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zoom

in on america

By the U.S. Missions of Austria and Poland

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While in Hawaii, families can immerse themselves in the Hawaiian culture. Photo © PR NEWSWIRE

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Zoom in on America

History & Population of Hawaii

Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States in 1959. It consists of a group of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean. The capital city, Honolulu, is located on the island of Oahu. Hawaii's nickname is "The Aloha State." In the Hawaiian language, "aloha" means hello or goodbye, but also love and affection.

Original Inhabitants

The first inhabitants of Hawaii were Polynesians who probably came from the Marquesas Islands (today French Polynesia in the South Pacific) in the 4th century. Five centuries later, settlers from Tahiti arrived. Hawaii was governed by a rigid system of laws with social hierarchy based on a strict taboo system. In the 18th century chiefs fought for power, but in 1795 King Kamehameha the Great subjugated all inhabited islands under a single rule. It is believed that British Captain James Cook was the first European to set foot on Hawaiian soil, in 1778. West European explorers and traders started to visit the islands regularly but they were soon outnumbered by Americans (San Francisco is 2,397 miles /3,857km away from Hawaii), who introduced a written language, schools, churches and taverns.

19th and 20th Century History

In the 19th century, Westerners started to visit and settle in the Hawaiian Islands in bigger numbers. As the number of settlers grew, they put the king of Hawaii, Kamehameha III, under pressure to sign a written constitution. He finally

did so in 1840. In 1875 Hawaii and the United States signed a trade agreement known as the Reciprocity Act. A few years later the U.S. received the right to establish a naval base at Pearl Harbor. Less than 20 years later, a group of American businessmen called the Committee of Safety enlisted the assistance of a company of U.S. Marines stationed on the U.S.S. Boston to seize power and forced queen Liliuokalani to abdicate her throne. The United States officially annexed Hawaii in 1900. The attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan on December 7, 1941 led to the United States' entry into World War II. After the war there was a period of rapid economic growth on the islands. In 1959, Hawaii became the 50th of the United States of America. In 1993, Congress issued an apology to the people of Hawaii for the U.S. government's role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy.

According to data in the 2010 Census, the native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander Population amounted to 1.2 million people, or 0.4 percent of all people in the United States. This represented a 40 percent increase since the 2000 census. More than half of these people live in Hawaii (356,000) and California (286,000).



Snow on Mauna Kea behind a statue of the Hawaiian King Kamehameha in Hilo, Hawaii. Mauna Kea is a dormant volcano and highest point in Hawaii. Photo © AP Images

Pearl Harbor

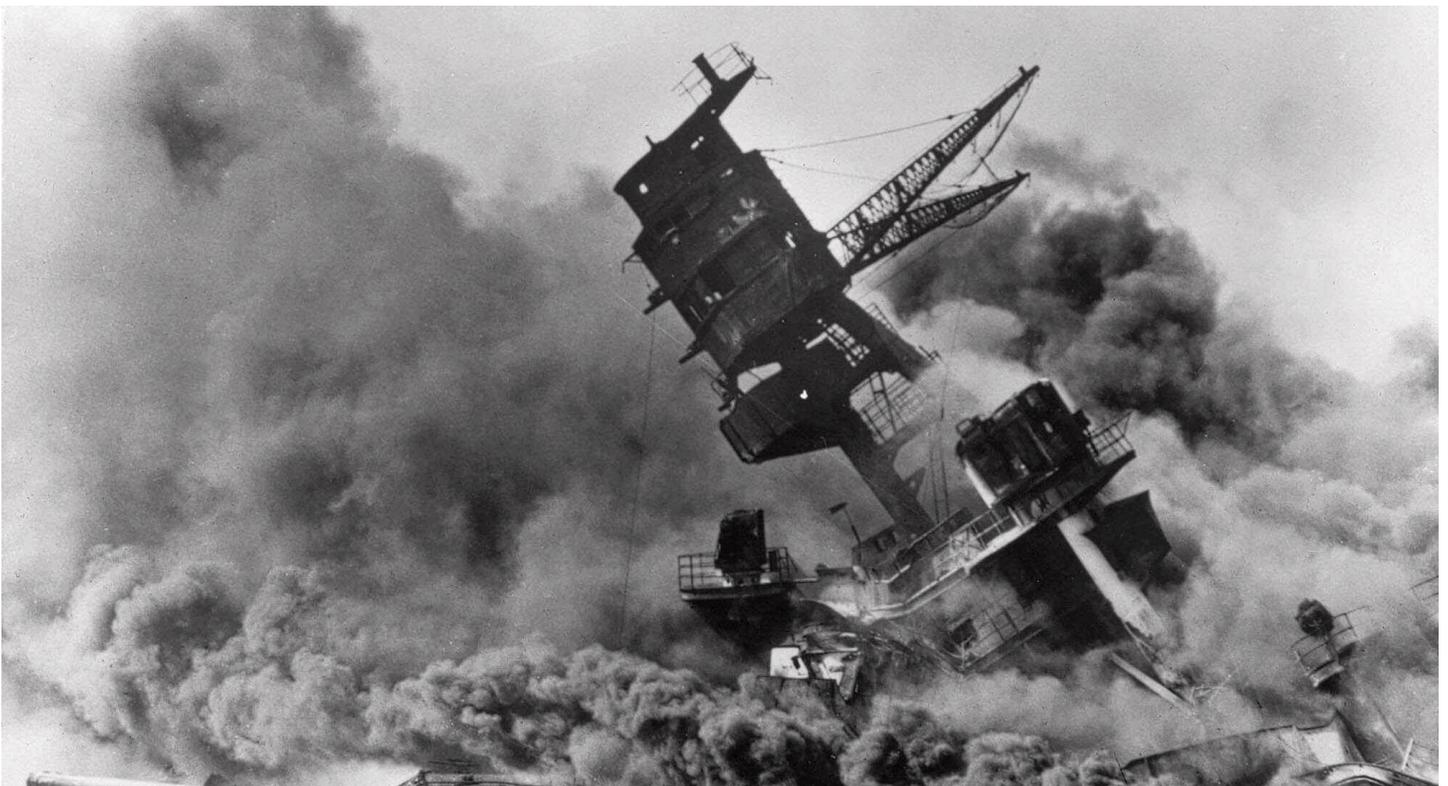
Pearl Harbor is a lagoon on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, west of Honolulu. Much of the harbor and surrounding lands is used as a United States Navy deep-water naval base. Pearl Harbor also serves as the headquarters of the United States Pacific Fleet.

The date December 7, 1941 was an important one on the timeline of World War II. It was on the morning of that day that hundreds of Japanese fighter planes attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor. The attack took the American fleet by surprise and resulted in the death of nearly 2,400 American soldiers and left another 1,200 soldiers wounded. Material losses were also heavy. Eight huge battleships, a dozen smaller ships, and more than 300 airplanes were destroyed. Until the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States had remained neutral in World War II. One day following the attack, at the request of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Congress declared war on Japan. Shortly thereafter the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War II on both the Atlantic and Pacific fronts.

The biggest loss suffered by the United States during the attack on Pearl Harbor was the USS Arizona. A Japanese aerial bomb struck an ammunition magazine in the front section of the ship. This caused a catastrophic explosion that sank the battleship in just nine minutes. 1,177 sailors and marines serving on the battleship were killed. Only 333 people on board the ship survived the attack.

Even though the attack caused a lot of destruction, it did not damage inland facilities such as shipyards, oil storage depots and submarine docks. The battleships that were either sunk or incapacitated were a major loss to the United States Navy, but soon the aircraft carrier became the most important ship in the battle of the Pacific. Luckily all of the Pacific Fleet's aircraft carriers were away from Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack. Because of this, the United States was able to fight back more quickly.

The World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument was established to commemorate the lives lost during the Pearl Harbor attack of 1941. It is run by the U.S. National Park Service. In 1949, the Territory of Hawaii established the Pacific War Memorial Commission and a year later a flagpole was erected over the sunken USS Arizona. On the ninth anniversary of the attack, a commemorative plaque was placed at the base of the flagpole. The Monument was constructed from 1958 to 1961. It is 184-foot-long and spans the mid-portion of the sunken battleship. It consists of three main sections: an entry room; the assembly room, a central area designed for ceremonies and general observation; and the shrine room, where the names of those killed on the U.S.S. Arizona are engraved on a marble wall.



Smoke rises from the battleship USS Arizona as it sinks during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Photo © AP Images

Hula Dance and Hula Bowl

Hula is a traditional dance whose roots can be traced back to the Polynesians who originally settled the Hawaiian Islands. Chant or song is a vital part of the dance in the sense that dancers' movements depict the words of chants or songs that tell old Hawaiian stories and traditions. Some hula dances are performed standing and some are performed sitting. The standing form of hula is known as a luna dance. The sitting form of hula is known as a noho dance. Some dances utilize both forms.

Some hula dance has been influenced by western styles and by modern musical instruments. Traditional hula is still practiced, however, using the patterns of ancient hula accompanied by chant and traditional musical instruments.

Throughout the Hawaiian Islands, hula dances are performed at seasonal festivals and competitions as well as live performances at hotels and resorts. Some well-known festivals are: the Merrie Monarch Festival held in Hilo; the Prince Lot Hula Festival in Moanalua Gardens in Honolulu; and the Kauai Mokihana Festival. A good place to learn to dance hula is the famous Waikiki beach, where visitors are offered a free lesson.

The Hula Bowl was an annual American football event played by collegiate rules from 1947 to 2008. Established in 1946 by Paul Stupin as the Hula Bowl All-Star Football Classic, it was played for 51 years in Honolulu and later moved to Maui and War Memorial Stadium. For its 3 final years the Hula Bowl returned to Aloha Stadium in Honolulu.

In the beginning, the Hula Bowl was played by one team made up of college players from the mainland United States and one team comprised of players from Hawaii. Over the years, the format of the game changed. First professional players from the National Football League were allowed to join the Hawaiian all-star team to make the game more competitive. In the 1960s, the game was limited to collegiate athletes only. In its last format, the Hula Bowl pitted all-star teams made up of college players from the Eastern United States against a team of college players from the Western United States.

The last Hula Bowl game took place in 2008.

(in the photo below) Kehaulani Chang dances a traditional hula with her family playing in background at Honolulu's Bishop Museum. Photo © AP Images



Hawaiian Folklore - Ukulele and Lei

The ukulele is a metal-stringed, small guitar which was introduced to Hawaii by the Portugese in the year 1879. The ukulele comes in different sizes but is seldom more than 60 centimeters long. The tone of the instrument depends on the size. The soprano, concert, tenor and baritone versions of the ukulele are the sizes used most frequently.

Traditional Hawaiian music has now blended with modern Western and Asian music. In the 20th century, the ukulele became popular in the United States and then spread internationally.

In the Hawaiian language, the word ukulele means "jumping flea," which may be a reference to the movement of the player's fingers on the instrument. Ukulele can also be translated to mean "the gift that came here," from the Hawaiian words uku (gift or reward) and lele (to come).

Hawaiian royalty played a major role in promoting the ukulele. King Kalākaua was an ardent supporter of the instrument, which he incorporated into performances at royal gatherings.

A "lei" is a garland or wreath worn around one's neck. It is a symbol and sign of hospitality. It is worn by Hawaiians out of respect for tradition and as an adornment on festive occasions. A lei is also offered to guests upon arrival and departure. Traditionally, a lei was woven from fern leaves. Shelves and beads were not uncommon. Leis were offered to gods during religious ceremonies and also presented to important people. This tradition is kept alive today: the statue of King Kamehameha is decorated with long garlands of flowers.

Today leis are made and worn mostly as a tourist attraction. Hula dancing is unthinkable without them. A departing guest who has been offered a lei is supposed to toss it into the water when their ship leaves the islands. Tradition has it that if the lei is carried back to shore, then the guest will return to Hawaii someday. Orchids, jasmine or ginger blossoms, and carnations are all used to make leis.

(in the photo below) The Royal Hawaiian Center, a mall in Waikiki.

Photo © AP Images



Surfing on Hawaiian beaches

Hawaii, alongside Polynesia, is the cradle of surfing. Excellent conditions including accessible beaches, breaking waves, a mild climate and inexpensive equipment in the shape of a simple wooden plank made it possible for everyone, rich or poor, to surf.

“Hee nalu” means surfing in the Hawaiian language and the first written records of this activity come from as early as 1779. Lieutenant James King wrote that the Hawaiians: “... seem to feel a great pleasure in the motion that this exercise gives.”

The sport, which was popular among men and women of all walks of life, was put to a stop in the 19th century. Missionaries who came to Hawaii to convert the native population to Christianity objected to surfing and banned it.

However, with the growing interest in tourism at the beginning of the 20th century, surfing made a successful comeback. Moreover, it was transplanted to other places such as Australia and California. Hawaiian royalty, including Duke Kahanamoku who was a great surfer himself, played an important role in bringing the sport to the world stage.

Duke Kahanamoku, who later became a multiple gold-medal winner at the Olympics as a swimmer, is considered the “father of modern surfing.”

“Big wave” surfing also originated in Hawaii. The powerful winter waves of Makaha on Oahu’s west shore and Waimea Bay on the North Shore became popular with surfers in the 1950s. Big wave season in Hawaii lasts between November and February on Hawaii’s north shores. November and December are the months when some of the best surfing competitions in the world are held on Oahu’s North Shore. They include the Vans Triple Crown of Surfing (the Super Bowl of surfing.)

The design of the surfboard has undergone changes and improvements. At first it was just a wooden board that was 2-3 meters long and 61 cm wide. It weighed about 45 kilograms. Such a board was hard to maneuver. With time, the use of new materials made surfboards about 10 kilograms lighter. The introduction of a fin under the tail of the surfboard made it faster and more maneuverable. Producers continued to experiment with new materials, such as balsa wood, fiberglass, and polyurethane. Surfboards became lighter and lighter. Today surfers use boards with three fins underneath. They are not only able to better steer the board but also are able to adjust their speed to that of the wave or to slow the board. Today’s surfboards vary between 43 centimeters and 2 meters in length and weigh just 2.3 - 2.7 kilograms.



Rusty Keaulana of Hawaii takes a large wave in the first heat of the Eddie Aikau Invitational on Waimea Bay in Haleiwa, Hawaii, Wednesday, December 15, 2004. 'The Eddie' is a one-day event held when waves are 30 feet or higher. Photo © AP Images

Activity Page

EXERCISE 1 PLAN YOUR HOLIDAYS - SPEAKING AND WRITING

You are going on a holiday to Hawaii. Would you like to learn to surf? Or maybe you'd prefer to learn to play the ukulele?

Join another student. Divide the two photos between you, preferably according to your interests in what you would like to learn during your coming holidays in Hawaii.

1. Describe your photo to your partner.
2. In a discussion compare and contrast the photos.
3. Tell your partner how you are going to learn your new skills.
4. Plan an event in which you will be able to present your new skills.

Write a short invitation to your event. Include the information on the venue and time. Think of a catchy "Welcome Note" which will attract your guests.

Give the invitation to your partner and receive his/her invitation to their event.

"Go" to your partner's event. Tell him/her about your impressions from their performance. Congratulate on their progress.

Write a card to your parents back home and tell them about your and your friend's events and whether you were impressed by what you both learned.



*A surfer takes a large wave.
Photo © AP Images*



*A musician is seen playing the instrument at the
41st Annual Ukulele Festival in Honolulu.
Photo © AP Images*

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Lanterns float from the shore out to the breakers as thousands of people launch their lanterns at Ala Moana Beach Park in Honolulu. People float candlelit lanterns on the ocean in remembrance of loved ones and to pay tribute to ancestors.

Photo © AP Images