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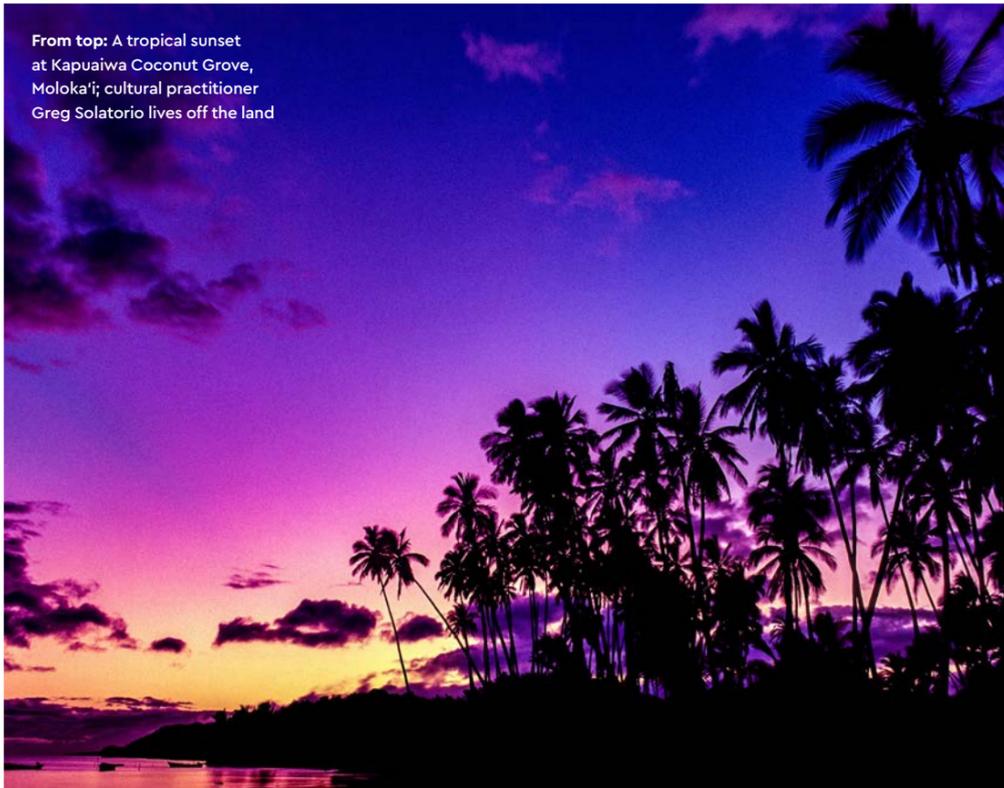
GREG SOLATORIO
Moloka’i

UNCOVER AUTHENTIC CULTURE

“We don’t take from Mother Nature because it is not ours to take. We ask and we borrow,” says native Hawaiian Greg Solatorio. He lives off the land in Halawa Valley on Moloka’i, the fifth-largest Hawaiian island. It’s just 38 miles long and 10 miles wide, and there are no mega resorts here – just pure wilderness and authentic culture.

Halawa is home to the state’s oldest settlement. After a tsunami destroyed the village in 1946, nature reclaimed it, coating the mountains in a thick rainforest. Greg leads cultural hikes in his beloved land. He blows the *pu* (conch shell) to announce his guests’ arrival, and greets them by pressing his nose and forehead to theirs – a gesture that exchanges *ha*, the breath of life. In his hillside shack overlooking the valley, Greg shares its past and explains misunderstood terms. “‘Aloha’ actually means love. Everyone is always telling each other they love each other!” he laughs.

Greg wears a red *kikeppa* (sarong) to signify his cultural practitioner status. His neck is adorned with ti leaves and a kukui nut lei (symbolising the circle of life), with a pig’s tusk indicating the cove at the mouth of the valley he comes from. “I was taught that culture is not secret, it is sacred. The minute we don’t share it, that’s the minute it dies,” he says, leading the way to Mo’oula Falls barefoot and pointing out native species and worship sites along the way. The tour ends with a lesson in the art of making palm leaf origami fish – a memento of time spent in this special land and culture.



From top: A tropical sunset at Kapuaiwa Coconut Grove, Moloka’i; cultural practitioner Greg Solatorio lives off the land

Insider tips

ENJOY: At Moloka’i Plumerias, the largest plumeria orchard in the state, you can pick your own flowers and string them together to make a lei – a traditional flower garland.

EAT: Locals and travellers flock to Kanemitsu Bakery for the famous Moloka’i ‘hot bread’. A giant sweet bread, it has tasty toppings of cinnamon, butter, strawberry and cream cheese.

SEE: Hike to the remote Kalaupapa community at the base of the highest sea cliffs in the world. Patients with leprosy lived here from 1866 to 1969, and a few remain today.



KU’UIPO MCCARTY
O’ahu

TASTE THE FARM-TO-TABLE SCENE

Built over 800 years ago, Moli’i is the only remaining ancient Hawaiian fish pond on O’ahu. And Kualoa Ranch, home to the pond, is the first farm to sell certified grown-to-maturity oysters in Hawai’i in three decades. “Because of the magic of Moli’i, we can get a harvestable half-shell oyster in six to seven months,” says Ku’uipo McCarty (pictured above) as she plucks an oyster from the tank and skilfully shucks it. “Our biggest joy is to provide a quality homegrown product.”

At Kualoa Ranch, an immersive experience awaits. Guests can throw nets with local fishermen, crack cacao nuts with farmers and harvest oysters alongside Ku’uipo and her team, then dine on a freshly prepared meal overlooking the land they’ve explored.

Then there’s Mina’s Fish House in the Four Seasons O’ahu at Ko Olina, where you can feast on whole grilled and baked fish dishes, shared family-style and paired with the perfect wine. As Jared Chang, the island’s only ‘fish sommelier’, says, “Just as wine is different on everyone’s palate, so is fish, making it a unique, incredible experience.”



Words: Lavanya Sunkara, Bianca Bujan, Jennifer Samuel Photography: Getty Images, Lavanya Sunkara, Mina’s Fish House, Alamy

In the Na Pali Coast State Park, cliffs soar to 1,200m above the Pacific Ocean

“The thing I love about Kaua’i is you can be as adventurous as you want to be, or just hang out at the beach”

SUE KANOHO
Kaua’i

ENJOY DRAMATIC VIEWS IN A TRANQUIL SETTING



“The thing I love about Kaua’i is you can be as adventurous as you want to be, or just hang out at the beach,” says Sue Kanoho, who first landed on the island 31 years ago and is now the Executive Director of Kaua’i Visitors Bureau.

Much of the island is inaccessible by car (take a helicopter or plane to see its idyllic interior), but you can hike the Ridge Trail into Waimea Canyon or join a boat tour up the Na Pali coastline. With rugged cliffs, a mist rising up from the valley floor and waterfalls cascading high above, it looks prehistoric.

But, says Sue, “People are the heart of Kaua’i. On tours, you get to see into their lives. When you live on this island, you want to share it – and protect it. Here, there’s a sense of community.”

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Insider tips

ENJOY: Have a spa treatment such as a *pohaku* (hot stone) massage, or try float therapy at Anara Spa at the Grand Hyatt Kaua’i.

EAT: Tuck into *haupia* (coconut pudding) at a luau, or lychees and mangoes at the farmers’ markets.

SEE: Hurtle above the verdant jungle on a Princeville Ranch zipline adventure for a new perspective on the island landscape.