountry Maui is a sensory extravaganza: rolling hills, misty mountains, and cool breezes carrying the scent of eucalyptus over roads painted purple with springtime jacaranda petals. High on the slopes of Haleakalā, Upcountry is covered with ranches and farmland and dotted with small towns. Kula, just below the volcano summit, offers sweeping views of Mauna Kahālāwai (West Maui Mountains), half of Maui, and the nearby islands of Kaho‘olawe and Lāna‘i. Kula’s most outstanding landmark is the brilliant white octagonal Holy Ghost church, built by Portuguese immigrants in 1894. The village of Kēōkea conveys the area’s agricultural history, including cabbage, carnations, protea and famous Kula Onions.

The Kwok Hing Society Temple in Kēōkea remains a memorable landmark and a visible sign of Chinese influence in an area known as Maui’s Chinatown.

Pā‘ia, a coastal plantation town on the island’s north shore, has a rural ambiance that disguises its sophistication. Home to internationally famous Ho‘okipa Beach Park, the “windsurfing capital of the world,” Pā‘ia is a lively mix of clothing stores, curio shops and restaurants. Its rich cultural heritage was shaped by the sugar industry and the multiethnic communities the industry brought to Maui.

One of the State’s last cowboy or paniolo towns, Makawao is replete with ranches, horses, cowboys, game birds and the elements of the paniolo life. Specialties of the area include art galleries, boutiques, eateries and small shops selling everything from world-famous cream puffs, to paniolo gear. One of Hawai‘i’s most popular July 4 rodeos is held in Makawao.

Hāna, a Touch of Old Hawai‘i

At the eastern end of the Maui, Hāna is considered the last unspoiled Hawaiian frontier, a soulful respite from the stresses of modern life. Visitors must cross 54 bridges and wind around 600 curves to reach this lush rural outpost. Along the way there are waterfalls, picnic spots, and breathtaking vistas of remote peninsulas and valleys where taro farmers maintain their traditional ways.

Pi‘ilanihale Heiau, the largest ancient place of Hawaiian worship in Hawai‘i, emanates awesome power from a hillside in Hāna, where the heiau is still intact. A stunning remnant of the ancient religion, it broods over a magnificent stretch of coastline owned and tended by a direct descendant of King Pi‘ilani, the Maui monarch who built it. Nearby, a small cliff and a small sweep of the Hāna coastline, with its lava arches, make an unforgettable sight. Built in 1400 by Pi‘ilani, who had a 40-year reign as one of Maui’s first chiefs, the heiau is part of the tour of Kahanu Gardens, one of five in the National Tropical Botanical Gardens system.



The heiau is just one of many highlights in Hāna, east Maui's verdant, quiet village where people still fish for their dinner and ride horses to the store. Hasegawa General Store and Hāna Ranch Store are as commercial as you get in Hāna.