



Finding the Perfect Place to Live in West Hawai'i

by Greg Gerard, Realtor 2005

With some of the most remarkable and constantly good weather in the world, the Kona-Kohala Coast can be a pleasant place to live indeed. The abundant sunshine, moderate humidity and pleasant tropical breezes are among the island's finest amenities. But many people don't realize they have a choice of multiple nuances of climate and this adds to the equation when selecting a location in which to live.

A complex variety of micro-climatic conditions exists along the leeward coast and up the mountain slopes, where the average temperature cools about three degrees for every 1,000 feet of elevation. Combine that with the moderate and varying rainfall along the coast and up the slopes from North Kohala to South Kona, and you can pick a perfect location; from hot, semi-arid to the cool, lush jungle.

Also varying along the coastline are housing costs, as well as buying opportunities. The current price



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range (9/04) begins with a modest, starter home listed at \$285,000 with three bedrooms, two baths, 1,200 square feet of living space on a 19,600 square-foot lot in Waimea and tops out with a \$23.8 million dollar, luxury, ocean front estate situated at prestigious Hualalai Resort. The fact is that along the coast you can live in a coffee shack (former coffee plantation cabin), custom home, condominium, or grand oceanfront estate. The range of choice offers an opportunity for everyone.

North Kohala, basically a peninsula with the northeast tip of the island at the end and the Kohala Mountain range up the middle, is sparsely populated and generally cooler and lush due to moisture that gathers over the Kohala Mountains. It's a little more remote, giving it more of a secluded feel, although it is within easy driving distance south to the resorts.

Waikoloa Village in South Kohala

is conveniently located for those working at the resorts or surrounding luxury homes and condominiums. This location is favored by retirees for the affordable homes and community-owned golf course. The Village has modest shopping facilities, but just 15 minutes east by car is Waimea, where there are more shopping opportunities, an excellent hospital and great private schools. Waimea is known for its cooler temperature, cowboys and country atmosphere.

The Kohala Coast is the home of several premier, world-class resorts with beautiful beaches and luxurious, high-end homes, condominiums and hotels. Homeowners can enjoy resort and golf privileges for a truly superlative lifestyle. This area is very attractive to buyers of second homes. Along the coast, extending southward to Kona, there are seven golf courses

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within 30 minutes driving time.

Kailua-Kona, also on the leeward side of the island, but more protected from the windward breeze, is situated on the shore of Kailua Bay in North Kona. This area offers very mild, tropical weather and is a popular tourist destination. In the 19th century, with its pleasant weather and laid-back atmosphere, it was the favorite summer residence of Hawaiian royalty. Today, Kailua-Kona is the largest population center in West Hawai'i. The newer stores in this area — which include Home Depot, Lowe's, Costco, Kmart, Wal-Mart, Safeway and Borders Books — have significantly lowered the cost of living and improved the availability of amenities. The multitude of activities from which to choose in Kailua-Kona include two multiplex theaters, recreational facilities, and many ocean and outdoor-related sports. This area, because of the availability of jobs,

goods and services, is very attractive to all segments of the home-buying population, including retirees and second

homeowners.

South Kona is home to "Tropical Old Hawai'i," where the old style and more rural, agricultural communities "up mauka" (up the mountain) dot the belt highway from Honalo to Honaunau at approximately the 1,000-foot level. Midway along the route is the area's commercial center, Kealahou. The crops from this area include Kona coffee, macadamia nuts, avocados and a variety of other fruits and vegetables. It is also a cattle ranching area. Rainfall is higher here than in Kailua-Kona, giving it a greener, lush atmosphere. A South Kona landmark is pristine Kealahou Bay, a marine preserve where dolphins like to romp and a favorite snorkeling and kayaking spot. Along its shore is a monument honoring Captain James Cook, the famous explorer. This was where he first landed on the island and also where he met his demise. The rural way of life in this region offers a relaxed pace and lower housing costs, making it attractive to retirees and people working along the coast.

Compared with other parts of the island, the largest tax base is West Hawai'i. When property tax rates are compared to the mainland, the tax rate here is relatively low. The county seat for the island is Hilo, where it was established during the plantation days, when the sugarcane industry dominated the economy. Today tourism, the world-class resorts along the Kona-Kohala Coast and the growth in shopping and other services in Kailua-Kona power the economic engine for the island.

Here we can enjoy the best of both worlds. The sunshine, beautiful surroundings, diversity and temperate climate are all vitally important, but so is the fact that West Hawai'i is a progressive community where new ideas are encouraged, yet the wisdom of aloha is still deeply respected. Residents strive to live holistically in a sustainable environment, with the knowledge that a healthy economy is vital to the well being of everyone. Many people here make a serious effort to "live with aloha." All these elements provide an excellent foundation for a bright future.

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