



Maui, located northwest of "The Big Island" of Hawaii, is known for its beauty, tourism and agriculture. Two of its nicknames are "The Magic Island" and "The Valley Isle."

There's a story behind Maui (and why it's known as the "Magic Island"). As we might expect, it is rooted in the island's folklore:

Eons ago, there was born the Demigod Maui. His father was the holder of the heavens and his mother was the guardian of the path to the Netherworld. Maui was the only one of the children who possessed the powers of magic and miracles.

Maui was the smallest of the family. He had the quickest of mind and had an extremely rascally nature about him. Maui would take any advantage of both his friends and the gods in his quest to fulfill his schemes.

It is said that Maui was not a god fisherman. His brothers were much more skilled. They would often laugh at him for his poor success.

In revenge, Maui used his cunning to fill his boat with catch at his brothers' expense. Maui would position his boat so that when one of his brothers began to pull in a fish, he would distract them so that he could pull his line across theirs stealing their fish.

Maui's brothers could only marvel at their younger brother. However they soon caught on and refused to take him fishing with them. Maui's fortune turned against him. His mother then sent him to his father to obtain a magic hook.

"Go to your father. There you will receive the hook called Manaiakalani, the hook fastened to the heavens. When the hook catches land, it will raise the old seas together."

Maui returned with his hook. He joined his brothers in another fishing expedition. They jeered him and threw him out of the boat. When they returned, they were empty handed.

Maui berated them. He stated that if they had allowed him to join them, they would have had better success. The brothers decided to allow him to join them in their canoe for another chance.

They paddled far into the deep ocean and threw their lines overboard. To their dismay, they only caught sharks. The brothers ridiculed Maui asking "Where are the fish you promised?"

Maui then rose and threw his magical hook into the ocean. Chanting a spell of power, he commanded the hook to catch the Great Fish.

At once the sea began to move. Great waves rose around the canoe. Maui commanded his brothers to paddle with all their might and to not look back. For two days, Maui held taut the magic line and hook while his brothers kept paddling furiously.

Suddenly from below the depths arose the tops of great mountains in a series of peaks that broke the surface of the ocean. Maui reminded his brothers to keep paddling mightily. Maui pulled mightily against the line and forced the peaks even farther out of the water.

One of his brothers then broke the command and gazed back in awe at the sight of the rising land. He stopped paddling and quickly the magic line began to slacken in Maui's hands. Before he could call out to his brothers, the line snapped and the magic hook was lost forever beneath the sea.

Maui chastised his brothers for their failure to paddle as he had commanded. "I had endeavored to raise a great continent but because of your weakness I have only these islands to show for all my efforts."

And this is how the Islands of Hawai'i came to be...



For many decades, Maui had vast sugar-cane plantations which were worked by Japanese laborers (among others). About 37,000 acres of Maui land are still dedicated to sugar-cane growing. Other key crops are:

- Coffee;
- Macadamia nuts;
- Papaya;
- Tropical flowers; and
- Fresh pineapple.

One of Maui's key attractions is the now-dormant volcano, Haleakala. Although its last eruption occurred around 1790, volcanologists think it is possible Haleakala could become active again.

Other key attractions, for tourists—aside from the beaches—are:

- The old whaling town of Lahaina (where it's still possible to see a breaching humpback whale from the beach); and
- The "Road to Hana" (a car trip which includes many beautiful views and stops, such as Wailua Falls).

Charles Lindbergh, the pioneering aviator, moved to Maui and is buried there (in the village of Kipahulu, not far from the very beautiful Seven Pools of O'heo Gulch).

Click on the image for a better view of the map.

Credits:

Image of Maui map, online courtesy State of Hawaii.

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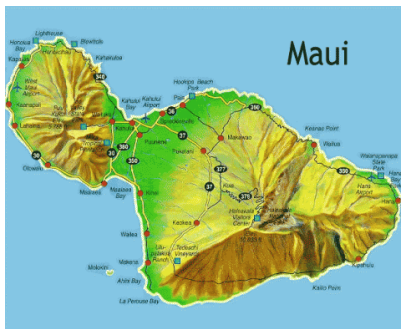
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