

Life on Vacation

A weekly look at the second-home market



By Kevin Eans, USA TODAY

On the horizon: Visitors hike on a field of lava from Kilauea Volcano at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. The Big Island has volcanoes and black-sand beaches.

Big Island, Hawaii

Alluring land of highs and lows



By Larry Olmsted
Special for USA TODAY

Many visitors to Hawaii's Big Island fantasize about owning a second home there. According to the island's visitor bureau, only 1.3% of them do. The appeals are many. Though it is the largest Hawaiian island at more than 4,000 square miles — more than twice the size of all the others combined — it has just 177,000 residents. One caveat: Volcanic smog (dubbed "vog") from Kilauea Volcano has caused health problems and harm to agriculture.

The island soars from sandy beaches to the state's highest peak, snowcapped Mauna Kea at 13,796 feet, and boasts a variety of scenery, geography and weather. The island has the world's largest volcano, Mauna Loa, the state's only UNESCO World Heritage Site, some of the world's best deep-sea fishing and more than 250 miles of coastline.

"There's more diversity here," says Bruce Sloan of Centex, developer of the Hali'i Kai community within Waikoloa resort. "You have snow on Mauna Kea and you're surfing below. People like that variety."

The majority of second-home owners live on Hawaii's west coast, where temperatures are 71 to 77 degrees year-round. More than a dozen of the state's finest golf courses are lined up one after another, along with beaches, marinas, restaurants and tourism infrastructure, including a very convenient airport. "There are a lot more direct flights into Kona, from as far as Chicago," Sloan says. "It used to be more buyers from the West Coast, but now we get all over, even New York."

The main town is Kailua-Kona, near the airport, and south of that is the Kona coast, famed for its fishing, water sports and the only domestic coffee production. With more full-time residents and less resort feel, Kona has lower prices. North of Kailua-Kona is the Kohala coast, home to several lavish golf communities including Hualalai Resort, Mauna Kea Resort, Waikoloa Beach Resort and Mauna Lani Resort, all of which contain mostly part-time owners. Kohala also has several exclusive gated non-golf communities, many of them expensive.

Next week: Fractional ownership abroad

A look at three Big Island neighborhoods

- ▶ **Waikoloa:** At the northern end of the Kohala coast, this is the most affordable of the large golf communities. It spans nearly 1,400 acres and includes two quality public courses, a Hilton and a Marriott, more than two dozen restaurants, a swim-with-dolphins facility, and two shopping centers. There are a wide range of price and size options, with condos from the high \$300,000s, homes reaching around \$2 million and everything in between (Waikoloabeachresort.com).
- ▶ **Hualalai:** The southernmost of the Kohala golf communities, Hualalai is also the priciest. Its Four Seasons hotel and two private golf courses have won numerous awards, including best in Hawaii. It's carved from oceanfront black lava fields on nearly 900 acres, and there are no condos, just homes, from \$1.5 to \$29 million, though most are in the \$3 million-\$4 million range (Hualalairesort.com).
- ▶ **Kailua-Kona:** This town anchors the west coast, and though a bit commercial for some, it has a range of affordable condos near shops and restaurants, a walking path along the seawall, and the island's main marina, renowned for its trophy tuna fishing. Small two-bedroom condos can be had from the low \$200,000s, and there is a wide selection of properties in the \$400,000-\$700,000 range.

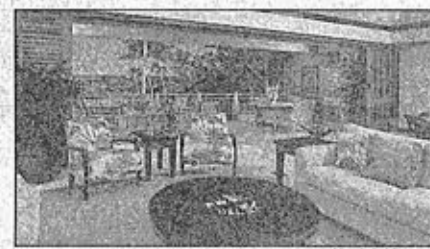


John De Mello Photography

On the market: This new condo is in the Hali'i Kai development within Waikoloa.

Midrange price: \$450,000

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 2
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 2
- ▶ **Size:** 1,204 square feet (including lanai)
- ▶ **Features:** Bedrooms have attached full baths, tile floors throughout, kitchen and laundry room. Homeowners have private beach club with pool, tennis, fitness center and restaurant, plus access to Waikoloa resort amenities, including golf.



Hualalai Resort

On the market: This two-level town house in Hualalai overlooks the golf course with ocean vistas and is being sold fully furnished.

High price: \$3,195,000

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Size:** 2,657 square feet, 940-sq.-ft. lanais
- ▶ **Features:** Marble and mahogany flooring, commercial-grade appliances, wine fridge, great room with wet bar, dual lanais — one with outdoor kitchen, garden and shower and detached garage.

Best for

Golfers, anglers and outdoor adventure.

Claim to fame

The original and most prestigious Ironman Triathlon began here and is held each year in Kailua-Kona.

Don't miss

Mauna Kea has what is billed as the world's largest collection of telescopes. A guide can set up your own stargazing party.

Getting there

The Kailua-Kona airport has non-stop flights to many major mainland cities.

Tourism information

gohawaii.com



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