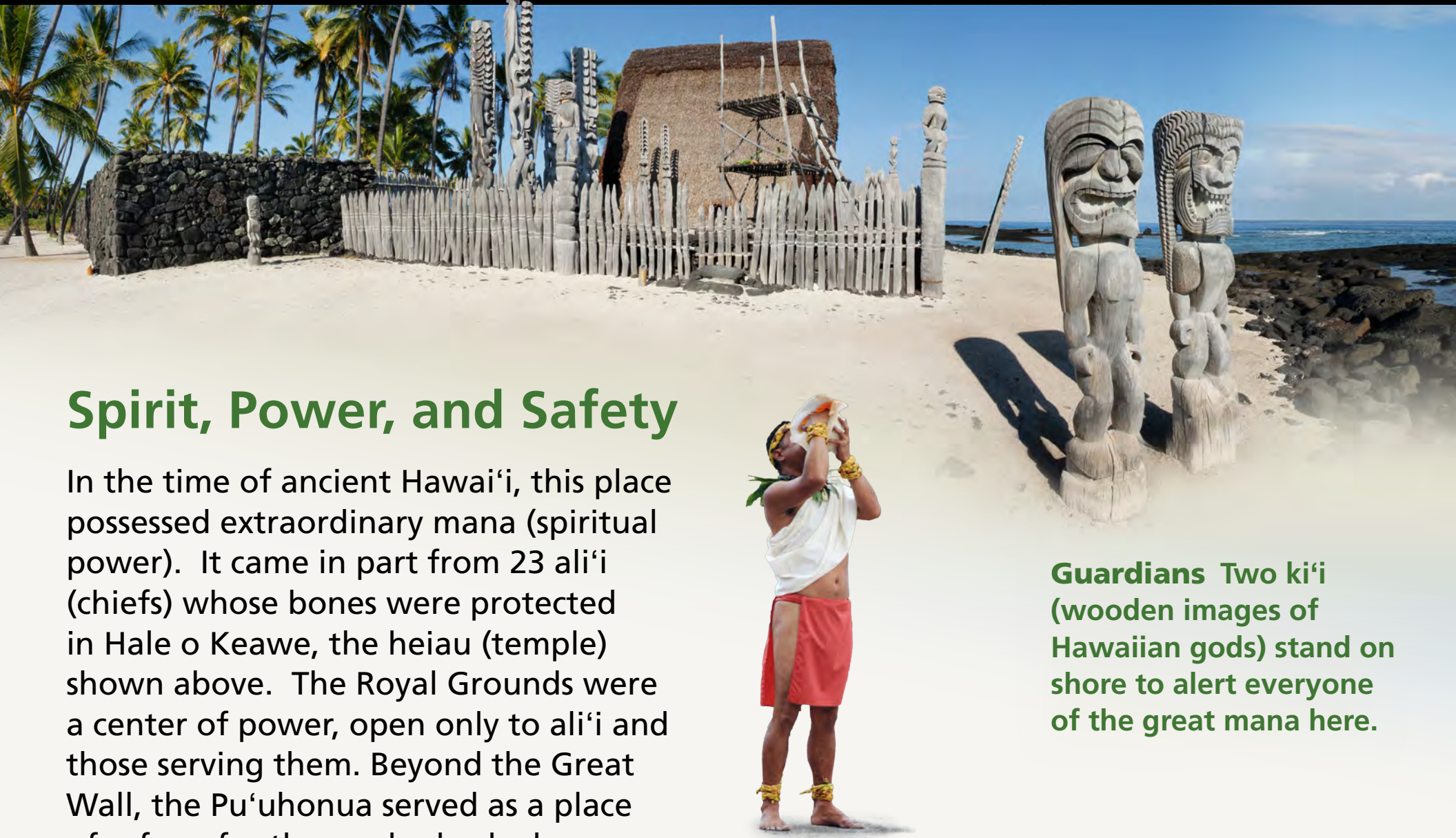


# Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau

National Historical Park / Hawaii



## Spirit, Power, and Safety

In the time of ancient Hawai'i, this place possessed extraordinary mana (spiritual power). It came in part from 23 ali'i (chiefs) whose bones were protected in Hale o Keawe, the heiau (temple) shown above. The Royal Grounds were a center of power, open only to ali'i and those serving them. Beyond the Great Wall, the Pu'uhonua served as a place of refuge for those who broke kapu, the sacred laws and beliefs by which all lived. These wahi pana (legendary places) and ancient Hawaiian culture endure here as Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park.

## Royal Grounds

The sound of a pū (conch) announces the approach of ali'i. Skilled paddlers maneuver wa'a (canoes) around the lava rocks to land at Keone'ele Cove. Ali'i step onto the Royal Grounds with their advisors and priests. For the next several months, they will hold ceremonies and host gatherings. They might engage in negotiating war or peace, meeting in the shade of a hālau (thatched shelter). They participate in amusements like kōnane (a board game) or the sport he'e hōlua (sled riding). Attendants and servants perform daily tasks, hurrying between hale (houses), serving the ali'i or perhaps preparing fish taken from the royal fishponds. Priests consult with the ali'i on matters of spirituality, and conduct rituals here, at Hale o Keawe, and in the Pu'uhonua.

**Guardians Two ki'i (wooden images of Hawaiian gods) stand on shore to alert everyone of the great mana here.**

## Pu'uhonua

### Place of Refuge

In the time of kapu, a woman eats with a man. A maka'āinana (commoner) casts his shadow on an ali'i. Someone catches a fish out of season. Break these or any other kapu, and you face the ultimate punishment of death. Your only chance of survival is to elude your pursuers on foot, make your way to the coast, and swim to the Pu'uhonua. If you make it — and many do not — you may be absolved by a priest.

During times of war, the Pu'uhonua served another role — as sanctuary for children, elders, and other noncombatants. Defeated warriors could also seek safety in the refuge. When the battle ended they were free to return home and resume their lives regardless of the battle's outcome.

The Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau, like all pu'uhonua in the islands, served Hawaiians for hundreds of years until kapu ended in 1819. It remains a sacred place of peace, calm, and refuge to Hawaiians, open to all who find their way here.

# KĪPAIPAI 'IA I KA 'OIA'I'O

## Become Inspired by the Authentic

Today the Hale o Keawe, Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau, Royal Grounds, and surrounding lands remain a center of traditional Hawaiian life. This long tradition has been perpetuated by the National Park Service since 1961. At the park's cultural festival, held every summer, you can become immersed in Hawaiian culture.

A woman chants and beats a drum to lead a young dancer in hula.



Hawaiians maintain ancient traditions today. A girl makes kapa (below).

A man carves wood (bottom left). A man prepares to gather fish with a net (below right).



# Exploring Through Time

## 900 – 1100 CE (Common Era)

Polynesians arrive in the Hawaiian islands, likely from the Marquesas Islands 2400 miles south. Their voyaging canoes carry plants, animals, and supplies needed to live here. People settle in hereditary groups led by a chief. Their farming, hunting, and gathering begin to change the land.

## 1100 – 1400

Tradition tells of ali'i (chiefs) voyaging back and forth between Hawaii and ancestral Kahiki (eastern Polynesia and Tahiti). They bring new ideas and traditions like temple drums, wooden images, and ritual human sacrifice. Tradition also says voyaging ends by 1400. Afterward, Hawaiians live in isolation for several hundred years.

## 1400 – 1600

As the population expands, ali'i establish land boundaries and centralize their power. They begin enforcing kapu (sacred laws), which separates them from the maka'āinana (common people) by controlling all aspects of life. During this time, people settle Hōnaunau, establish a pu'uhonua (place of refuge), and build the first heiau (temple) here.

## 1600 – 1778

Hawai'i island is united under one ali'i in the early 1600s. Hōnaunau becomes a royal center. Hale o Keawe heiau is built to house the bones and mana (spiritual power) of the ruling ali'i, Keawe-ʻĪ-kekahi-ali'i-o-ka-moku. Ali'i continue to expand their power and influence. In the mid-1700s, Kamehameha is born. His uncle Kalaniopu'u was the ruling chief of the island by the late 1770s.

## 1779 – 1810

In 1779, English explorer Captain James Cook sails into Kealakekua Bay, north of Hōnaunau. His is the first recorded contact with Hawaiians on this island. In 1782, Kalaniopu'u dies. Kamehameha defeats his rivals and rises to power. He unifies the Hawaiian islands by 1810 through treaty and conquest.

## 1819

Kamehameha dies. During the mourning period, two of his wives — Ka'ahumanu and Keōpūolani — and his son Liholiho (Kamehameha II) defy kapu by eating together. Their action begins the collapse of the kapu system. More profound changes in Hawaiian society follow as Christian missionaries arrive along with other Europeans and Americans.

Today, the Hawaiian story continues to evolve through the sharing of traditions and the work of archeologists, anthropologists, and other specialists.

**Only ali'i wore helmets and capes embellished with feathers.**



# Explore Two Sides of Hawaiian Life



Follow numbered posts on a half-mile self-guiding tour through the Royal Grounds and the Pu‘uhonua.

Red = stops in the Royal Grounds

Yellow = stops in the Pu‘uhonua

**1 Royal Grounds** Here, in ancient times, you would have seen workers pound kalo (taro), take fish from the ponds, or prepare the grounds for ali‘i. On the far side of the Royal Grounds is the Great Wall (stop 7), the boundary of the Pu‘uhonua.

Follow the sandy path to the right.

**2 Temple Model** This structure is a small reconstruction of Hale o Keawe, the heiau at stop 8. This model shows details of the heiau. Its frame is ōhi‘a wood, the roof is thatched with kī leaves, and the trim is of ama‘u (fern).

**3 Kōnane** This Hawaiian strategy game is played with black and white pebbles on a papamū (stone playing surface). Papamū can be any size and are carved into a lava surface. If you would like to play kōnane, ask for rules at the visitor center.

**4 Kānoa** These bowls, carved into rock, may have been used for dying kapa (bark cloth), tanning fishing nets, or pounding ‘awa root to make a ceremonial drink.

**5 Tree Mold** When hot lava surrounds a living tree, moisture in the tree causes the lava to harden before it burns. Sometimes this leaves tree molds like you see here. Many molds in the park are of loulu palms. Loulu were once abundant, but now are endangered.

**6 Keone‘ele** This protected cove was kapu; only ali‘i could land canoes here. At times, honu (sea turtles) rest on the shore. Please watch them from a distance; they are protected by law.

Check the regulations and safety tips at the end of this brochure before you begin. Please be respectful of this sacred site.

Picnic Area

PU‘UHONUA

The Great Wall

Coastal Access Road

Ala Kahakai

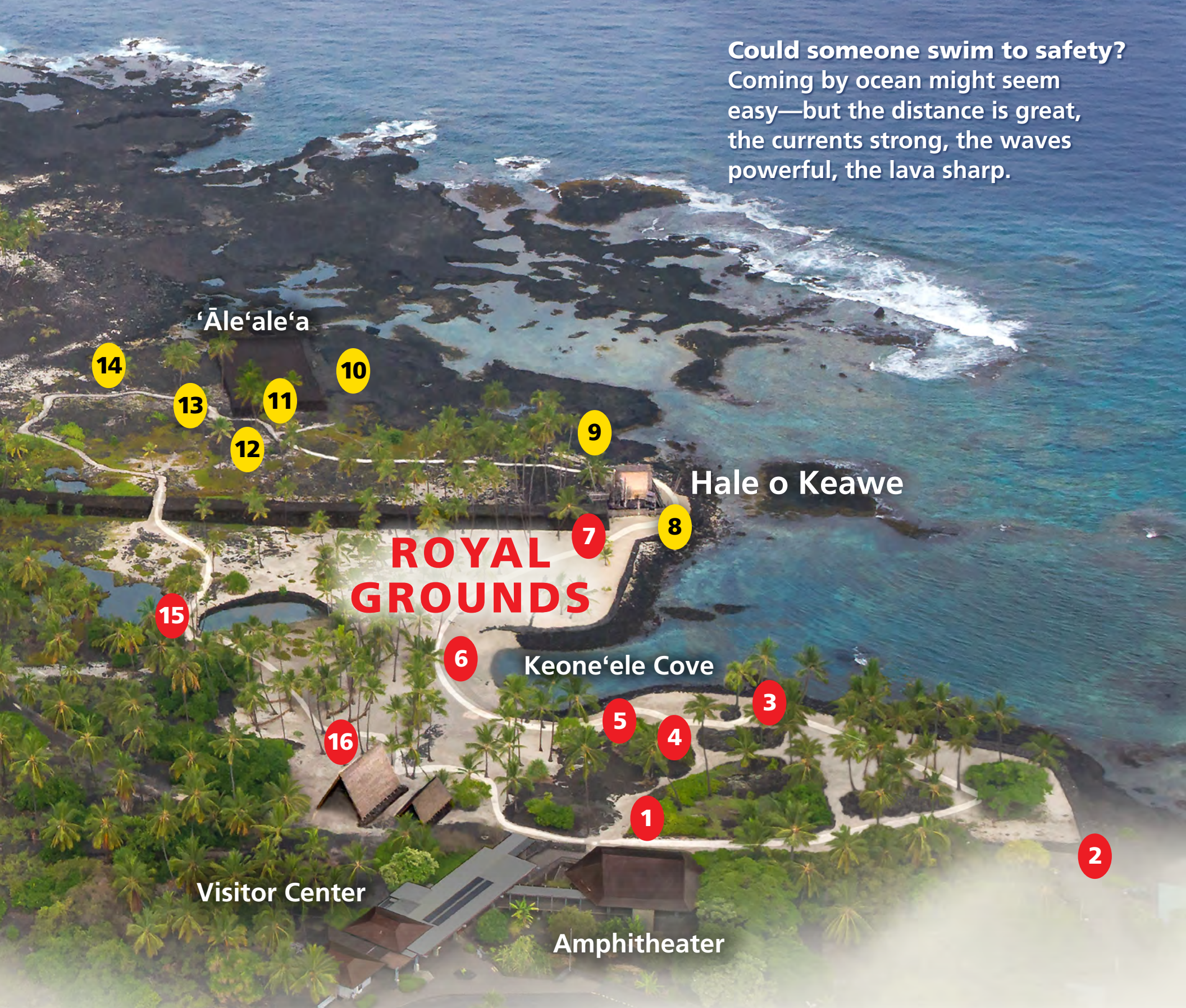
National Historic Trail (1871 Trail)

**7 The Great Wall** Up to 12 feet tall, 18 feet wide, and over 950 feet long, this wall defines the sacred space of the Pu‘uhonua. The wall was constructed over 400 years ago using uhau humu pohaku (dry-set masonry)—stones fitted without mortar.

**8 Hale o Keawe** This heiau was a royal mausoleum housing bones of 23 ali‘i, including Keawe-‘Ī-kekahi-ali‘i-o-ka-moku, Kamehameha’s great-grandfather. These bones give the heiau immense mana. Hawaiians still revere this place and sometimes leave ho‘okupu (offerings) on the lele (tower). The wooden images are ki‘i representing Hawaiian gods.

**9 Pu‘uhonua** Imagine scrambling out of the waves onto the rough lava. Although exhausted and out of breath, now you are safe. In a few days you will be absolved by a priest and can go home.

**10 Keōua Stone** According to local tradition, this was a favorite resting place of Keōua, a high chief. Holes in the lava surrounding the base may have supported a coconut leaf canopy.



**Could someone swim to safety?**  
Coming by ocean might seem easy—but the distance is great, the currents strong, the waves powerful, the lava sharp.

Walk back to the sandy path to continue the walking tour.

**11 'Āle'ale'a** This may have been a principal heiau long before Hale o Keawe (stop 8). The platform was built in seven stages. After Hale o Keawe replaced this heiau, oral tradition describes ali'i relaxing and watching hula on the platform.

**12 Ka'ahumanu Stone** Legend holds that Queen Ka'ahumanu, a favorite wife of Kamehameha, swam to the Pu'uhonua after they quarreled. She hid under this stone, but her barking dog revealed her location. Fortunately, she and her husband reconciled.

**13 Papamū** Small poho (depressions) were carved into flat lava rock to create this surface for playing kōnane (stop 3). The skills mastered in this game could be used in battle or other pursuits.

**14 Old Heiau Site** Long ago, another heiau was built here. It may have been the first heiau for the refuge. Ravaged for centuries by ocean waves, only remnants remain. They are among the oldest structures in the park.

The path now leads back toward the Royal Grounds. Just before the Great Wall, you pass a pond on the right. It is an anchialine (an-kee-uh-line) pool, fed by a freshwater spring and the ocean. The tour continues through a modern opening in the wall.

**15 Royal Fish Ponds** These anchialine pools held fish to be eaten by the ali'i.

The next stop is the large thatched shelter.

**16 Hālau** In ancient times, this structure would have been made of ōhi'a wood tied with cord and thatched with pili grass. Today it serves as a hālau wa'a, or canoe house. Artisans work in the smaller hālau.

# UA OLA NO O KAI IA KAI

## Life Comes from the Sea

From ocean to shore, Hawaiians found plenty to eat. They fished from canoes. To catch he'e (right), they used lūhe'e (above right)—a lure of shell, stone, wood, and bone. Uhu (below left) was one of many reef fish they harvested with nets and spears. Along shore, they gathered delicacies like hā'uke'uke and 'opihi (bottom). And they prized honu (right) for its meat and beautiful shell.



**lūhe'e**

**He'e  
(octopus)**



**Honu  
(green sea turtle)**



**Uhu  
(parrotfish)**



**Hā'uke'uke  
(sea urchin)**



**'Opihi  
(limpet)**



# UA OLA NO O UKA IA UKA

## Life Comes from the Land

Food, medicine, clothing, ritual — Hawaiians had many uses for canoe plants brought by their ancestors. Niu (right) provided food, drink, and fiber for cord. Kalo (bottom left) and 'Ulu (center) were staple foods. The stiff leaves of hala (the tree below) were made into mats, baskets, and sails. Noni (below) was one of many medicinal plants.

**Niu  
(coconut palm)**



**Noni  
(Indian mulberry)**



**'Ulu  
(breadfruit)**



**Kalo (taro),  
the source of poi**

**Hala  
(pandanus)**

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# E KOMO MAI **Welcome**

The National Park Service welcomes you to Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park, established in 1961. We invite you to explore the culture and enjoy the coastal landscape that speaks of people who lived here for centuries.

## **Getting Here**

Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park is in the South Kona district of the island of Hawai‘i. Take Māmalahoa Highway (Hwy. 11) to Ke Ala o Keawe Road (Hwy. 160), between mileposts 103 and 104. Follow Hwy. 160 to the entrance.

## **Visitor Center**

Open daily. Information, exhibits, gift shop. Call or check the website for hours.

## **Immerse Yourself in Hawaiian Culture**

- Walk the self-guiding tour in this brochure.
- Take the cell phone tour.
- Talk to people giving demonstrations.
- Attend a ranger program.
- Watch a film.
- Look for native plants and animals.
- Play a game of kōnane (tour stop 3).
- Children ages 3 and up can become Junior Rangers.
- Attend our annual cultural festival on the weekend before the Fourth of July.

## **1871 Trail to Ki‘ilae Village**

Pick up a trail guide at the visitor center for this 2.25-mile roundtrip hike that passes ancient and historic sites, volcanic features, and ocean views. Wear sturdy shoes for walking on lava.

## **Wildlife and Plants**

Feeding, touching, and harassing wildlife — including those in water — is prohibited.

- Federal and state law protects threatened or endangered sea turtles, monk seals, and some plants.

## **Regulations and Safety**

Honor and respect ceremonies, protocols, and practices. Keep your distance and refrain from photographing and recording.

- Ask at the visitor center for other special rules and regulations.
- Stay on the trails.
- Federal law protects all cultural objects.
- Firearms regulations and fishing guidelines are on the park website.
- Food is allowed only in the picnic area.
- Pets are allowed only in the picnic area and on the Coastal and 1871 trails. They must be restrained and under control by a leash no longer than six feet.
- Wear sun protection; bring water.

## **Accessibility**

We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. Beach wheelchairs are available at the visitor center. For information go to the visitor center, call, or check the park website.

## **Related Sites**

Explore traditional Hawaiian life at other National Park sites on this island: Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, Pu‘ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site, Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, and Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park.

**Pu‘uhonua Hōnaunau  
National Historical Park**  
**PO Box 129**

**Hōnaunau, Kona, HI 96726**  
**808-328-2326**

**[www.nps.gov/puho](http://www.nps.gov/puho)**

Follow us on Facebook.

## **Emergencies call 911**

Pu‘uhonua Hōnaunau National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).



## Life Beyond the Refuge

Life extended beyond the Pu'uhonua and Royal Grounds for both ali'i and maka'āinana.

From the ocean to the mountaintop, Hawaiians divided the island into moku (large districts) and smaller land divisions called ahupua'a. In each ahupua'a, they found all they needed to thrive: access to the sea, fertile farmland inland, forests in the upland, and sacred land in the upper elevations. People lived either makai (near the ocean) or mauka (toward the upland); some people had parcels both near the ocean and higher in the agricultural zones. They used a complex system of trails to travel within the ahupua'a. (Note: the park boundary lies one-half mile east in the Ki'ilae Ahupua'a, just beyond the scope of this map.)

### Map Legend

|  |   |                |  |                       |
|--|---|----------------|--|-----------------------|
|  | 0 | 0.25 Kilometer |  | Information           |
|  | 0 | 0.25 Mile      |  | Picnic area           |
|  |   |                |  | Restrooms             |
|  |   |                |  | Wheelchair accessible |
|  |   |                |  |                       |