



## **Moloka‘i Missed the Tourism Wagon – and That’s Exactly Why to Go**

It’s dusk on the island of Moloka‘i. You pull your car out onto the main highway, heading to a restaurant for dinner. This is the busy part of the island, near the main town of Kaunakakai. Then you notice something strange and marvelous – nothing.

The two-lane highway is straight as a stick, and you can’t see a single car all the way down the road. No headlights at all in your rear-view mirror. No tall buildings or crowded luxury homes separate you from the lake-like sea, which is shining with the last colors of the sunset. The emerging stars look close enough to touch, and the sky is full of silence. You pass a huge plumeria tree loaded with flowers and, even with the windows rolled up, the sweet perfume fills the car and becomes a topic of conversation.

Yes, it’s true there’s “nothing” on Moloka‘i, lots of it – an abundance of the delicious “nothing” that busy people crave when their jobs and lives crowd them.

On a drive like this, you feel muscles unclench.

“You have to love seclusion to love being here,” says Keala Coelho, accommodations director at Pu‘u O Hōkū Ranch on Moloka‘i’s east end. “What we offer are lots of peace and quiet, and extreme privacy.”

A 14,000-acre spread, Pu‘u O Hōkū Ranch welcomes guests at two large, rustic cottages, each with a land-and-seascape that goes on for miles. Also on the east end are the Dunbar Beachfront Cottages, a pair of green-and-white plantation buildings overlooking a swimmable beach.

Along the island’s sheltered southeast shore are three modest mini-resorts. Two of them – Wavecrest and Moloka‘i Shores – are condominiums designed for home-style living: ocean-view buildings looking toward Maui and Lāna‘i, manicured lawn, swimming pool and barbecues. These are quiet places where guests can sit seaside watching the sun set – or rise. (This is one of the few places in Hawai‘i where you can watch both events from the comfort of the same park bench.) Depending upon the property, guests have access to a putting green, shuffleboard, tennis courts and one of the island’s best spots for swimming and snorkeling.

The third option is the oceanfront Hotel Moloka‘i, a cluster of two-story buildings designed like the classic South Seas longhouse. The hotel includes a very good restaurant and, on many nights, Moloka‘i musicians playing poolside. One of its newest

enhancements is a spa where guests can enjoy one of a dozen-or-so types of massages, yoga classes and beauty services.

If you crave big, hot stretches of sand, you'll find them on the west-facing shore at Kaluako'i. Three excellent condominiums take full advantage of their beach-view locations – the lushly landscaped Paniolo Hale, perched on a natural ledge; Ke Nani Kai with a newly remodeled pool, whirlpool, horseshoe pit, barbecue and tennis courts; and Kepuhi Beach Resort where every unit looks out over Kaiwi Channel toward O'ahu's landmark Diamond Head.

Two companies provide information and bookings for dozens of Moloka'i condominiums. Visitors who are planning a trip can learn a lot at Moloka'i Vacation Properties ([www.molokai-vacation-rental.com](http://www.molokai-vacation-rental.com)) or Moloka'i Resorts ([www.molokairesorts.com](http://www.molokairesorts.com)).

None of these getaways is taller than three stories, and all of them provide natural solitude. It's the same natural solitude you experience while kayaking along the island's reef-protected south shore, while finding an unpopulated beach, while hiking to a waterfall, while simply loafing.

Some families find this natural solitude to be a perfect backdrop for a family-bonding vacation. Moloka'i simply lacks a dozen different reasons to scatter in all directions. So families share their adventures: mountain-biking together, riding horses together, learning to kayak together. They have time to talk, to share an experience together, to push the world aside and revive the most fundamental relationships of their lives.

For couples – especially couples who love the outdoors or couples who like the simplicity of quiet conversation – Moloka'i is wonderfully renewing, if not downright romantic.

Moloka'i is not for everyone. To be frank, the vast openness of the landscape and supreme lack of urban excitement don't suit everyone's tastes. But when you get *inside* Moloka'i, the riches unfold. Says one rental unit owner: "Moloka'i attracts independent travelers who don't want to be isolated in a hotel with other tourists. They want to see how people live. They like the freedom and safety here."

For Moloka'i visitors, it's not enough to trade the stimulation of a mainland city for the stimulation of hotel lobbies, commercial lū'au, advertisements, attractions, and traffic. What about *no stimulation at all*?

What about the sweet stimulation of bird song on your morning lānai, surrounded by an island that will never interrupt such an artful quietness?

Long and narrow, Moloka'i looks insignificant next to its neighbors. If someone asked you to compare the Hawaiian islands to a paragraph, you'd have to say that Moloka'i is a quiet dash between two boisterous sentences, O'ahu and Maui. In other words, Moloka'i provides what its neighbors can't – a rich, simple "nothing."