

# PROFILE OF WEST KAUAI

November 2006 West Kaua'i Business & Professional Association

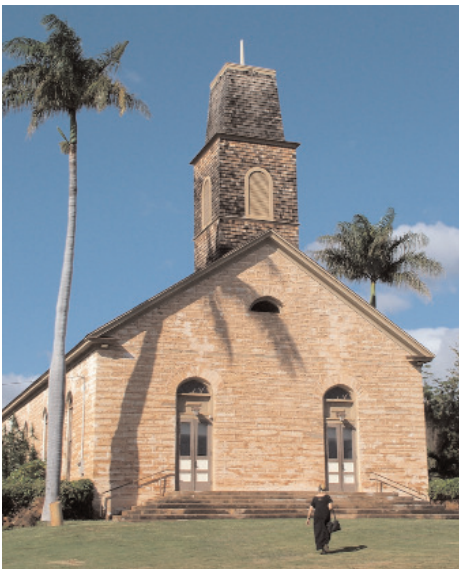


Waimea Canyon

## West Kaua'i

Kaua'i is the state's fourth largest island with 552 square miles and an estimated population of 62,000 in 2005. Its mountainous central mountain mass is topped by Kawaikini Peak measuring 5,243 feet above sea level. The island's major roadway rings the island from Kekaha on the west to Ha'ena on the north. The inaccessible Napali Coast blocks land access on the northern end creating a horseshoe of population near sea level. The main population centers today are Lihue and Kapa'a on the southeastern end of the island.

There are five modern districts today and the Waimea District in west Kaua'i is one of the largest in land area starting just outside of Kalaheo and ending at Polihale State Park adjacent to the beginning of the Napali Coast. The region includes many state parks and recreational areas. At one time it was the most populous part of the island and the largest town is Kekaha, the fourth largest in population on Kaua'i.



Waimea United Church of Christ  
aka Foreign Church and Stone Church



Gay & Robinson harvesting sugar cane

## Economy

For over two centuries, the islands of Hawai'i greatly depended on agriculture as its main economic activity. The sugar industry was the most dominant agricultural product and the major source of tax revenues and capital inflow. Although diminished by 90% from more than 70,000 acres of land in sugarcane, the sugar industry still holds a significant slot in the mostly tourism-dependent economy of Kaua'i.

Farming as a whole is still the mainstay of West Kaua'i's economy. Gay & Robinson, Inc. at Kaunakani remains in sugar and cattle; Kekaha Sugar Plantation's lands are used chiefly by seed corn research companies, a shrimp farm and some diversified farming; while the former McBryde Sugar Plantation lands from Kalaheo to 'Ele'ele have been converted from sugar to coffee farming.



Pioneer Seed Facility at Waimea

Other industries include military and health care along with county & state employment in caretaking parks, landfill and other civil functions in the area. The Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) at Barking Sands is the island's largest employer and very few are actual active service personnel. A number of high tech operations have facilities in the district due to contracts with PMRF. The next largest employer is Gay & Robinson at



Port Allen Dock with Navy vessels

Kaunakani supporting many service operations including trucking, repairs and other trade services, followed by Kaua'i Veterans Memorial Hospital in Waimea. It is a state-run hospital named in honor of the area war veterans, not a VA hospital.

The largest industry in Kaua'i is year-round tourism. Hotels, resorts, restaurants, and countless shopping sites provide employment opportunities. West Kaua'i does not have a resort designation as do the other areas of the island and offers about 1% of the County's total visitor units. There is one hotel, Waimea Plantation Cottages, which is a small resort on the beach featuring renovated plantation housing. Most of the other accommodations are vacation rentals or cabins at Koke'e and campgrounds. Most of Kaua'i's tour boat industry takes off from Kikiaola and Port Allen Small Boat Harbors.



Waimea Plantation Cottages

There are three visitor centers: Kauai Coffee Co, Gay & Robinson, West Kaua'i Visitor Center and one museum: Koke'e Natural History Museum. The Kaua'i Museum in Lihue is recommended for

learning about the general history and culture of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau. Each town has at least one bank, post office and store for groceries and sundries. Fine dining is available, but this is the area to try local foods, especially the plate lunches.

## West Kaua'i Towns



*Hanapepe's original main street*

### 'Ele'ele

'Ele'ele sits on a bluff overlooking Hanapepe Valley and Town. The 'Ele'ele Shopping Center is currently the only shopping center in the district. 'Ele'ele's Port Allen Harbor is a major island attraction and home to a small industry of tour boats for trips to the Napali Coast and humpback whale watching on the South Shore during the winter months. The small airport near Salt Pond is where a number of other visitor activities are located, anything from helicopter tours to gliders.

The Hanapepe Overlook, just outside of 'Ele'ele, is a picturesque view of a once important crop growing area in ancient times. On a clear day, Kawaikini Peak can be seen in the far distance. Rainbows form readily here due to the sun filtering through the mists that often form over Kalaheo in the distance.

### 'Ele'ele Statistics, 2000 Census

Population: 2,040  
Households: 626  
Median resident age: 36.0 years  
Median household income: \$46,705  
Median house value: \$176,700  
Land area: 0.8 square miles  
Elevation: 120 feet

### Hanapepe Town

Referred to as "Kaua'i's Biggest Little Town," Hanapepe used to belong among the most active towns on the island. From its simple beginnings as a village at the mouth of the Hanapepe river valley, Hanapepe grew rapidly into a bustling commercial town with the advent of the sugar industry in the 1890's. During

WWII numerous troops were stationed near the harbor and the town boomed with theaters, restaurants, skating rings, bars and hotels. After the war, with the building of the current highway, the town's prosperity dwindled as the plantation around it declined in population. The highway bypassed the town further drawing business away. The rustic charm of

Hanapepe, now accentuated by thriving art galleries, has begun to attract residents and tourists alike with Friday Art Night activities including Gallery Openings, live music and other special events. One of the safer beaches to swim at, Salt Pond Beach Park is a major attraction.

### Hanapepe Statistics, 2000 Census

Population: 2,153  
Households: 706  
Median resident age: 34.9 years  
Median household income: \$44,112  
Median house value: \$184,700  
Land area: 0.9 square miles  
Elevation: 20 feet

### Kaumakani Village

Plantation villages were once common, located within sprawling fields full of sugarcane and nearby the sugar mills give testament to the years of work poured into the land. Kaumakani is among those communities. Its residents lived comfortably working on plantations, raising families with nearby churches, schools, offices, and other infrastructure

catering to the needs of the residents. Kaumakani is relatively small, with very few places to go for entertainment, but Thrifty Mart does have one of the best bakeries in the area. On the avenue with its 1920 vintage street lights, is a small museum featuring sugar era displays and artifacts. Plantation tours are available year round to see the seasonal operations.

### Kaumakani Statistics, 2000 Census

Population: 607  
Households: 207  
Median resident age: 40.1 years  
Median household income: \$34,583  
Median house value:  
Land area: 1.0 square miles  
Elevation: 196 feet

### Waimea

In 1778, prominent European explorer Captain James Cook was believed to set foot Waimea before any other explorer did, starting the modern trend of tourism. Once the seat of government and first place that harbored missionaries, there are many interesting public buildings, churches, banks, businesses and historic buildings. There are more registered landmarks, buildings and sites than any other town in Hawai'i. In 2006, Waimea was named one of the Dozen Distinctive Heritage Destinations by the National Trust, the first in Hawai'i. Discover some of the uniqueness with a visit to West Kaua'i Visitor Center. The town has one



*Waimea's original main street*

small hotel, Waimea Plantation Cottages, a resort built on the sugar plantation theme. From Waimea, visits to many unique attractions, such as Polihale State Park the culmination of 15 miles of white sand beach starting in Kekaha; Koke'e State Park at over 3,000 foot elevation and the colorful Canyons of Waimea. The

town hosts the Waimea Town Celebration in February and the Waimea Lighted Christmas Parade in December.

### Waimea's Statistics, 2000 Census

Population: 1,698

Households: 752

Median resident age: 45.9 years

Median household income: \$63,833

Median house value: \$369,600

Land area: 2.1 square miles

Elevation: 10-200 feet



*Kekaha sugar mill at the center of town*

### Kekaha

The sugar plantation town of Kekaha is located in the dry, southwest portion of the Kaua'i. The Kekaha Sugar Mill still stands at the heart of the town although it ceased operating in 2000 leaving much of the working population with little choice but to leave or commute to jobs elsewhere. Kekaha serves as home to a number of people with diverse backgrounds and a sizable native Hawaiian population, many generations of families working for the plantation. Although there are little in the way of activities, the white sand beach at Kekaha is an attraction in of itself. Sunsets are perfectly visible every day of the year and views of the island of Ni'ihau off in the distance are unique. Through the town of Kekaha is the main access route to Koke'e and Waimea Canyon and life is mainly lived outdoors by the residents.

### Kekaha Statistics, 2000 Census

Population: 3,175

Households: 1,073

Median resident age: 40.4 years  
Median household income: \$41,103  
Median house value: \$163,000  
Land area: 1.0 square miles  
Elevation: 10 feet

### Schools

The first missionaries, the Whitneys and Ruggles from New England, arrived in Waimea in 1820 and started their first classes in reading at Waimea and Hanapepe. The first students were King Kaumuali'i and one of his wives, Kapule. The missionaries translated the oral Hawaiian language into a written language and taught the Hawaiians to read in their language. By 1824 schools were found around the island. With a printing press in Honolulu and later Lahaina, they printed text books, hymnals and the Bible in the Hawaiian language.



### Waimea High School

present campus (including elementary school) 1882, first graduating class 1938  
860 students  
[www.waimeahighschool.org](http://www.waimeahighschool.org)

### Eleele School

founded in 1837. present campus 1912

### Waimea Canyon School

founded in 1972  
600 students: 400 in grades 7-8  
[www.k12hi.us/~waimeaca](http://www.k12hi.us/~waimeaca)

### Kekaha Elementary School

founded in 1888  
250 students including  
Ke Kula Niihau o Kekaha's 30 students.  
[www.kekaha.k12.hi.us](http://www.kekaha.k12.hi.us)

### Kula Aupuni Niihau a Kahelelani Aloha

Public Charter School  
40 students

### St. Theresa's Parrish School

*Other facts pertaining to the area:*

### Libraries

Hanapepe Public Library  
Waimea Public Library

### Fire & Ambulance Stations:

Hanapepe & Waimea

### Health Care

*Hospital & Emergency Room*

**Kauai Veterans Memorial Hospital**  
Waimea

*Clinics*

**Kauai Medical Clinic**, Eleele

**West Kauai Clinic**

**West Kauai Medical Center**  
Waimea

### Churches

#### Eleele

Eleele Baptist Church  
Episcopal Church on West Kauai  
Kin'g's Chapel Eleele

#### Hanapepe

Church of the Nazarene  
Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church  
Hanapepe Hongwanji Mission  
Hanapepe United Church of Christ  
Jehoval Witness Hanapepe Congregation  
Kauai Soto Zen Temple Zenshuji  
Salvation Army

#### Kaumakani

Kaumakani Catholic Church  
(Holy Cross Church)  
West Kauai United Methodist Church

#### Waimea

Waimea Baptist Church  
Waimea Hawaiian Church  
Waimea Higashi Hongwanji  
Waimea Shingon Mission  
Waimea United Church of Christ  
West Kauai Hongwanji Mission

#### Kekaha

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Kekaha Ward  
Episcopal Church On West Kauai, St. Paul's  
Jehoval Witness Kekaha Congregation  
St. Theresa's Parish  
West Kauai United Methodist Church  
Westside Christian Center