The best places to eat, sleep and play in Big Island this spring and summer

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INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you’ll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.

Inside

BIG ISLAND

Overshadowed by her better-branded sisters, the Big Island of Hawaii is larger than all of the others in the chain combined—nearly the size of Connecticut. Most travelers know it for Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, home to the longest volcanic eruption in recorded history (it’s been going since 1963). With a population of around 160,000, it’s an empty, wild and ecologically diverse “continent in miniature.” With everything from rainforests to deserts to snow-capped mountains, the island is tailor-made for adventurers and lovers of the outdoors. But it is also home to the exclusive Kohala Coast, filled with luxurious mega-resorts.

The Big Island is pivotal to Hawaii’s history: The Polynesians who traveled from the Marquesas first settled here, and the island was the birthplace of the great King Kamehameha I. Since it has a little (or a lot of) something for everyone, the Big Island remains a favorite for repeat vacationers to Hawaii.

PACKING TIPS

1. “The sun is very strong, so pack a bathing suit that covers your body.”—TripAdvisor Member, Newport Beach, Calif.

2. The eastern side of the Big Island is rainy, so “be sure to pack a rain jacket and an umbrella. There is a reason that there is so much lush vegetation in the area!”—TripAdvisor Member, Suisun City, Calif.

3. At the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, “your hike around the crater is pretty intense. Be sure to bring a LOT of water. I personally used a Hydration System—a backpack in which you can store water and drink out of using a built-in faucet.”—TripAdvisor Member, Whitefish Bay, Wis.
BIG ISLAND’S BEST VIEWS

“The Waipio Valley Lookout is one of the most dramatic sights on the island.”—TripAdvisor Member, Papaikou

The Waipio Valley Lookout, end of Highway 240

Head to South Point, “the southernmost point in the United States—a pretty cool photo-op. Plus you’ll see some beautiful sea cliffs and big waves.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dawsonville, Ga.

South Point, South Point Road

3. Hula Daddy Kona Coffee, 74-4944 Mamalahoa Hwy., Holualoa, 808 327 9744
4. Kilauea Iki Trail, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, 808 985 6000
5. Mauna Kea Summit, Mauna Kea Access Road, 808 961 2180
6. City of Refuge (Honaunau Bay), Honaunau
7. Pololu Valley Lookout, End of Highway 27 (Honokaa)

“Our sunset and stargazing trip up the 14,000-foot mountain of Mauna Kea was breathtaking. The views going up were spectacular; you could see all the way to Hilo. We drove through some thin cloud banks on our way up; once we popped through, the biggest full moon I have ever seen was just cresting the summit.”—TripAdvisor Member, North Carolina

Mauna Kea Visitor Information Station, Mauna Kea Access Road, 808 961 2180

Where to PLAY

TOP 10 Attractions

1. Hula Daddy Kona Coffee, 74-4944 Mamalahoa Hwy., Holualoa, 808 327 9744
2. Kilauea Iki Trail, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, 808 985 6000
3. Mauna Kea Summit, Mauna Kea Access Road, 808 961 2180
4. City of Refuge (Honaunau Bay), Honaunau
5. Pololu Valley Lookout, End of Highway 27 (Honokaa)
6. Kealakekua Bay, Captain Cook
7. Waipio Valley, End of Hamakua Heritage Corridor
8. Kapoho Tide Pools, Waipae Road, Pahoa
9. Mauna Kea Beach

FAMILIES

The Hilton Waikoloa Village is the only place that guarantees a swim with dolphins, in a controlled setting. The “kids did the Dolphin Quest and really enjoyed it. It is pricey but something we feel they will always remember in their lives.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Diego, Calif.

Dolphin Quest, 425 Waikoloa Beach Dr., Waikoloa, 808 886 2875

The ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center at the University of Hawaii in Hilo is a relatively new and impressive attraction. “The exhibit hall features more than 300 displays and is accessed through a storybook koa forest. The exhibits, many of them interactive, link the voyaging explorations of early Hawaiians to the astronomical discoveries of today’s scientists.”—TripAdvisor Member, Berkeley, Calif.

‘Imiloa Astronomy Center, 600 `Imiloa Place, Hilo, 808 969 9700

A trip to the Big Island isn’t complete without a snorkeling expedition. “Would highly recommend Sea Quest to all able-bodied first-timers to Hawaii, first-time snorkelers and particularly to families with middle school to high school kids.”—TripAdvisor Member, California

Sea Quest Rafting & Snorkeling Tours, Keauhou Bay, 808 329 7238

ROMANCE

The Big Island’s remote Green Sand Beach, located in a private cove on the southern tip of the island, is usually devoid of other tourists. “It’s stark, rugged, almost primitive—and I loved it. We visited it in the late afternoon, when the light was fading and it felt like a place apart from the rest of reality.”—TripAdvisor Member, Calgary, Alberta

Green Sand Beach, South Point Road, Ka‘u

The Waipio Valley is a sacred area for Hawaiians, and you can visit on horseback with Na’alapa Stables. “The ride itself was fabulous. We went deep into the valley’s interior, along the valley floor through lush jungle trails, through streams and rivers. We saw dramatic 1,200-foot waterfalls, taro patches, lotus ponds, wild horses and exotic plants and birds.”—TripAdvisor Member, Riverhead, N.Y.

Na’alapa Stables, Waipio Valley, 808 775 0419

“Don’t miss the Spa Without Walls.” Private outdoor huts “near the waterfalls create the most perfect setup for a couples massage.” The spa also features cabanas open to the Pacific breezes. “I wish I could do it all over again. Enjoy!”—TripAdvisor Member, Toronto, Ontario

Spa Without Walls, Fairmont Orchid, 1 N. Kaniku Dr., Kohala Coast, 808 885 2000

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ADVENTURE

“I rented a kayak from Kona Boys and paddled across Kealakekua Bay to the Captain Cook Monument one afternoon and saw many spinner dolphins.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kodiak, Alaska

Kona Boys Kayak Rental, 79-7539 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kealakekua, 808 328 1234

BUDGET

“I’ve been to the Akaka Falls many times and I’m always in awe of the giant ferns and plants that make you believe you’ve entered a tropical jungle! The fragrance of the wild ginger adds so much to the experience as well. They charge a small admission fee now, so remember to bring cash.”—TripAdvisor Member, Washington

Akaka Falls, Highway 90 to Hamakeua Highway, 808 974 6200

EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL

On a hillside in South Kona is the humble Painted Church. Colorful hand-drawn scenes by a turn-of-the-century Belgian priest decorate the entire interior of the edifice. It’s a “very small, beautiful church. A very friendly congregation greeted us visitors with yarn leis.”—TripAdvisor Member

Painted Church, 84-5140 Painted Church Road, Captain Cook, 808 328 2272

RELAXATION

Hapuna Beach on the Kohala Coast is “one of the most beautiful beaches in the entire country, offering wonderfully soft sand, swimming, snorkeling, boogie boarding, etc.”—TripAdvisor Member

Hapuna Beach, Off Highway 19, Queen Kaahumanu Highway, Kohala Coast, 808 974 6200

You’ll find great deals on souvenirs and other island goodies at the Farmer’s Market in Hilo: “flowers of many colors, vegetables, fruit with strange names and even stranger looks, Japanese food, Vietnamese food, Korean food, Hawaiian food, jewelry, sarongs, hats, hair accessories, Japanese and Chinese knives, painted pillow covers, mumus.”—TripAdvisor Member, Live Oak, Fla.

Farmer’s Market, Corner of Mamo and Kamehameha streets, Hilo, 808 933 1000

For a small donation, you can visit the fascinating Wood Valley Temple and Retreat Center, “a restored Buddhist temple with a resident monk from Ladakh who lives there along with the resident managers. There are also resident peacocks in this lush rain forest setting.”—TripAdvisor Member, California

Wood Valley Temple and Retreat Center, 1 Temple Road, Ka’u, 808 928 8539

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park “has so much to offer it’s difficult to see in just one day…each stop reveals a different vista or type of lava. If you’re a little more energetic, there are some easy-to-moderate hikes that most people in decent shape can handle.”—TripAdvisor Member, Connecticut

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Off Highway 11 at mile marker 28, 808 328 2288

Don’t miss an opportunity to swim with the manta rays at night. With Big Island Divers, “we were one of the first boats on site for the manta dive and, after spending some additional time on the reef, were the absolute last people out.”—TripAdvisor Member, Texas

Big Island Divers, 74-5467 Kaiwi St., Kailua-Kona, 808 329 6068

A trip to the Big Island is not complete without a visit to Pu’uhonua O Honaunau, a scenic shoreline site with numerous Hawaiian stone temples. “We enjoyed this park very much. We took the self-guided tour, so we could spend as much time as we wanted looking at things. The rangers were very helpful and happy to answer questions.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kirkland, Wash.

Pu’uhonua O Honaunau, Off Route 160, 808 328 2288

Along the shoreline of Kailua-Kona town is the Hulihe’e Palace, once a residence for the Hawaiian royalty, still full of their furniture and personal belongings. “The house and grounds are very impressive given the year they were made.”—TripAdvisor Member

Hulihe’e Palace, 75-5718 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 329 1877

“We enjoyed this park very much. We took the self-guided tour, so we could spend as much time as we wanted looking at things. The rangers were very helpful and happy to answer questions.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kirkland, Wash.

Pu’uhonua O Honaunau, Off Route 160, 808 328 2288

The Puako Petroglyphs are in one of the largest preserved petroglyph fields in Hawaii. The setting is serene and natural. Plan on at least an hour to walk the trail and appreciate the petroglyphs. Be aware that touching or walking on or making rubbings of the petroglyphs is prohibited, because it damages them.”—TripAdvisor Member, Arlington, Va.

Puako Petroglyph Archaeological Preserve, Holoholokai Beach Park

The Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden “is quite large, with a variety of plants, flowers and trees like I have never seen before! There’s even a waterfall and beautiful trails along the ocean with gorgeous views.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dallas, Texas

Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden, 27-717 Old Mamalahoa Hwy., Papaikou, 808 964 5233

...plants, flowers and trees like I have never seen before!”
**What’s the TOUR**

**How to Get Around**

**Dolphin Discoveries** explores the waters around the Big Island. “Amazingly colored fish abound at each location. Be sure to take an underwater camera to capture the experience on film.”—TripAdvisor Member, Mesa, Ariz.

Dolphin Discoveries, 77-116 Queen Kalama Ave., Kailua-Kona, 808 322 8000

“Our trip with **Sea Hawaii** trip was so amazing—six hours exploring the ocean and Kealakekua Bay. We started our trip spotting dolphins and breaching whales. After coming back to shore, we decided to go again. We took three, yes three, adventures with Sea Hawaii in our 12-day stay.”—TripAdvisor Member, Vancouver, Wash.

**Sea Hawaii Rafting**, Kailua-Kona, 808 325 7444

“I can’t say enough good things about the heli tour we took on **Blue Hawaiian**. I was not expecting much, to be honest...I was so wrong!”—TripAdvisor Member, Colorado Springs, Colo

**Blue Hawaiian Helicopters**, 808 961 5600

TripAdvisor members have posted more than 2,000,000 photos on the site. The good, the bad and the very candid. It’s almost like being there!
**WHERE to eat**

### FAMILIES

“The food is just one of the things to enjoy at What’s Shakin’. From the Ono fish sandwich, to the avocado banana smoothie to the ‘java cake’ chocolate desert, this place is one of the best on the island.”—TripAdvisor Member, Lebanon, Pa.

What’s Shakin’, 27-999 Old Mamalahoa Hwy., Pepeekeo, 808 964 3080

The Hilo Bay Café is a local favorite. “My family really enjoyed this nice little restaurant. It’s tucked away in a shopping center but worth seeking out.”—TripAdvisor Member, Long Island, N.Y.

Hilo Bay Café, 315 Maka’ala St., Hilo, 808 935 4939

“Jackie Rey’s is a fine family-dining establishment” with “an extensive kid’s menu.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madison, Wis.

Jackie Rey’s Ohana Grill, 75-5995 Kuakini Hwy., Kailua-Kona, 808 327 0209

*“...one of the best on the island.”*

### TOP 10 Restaurants

1. Up Country Bakery & Café, 82-6127 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook, 808 323 2266
2. Da Poke Shack, 76-6246 Alii Drive, Kailua-Kona, 808 329 7653
3. Sushi Rock, 55-3435 Akoni Pule Hwy., Hawi, 808 889 5900
4. Lighthouse Delicatessen, 55-3419 Akoni Pule Hwy., 808 889 5757
5. Patz Pies, 82-6127 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook, 808 323 8100
6. Cafe’ Ono, 19-3834 Old Volcano Road, Volcano, 808 985 8979
7. Krua Thai Cuisine, 75-5705 Kuakini Hwy., Kailua-Kona, 808 327 5782
8. What’s Shakin’, 27-999 Old Mamalahoa Hwy., Pepeekeo, 808 964 3080
9. Okolemaluna Tiki Lounge, 75-5799 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 883 8454
10. The Coffee Shack, 83-5799 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook, 808 328 9555

### ROMANCE

“It was our 45th anniversary, so we thought we should splurge on the five-course meal at La Bourgogne. The service was great, and all the wines complimented the courses extremely well. We cannot wait for an occasion to return.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kailua-Kona

La Bourgogne French Restaurant, 77-6400 Nalani St., Kailua-Kona, 808 329 6711

“At Brown’s, a soft ocean breeze and a live guitarist playing beautifully made for a hypnotic, serene, perfect anniversary dinner overlooking the Pacific.”—TripAdvisor Member, Orange County, Calif.

Brown’s Beach House, Fairmont Orchid, I N. Kaniku Dr., Kohala Coast, 808 885 2000

“It was divine!”

### BUDGET

**Pau** is the “best value for dinner in Hawaii. Everything was incredibly fresh, and the pizza was huge. We took several slices home, and it was just as good the next day.”—TripAdvisor Member, Columbia, S.C.

Pau, 65-1227 Opolo Road, Kamuela, 808 885 6325

**Café Pesto** “was the best restaurant value by far...the pizza was made with very fresh ingredients and it lived up to its reputation as the best on the island. Highly recommended.”—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

Café Pesto, Kawaihae Shopping Center, Kawaihae Harbor Hwy. 270, 808 882 1071

“Stop at the Tex Drive-In and try a malasada. Had I realized how incredible they were, I would have bought more than one! They were cheap, too - 99 cents for a plain and $1.50 for filled.”—TripAdvisor Member, Chicago, Ill.

Tex Drive In & Restaurant, 45-690 Pakalana St., Highway 19, Honokaa, 808 775 0598

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WHERE to eat

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

Tako Taco Taqueria “may be the only truly ‘fast’ and ‘healthy’ food on the Island. Fresh Waima green, home cooked flavors, outstanding guacamole and many vegetarian and vegan offerings.”—TripAdvisor Member, Mauna Kea, Hawaii

Tako Taco Taqueria, 64-1066 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kamuela, 808 887 1717

“Try the Kona Health Food store in Kona next to the Safeway. They have a wonderful cafe.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kona, Hawaii

Kona Natural Foods, 75-1027 Henry St., #105, Kailua-Kona, 808 329 2296

“Cafe’ Ono is the lunch place I wish I had around the corner from me! The food is immensely fresh and beyond delicious—flavorful soups, lofty whole-grain breads, simple salads. There’s not a big menu, but enough to have interesting options. And the portions were larger than I could possibly finish.”—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

Cafe’ Ono, 19-3834 Old Volcano Road, Volcano, 808 985 8979

HIDDEN GEMS

Mi’s is a “tiny restaurant in a tiny building in the tiny town of Kealakekua. Don’t be surprised if the owner comes to your table to pour your wine and visit with you. And don’t be surprised if they recognize you after your first visit and treat you like family.”—TripAdvisor Member, East Wenatchee, Wash.

Mi’s Italian Bistro, 81-6372 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kealakekua, 808 323 3880

At the Kilauea Lodge, the “food at the restaurant was excellent, with a relaxing and lovely setting. Make reservations at the restaurant; it can book up fast. The staff is very nice and friendly.”—TripAdvisor Member, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Kilauea Lodge & Restaurant, 19-3948 Old Volcano Road, Volcano Village, 808 967 7366

“Last week, we returned home to Kailua-Kona. With our larder still empty, we opted for a visit to this little Indonesian restaurant tucked away in the mall across from the seawall. We recommend Rapanui to those who like intimate restaurants with interesting cuisine.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kailua-Kona

Rapanui Island Café, 75-5695 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 329 0511

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Merrie Monarch Festival is the leading forum on the art of ancient and modern hula. It includes art exhibits, craft fairs, performances, a parade highlighting the cultures of Hawaii and a three-day hula competition. The jam-packed week of events kicks off with a Ho’olaulea or music festival. There is also a slew of free events that coincide with the venerable festival. (April 8 - 14)

Merrie Monarch Festival, Various venues, 808 935 9168, http://www.merriemonarchfestival.org

Honor both the achievements of independent narrative filmmakers and the gorgeous Hawaiian scenery at the Big Island Film Festival. Many of the screenings will take place outdoors, under the stars. (May 24 - 28)

Big Island Film Festival, Mauna Lani Resort, 808 883 0394, http://www.bigislandfilmfestival.com

On Memorial Day weekend, head to Hilo for the 7th Annual Hilo Inter-Tribal Powwow, honoring Veterans and Native American culture. There will be traditional dancing, music, arts and crafts, storytelling and food. Admission is free and all are welcome. (May 26 - 28)

Hilo Inter-Tribal Powwow, Waiakea River State Park, Hilo, http://www.hilopowwow.com

Every summer, the Waikoloa Bowl fills with the smell of popcorn and cotton candy and the sound of live music during the 4th of July Extravaganza. Stick around until the sun goes down and catch the Independence Day fireworks spectacular. (July 4)


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Where to STAY

FAMILIES
The Hale Kona Kai Condominiums are conveniently located right in the main town of Kailua-Kona. “The price (reasonable) and location (excellent) make this a great choice for a family stay.”—TripAdvisor Member, Colorado
Hale Kona Kai Condominiums, 75-5870 Kahakai Road, Kailua-Kona, 800 421 3696

“We recently returned from a stay at the Keauhou Beach Resort and have three things to say: location, location, location! This hotel is located on a wonderful snorkeling beach, especially for families and beginners... if you are looking for an inexpensive family-friendly place with a great location, this is it!”—TripAdvisor Member, Bishop, Calif.

Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort, 78-6740 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 322 3441

Aloha Guest House is a mountainside B&B on five secluded acres with plenty of room for the whole family. “When we stayed as a family, we rented two adjacent rooms, which worked out perfectly.”—TripAdvisor Member, Santa Cruz, Calif.
Aloha Guest House, 84-4780 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook, 808 328 8955

ROMANCE
The low-key but elegant and secluded bungalows of the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai attract movie stars and romantic couples. “The purpose of our visit was to celebrate a belated honeymoon that we never took when we married eight years ago. This hotel was a wonderful place to go for a romantic and luxurious trip.”—TripAdvisor Member, California
Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, 72-100 Kaupulehu Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 325 8000

“A 2008 Traveler’s Choice Award winner for Best Hotel - Romance in the U.S., the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel is a quiet, romantic and beautiful tropical resort. It is a great place for couples, and I saw few children.”—TripAdvisor Member, Winston-Salem, N.C.

Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel, 62-100 Kaunaoa Dr., Kohala Coast, 888 977 4623

At The Fairmont Orchid, “the grounds are open 24 hours. You can sit in a hot tub, lie in a hammock or go for a swim any time of the day or night, whenever you feel like it. This makes for a very romantic atmosphere as you sit in the oceanside hot tub, drinking champagne, hearing the waves roll up and looking up at the stars.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York City, N.Y.
The Fairmont Orchid, 1 N. Kaniku Dr., Kohala Coast, 808 885 2000

BUDGET
Dolphin Bay is a “great-value, inexpensive place to stay in Hilo. The standard studio is actually a quite big room, with a fully equipped kitchen, bathroom with big shower, table and a lot of space.”—TripAdvisor Member, Maniago, Italy
Dolphin Bay, 333 Iliihi St., Hilo, 808 935 1466

The Kona Tiki Hotel is “an old school motel/hotel—no frills or resort type amenities. But $90/night for a kitchenette that’s 20 feet from the water. You just can’t beat it! Amazing!”—TripAdvisor Member, Piedmont, Calif.
Kona Tiki Hotel, 75-5968 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona, 808 329 1466

“I’d like to recommend the Manago to anyone on a budget or not. We stayed on the third floor; the room we received was very basic and spotless, with a great view.”—TripAdvisor Member, Waterloo, Ontario
Manago Hotel, 82-6155 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook, 808 323 2642

LUXURY
“We are originally from the Big Island and have stayed in virtually every luxury hotel on the Kohala/Kona coast. The Mauna Lani is our favorite and this condo lived up to all our expectations.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.
Mauna Lani Bay Hotel & Bungalows, 68-1400 Mauna Lani Dr., Kohala Coast, 808 885 6622

If you want a luxury vacation with the comforts of home, the Kona Belle Vue B&B may be right for you. “The rooms are luxury apartments with all needed amenities including a full kitchen. The grounds are beautiful with unblocked ocean vistas.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.
Kona Belle Vue B&B, Kealakekua, Captain Cook, 808 328 9898

“Forget any dowdy B&B images you may have. Waianuhea is all about style and luxury. You won’t find any frilly Victorian lace curtains or dusty knickknacks decorating this place. It deserves to be featured in Architectural Digest magazine.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.
Waianuhea, 45-3503 Kahana Dr., Honokaa, 808 775 1118

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Where to STAY

HIDDEN GEMS

Boasting a “dramatic location,” The Palms Cliff House Inn “is a small B&B located high on a cliff overlooking the Pacific. We had a nice lanai with a fantastic view and soundtrack from the ocean.”—TripAdvisor Member, Houston, Texas

The Palms Cliff House Inn, 28-3514 Mamalahoa Hwy., Hononu, 866 963 6076

Kalani is an eco-resort nestled amid the rainforest of the Pahoa District, hosting frequent yoga, massage and health workshops. “Excellent facility. Food was healthy and tasty! Staff was wonderful, very friendly and helpful. Relaxing location and the classes were enjoyable.”—TripAdvisor Member, Cambria, Calif.

Kalani Oceanside Retreat, 12-6860 Kalapana-Kapoho Beach Road, Pahoa, 808 965 7828

“The pool and hot tub at the Horizon Guest House are some of the best I’ve ever seen. We hung out in them at night and sipped wine as we watched a sky full of stars that you can see at very few places on earth.”—TripAdvisor Member, Washington, D.C.

Horizon Guest House, 86-3992 Mamalahoa Hwy., Honaunau, 808 328 2540

“...a fantastic view and soundtrack from the ocean.”

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