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Hawaii

The state of Hawaii includes a series of 132 volcanic islands located in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. Americans in the continental United States are most familiar with the eight largest islands: the island named Hawaii, Maui, Kaho'olawe, Lana'i, Moloka'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Ni'ihau.

Early History of Hawaii

Hawaii was settled by the Polynesian people, an ethnic and cultural group that occupies the Pacific Islands. Historians believe that the first people arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in the third or fourth century CE from the Marquesas Islands, also in the Pacific Ocean. Historians also believe that people from the island of Tahiti conquered the first settlers of Hawaii around 1200 CE.

In 1778 two British ships carrying the explorer Captain James Cook and his crew reached the islands Kaua'i and Ni'ihau in a quest to find the Northwest Passage. He named the islands the Sandwich Islands after the British Earl of Sandwich; this name is no longer used. Cook left the islands and continued his search for the Northwest Passage, but returned later in the year and explored the inhabited islands. The adventure ended tragically when Cook was killed and his crew retaliated by burning a village and killing some of the villagers.

Meanwhile Chinese exporters established a business trading in Hawaiian sandalwood in the 1790s. During this time, Great Britain, France and the United States all wanted to claim territory in the Sandwich Islands. When this happened, there were somewhere between 300,000 to 400,000 Polynesian people in the islands. The European traders brought with them communicable diseases like smallpox, influenza and measles which were deadly to the Polynesians who had no immunity to these diseases. As a result, about eighty percent of the native population died.

In the same time period Kamehameha was chief of a district on the Big Island of Hawaii and he aspired to bring all the Hawaiian Islands under one rule. By 1810 he succeeded in becoming the ruler (king) of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Thousands of miles away, in New Haven, Connecticut the Hawaiian Islands captured the imagination of churchgoers because of a short book written by Hawaiian Henry

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Opukaha'ia, who had converted to Christianity. Protestant minister Hiram Bingham, other ministers and their families sailed to Hawaii as missionaries in 1819.

By then the king's son had taken the throne as Kamehameha II and he gave permission for the missionaries to remain in Hawaii. The missionaries wished to translate the Bible into Hawaiian but the Hawaiian people had no form of writing. The missionaries devised an alphabet using just twelve letters of the English alphabet and by 1831 there were 52,000 Hawaiians attending school.

In the middle of the 1830s the first sugar cane plantation appeared on the island of Kaua'i. For twenty years, as the sugar plantations grew, plantation owners imported workers from around the world, especially Japan, Portugal and Germany. By 1886, the immigrants outnumbered the native Hawaiians.

From Kingdom to U.S. Territory

In 1874 David Kalakaua was the King of the Hawaiian Kingdom. He was the first monarch to ever visit the White House, then under President Ulysses Grant. The king placed his kingdom into serious debt by building a royal palace in Honolulu and holding an elaborate coronation ceremony. In 1887 foreign businessmen with sugar and other interests in Hawaii took advantage of the situation and had a new constitution adopted for Hawaii, called the Bayonet Constitution. This constitution disenfranchised many groups and concentrated power in the business groups. The Bayonet Constitution also declared that Pearl Harbor in Honolulu was a U.S. naval base.

Princess Lili'uokalani ascended the throne to become the only queen of Hawaii in 1891. By 1893 she was ready to attempt to restore the Constitution of 1864 in place of the Bayonet Constitution. However, the American businessmen formed what they called a Committee of Safety. Aided by some U.S. Marines, the Committee of Safety executed a bloodless takeover of the government and declared that Sanford Dole, a lawyer, was the new head of the government. They placed the queen under house arrest in her palace.

The Committee of Safety informed the U.S. government and President Grover Cleveland of the takeover and suggested that the U.S. annex Hawaii; President Cleveland refused. However, President McKinley annexed Hawaii in 1898

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and the Hawaiian flag was replaced by the U.S. flag throughout the islands without any agreement from the citizens of Hawaii. In 1900 Hawaii became a U.S. territory. Hawaii applied numerous times for statehood in the early 1900s, but statehood was repeatedly denied.

In the early 1900s, Hawaii was essentially controlled by four American businesses and one German company. Along with sugar companies, James Dole had started growing pineapples and eventually purchased the island of Lana'i for his pineapple plantation. American tourists also began visiting Hawaii and entrepreneurs developed tourist attractions in Honolulu and Waikiki.

World War II and Statehood

The naval base at Pearl Harbor continued to exist and played a critical role in U.S. involvement in World War II. On December 7, 1941 Japanese bombers destroyed one third of the entire U.S. fleet by bombing the Pearl Harbor naval base. The following day President Franklin Roosevelt declared war on Japan, and two days later Adolf Hitler of Germany declared war on the United States. The U.S. was involved in war in the Pacific and in Europe.

During the war years, Hawaii was under martial law under General Walter Short. At that time about one-third of Hawaiian residents were of Japanese ancestry, but unlike the continental U.S., they were not placed in prison camps. Japan surrendered to the U.S. on September 2, 1945, ending the war.

After the war, Hawaii continued to apply for statehood but was denied several times. Finally on August 21, 1959 Hawaii became the fiftieth state. On November 23, 1993 President Clinton, by signing an Apology Resolution, formally apologized to the Hawaiian people for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy one hundred years earlier. Due to its history, today Hawaii is the most ethnically diverse state in the United States.

Hawaii Today

The population of Hawaii has now reached 1.3 million people and seventy percent of them live in the Honolulu metropolitan area. The average cost of living in Hawaii can be between thirty and sixty percent higher than locales in the continental United States. This high cost of living is due to the remoteness of the islands in the Pacific Ocean. All goods must be transported to Hawaii as there is

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little manufacturing on the islands. Sugar cane and pineapple continue to dominate the local agriculture, while tourism accounts for twenty percent of the economy.

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Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False In 1778 the Hawaiian Islands were named the Marquesas Islands after the Marquis de Lafayette.
2. True False French exporters established a business trading in Hawaiian sandalwood in the 1790s.
3. True False When they came to the Hawaiian Islands in the late 1700s the European traders brought communicable diseases like smallpox, influenza and measles which were deadly to the Polynesians.
4. True False By 1810 Kamehameha succeeded in becoming the ruler (king) of the Kingdom of Hawaii.
5. True False The Bayonne Constitution declared that Pearl Harbor in Honolulu was a U.S. naval base.
6. True False The Committee of Safety placed Queen Lili'uokalani under house arrest in her palace.
7. True False In 1898 President McKinley annexed Hawaii and in 1993 President Clinton apologized for the annexation.
8. True False On December 7, 1941 Japanese bombers destroyed one third of the entire U.S. fleet by bombing the Pearl Harbor naval base near Honolulu.
9. True False Hawaii repeatedly applied for statehood but was denied. Finally on August 21, 1959 Hawaii became the fiftieth state.
10. True False The average cost of living in Hawaii can be between thirty and sixty percent higher than locales in the continental United States.

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Answers

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. True