

Hawaii's Grand Canyon – Waimea Canyon



Easily one of the biggest attractions on the island of Kauai is Waimea Canyon – it's been called the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific," and when you see it you'll understand why.

Located in Hawaii, Waimea Canyon is more than 10 miles long, 1 mile wide and 3,000 feet deep – and the rosy, warm colors are reminiscent of the Grand Canyon on the mainland. But Waimea Canyon has one big thing that its mainland counterpart could never boast – proximity to world-class surfing.

Like the Grand Canyon in the American Southwest, Waimea Canyon on Hawaii's Kauai island was formed by a river – the Waimea River – over millennia. But quite unique to Waimea Canyon, the

whole process was aided by a major collapse in the earth during a massive volcanic eruption.

The same volcano which created the island of Kauai itself also helped create the rift which became the Waimea River bed. And because the island's highest peak, Mount Wai'ale'ale, holds the distinction of being one of the wettest places on earth, the river was fed by a steady – and heavy – diet of rainfall, which helped further cut into the earth and create Waimea Canyon.

Today, Waimea Canyon is part of a state park which covers almost 1,900 acres with lots of great hiking trails at all experience levels and a wilderness area. You can get to many great lookout spots from your car, too, if you don't feel like getting your feet dirty. But if you're planning to do a lot of driving to see the canyon, be aware that there aren't any gas stations along the 40-mile stretch of Waimea Canyon Drive – so be sure to start with a full tank!

Waimea Canyon State Park borders another state park in Kauai – Koke'e State Park – and actually the rangers station/visitors center for Waimea Canyon is located in Koke'e State Park. The museum at Koke'e State Park also houses the rangers station, where you can find hiking maps of the canyon and surrounding park lands.

Location: From Lihue, drive southwest on Kuhio Highway (HI-56), which turns into Kaunualii Highway (HI-50), into Waimea. Turn right on Waimea Canyon Drive (HI-550).

Hours: Daily during daylight hours