



The Forbidden Island

Article

PU'UWAI, Hawaii (Achieve3000, May 19, 2021). Imagine an island where locals spend their time fishing, hunting, and harvesting homegrown sweet potatoes, mangoes, or pumpkins. On beautiful beaches, artists gather shells to craft into exquisite *lei* like those once worn by Hawaiian royalty. An islander may ride by on horseback, but there are no paved roads or passenger cars.

Sound like a scene from centuries ago? That's actually what modern life looks like on Ni'ihau. This Hawaiian island is home to a deep-rooted community, but it doesn't have a single store or restaurant. Although it's only 17 miles (27 kilometers) from the island of Kaua'i, which is a popular tourist destination, this serene setting has no hotels, highways, or hustle-bustle.

There's something else that's almost entirely absent, too...visitors. Ni'ihau is often called the Forbidden Island. With very few exceptions, outsiders—including native Hawaiians from other islands—aren't allowed to set foot on its 70 square miles (181 square kilometers) of terrain. Only people whose families have lived there for generations have unlimited access to Ni'ihau.

Why is Ni'ihau forbidden for all but a fortunate few? The answer has to do with the island's unusual history. In the mid-1800s, Hawaii was a sovereign nation. Ni'ihau was inhabited by the ancestors of the indigenous people who live there today. In 1864, the Hawaiian king sold the island to a Scottish family. The family paid the king \$10,000 in gold and pledged to respect the native culture. Many Ni'ihauans were distressed that their homeland was now under foreign ownership. More than half left the island, but the rest chose to stay.

The Forbidden Island earned its nickname in the 1900s, when the decision was made to close Ni'ihau to visitors. Many sources say the purpose was to safeguard the population against diseases like polio and measles. The policy ended up preserving the islanders' heritage, as well as their health. Surrounded by foreign influences, Hawaiians on other islands struggled to keep their culture alive. But the people of Ni'ihau were able to hold firm to their customs and traditions.

On Ni'ihau today, the old ways live on. It's the only community in the world where Hawaiian is the primary language. As a matter of fact, its members speak a dialect of Hawaiian that is unique to this island. Like their ancestors, they live off the land. They've also passed down knowledge of traditional songs and artistry.

Still, for residents, the island isn't some old-fashioned outpost cut off from the outside world. The people of Ni'ihau visit nearby islands and places far beyond Hawaii's shores. The island has modern technology like computers and solar power. In fact, Ni'ihau is the site of the only school in Hawaii that's powered entirely by solar energy.



Photo credit: Christopher P. Becker
Hotels and shopping malls? Not on Ni'ihau! The island of Ni'ihau has no stores, hotels, or restaurants.

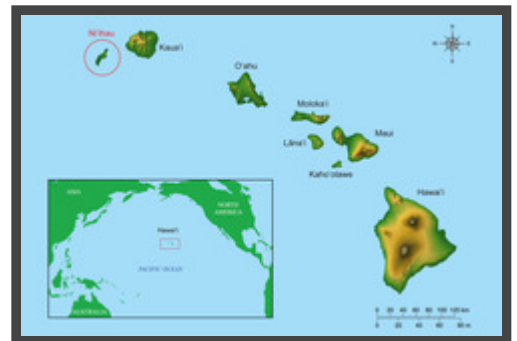


Photo credit: (Hawaii) Map Resources/Shutterstock (inset): Tentotwo/Wikimedia Commons
Ni'ihau is one the Hawaiian Islands. It's 17 miles west of Kaua'i.

While people of Ni'ihau honor the past, they're far ahead of other communities in some ways. Their sustainable lifestyle is a model of forward-thinking environmental responsibility. For example, they grow and catch much of their own food. Residents mostly depend on bikes, horses, or their own two feet for transportation, cutting down on pollution and use of fossil fuels.

The Forbidden Island's isolation has helped preserve a traditional Hawaiian way of life. Some believe that this small community of islanders with their time-honored knowledge of the land and its resources could help inform Hawaii's future, as well.

Dictionary

dialect (*noun*) a different form of a language, often spoken in one place or by one group of people

exquisite (*adjective*) delicate and beautiful

heritage (*noun*) something, like a way of life or culture, that is passed down from one generation to the next

indigenous (*adjective*) native to a certain place

serene (*adjective*) calm and peaceful

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The Article primarily discusses _____.

- Ⓐ how the isolation of the island of Ni'ihau has allowed its people to keep their native Hawaiian culture and live sustainably
- Ⓑ how the location of the island of Ni'ihau would normally make it a popular tourist destination with hotels and highways
- Ⓒ how the people of Ni'ihau pass down their knowledge of traditional Hawaiian songs and artistry
- Ⓓ how Ni'ihau is the only community in the world where Hawaiian is the primary language

Question 2

According to the Article, what is one benefit of closing the island of Ni'ihau to safeguard the population against diseases?

- Ⓐ The other Hawaiian islands built hotels and restaurants for tourists.
- Ⓑ The culture of the native people of Ni'ihau was also preserved.
- Ⓒ The native people of Ni'ihau were given unlimited access to the island.
- Ⓓ The Hawaiian king also earned a large amount of gold for the island.

Question 3

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *exquisite*?

- Ⓐ sacred
- Ⓑ quaint
- Ⓒ costly
- Ⓓ gorgeous

Question 4

Which of these statements is **contrary** to the ideas presented in this Article?

- Ⓐ The only people who have unlimited access to Ni'ihau are those whose families have lived there for generations.
- Ⓑ The island of Ni'ihau is the site of the only school in Hawaii that is powered entirely by solar energy.
- Ⓒ The island of Ni'ihau is an old-fashioned outpost cut off from the outside world and lacking in modern technologies.
- Ⓓ The people who live on Ni'ihau work to pass down their knowledge of traditional Hawaiian songs and artistry.

Question 5

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- A Ni'ihau is part of the Hawaiian Islands and is located closest to the island of Kaua'i.
- B Ni'ihau is called the Forbidden Island because a large majority of people are denied access.
- C The people of Ni'ihau grow or catch much of their own food in the ways of their ancestors.
- D The people of Ni'ihau are living in a way that is more purposeful than that of outsiders.

Question 6

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that the people of Ni'ihau are not cut off from the outside world?

- A On Ni'ihau today, the old ways live on. It's the only community in the world where Hawaiian is the primary language.
- B The people of Ni'ihau visit nearby islands and places far beyond Hawaii's shores. The island has modern technology like computers and solar power.
- C Residents mostly depend on bikes, horses, or their own two feet for transportation, cutting down on pollution and use of fossil fuels.
- D Surrounded by foreign influences, Hawaiians on other islands struggled to keep their culture alive. But the people of Ni'ihau were able to hold firm to their customs and traditions.

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

With very few exceptions, outsiders—including native Hawaiians from other islands—aren't allowed to set foot on its 70 square miles (181 square kilometers) of terrain. Only people whose families have lived there for generations have unlimited access to Ni'ihau.

In this passage, the word *access* means _____.

- A to gain entry into
- B to gain mastery over
- C to have a deep love for
- D to have an understanding of

Question 8

Read the following passage from the Article:

Imagine an island where locals spend their time fishing, hunting, and harvesting homegrown sweet potatoes, mangoes, or pumpkins. On beautiful beaches, artists gather shells to craft into exquisite *lei* like those once worn by Hawaiian royalty. An islander may ride by on horseback, but there are no paved roads or passenger cars.

Why did the author include this information?

- A To describe how only people native to the island can live on Ni'ihau
- B To tell the reader about the complex history of Ni'ihau
- C To create a mental image for the reader of life on Ni'ihau
- D To explain that life can be difficult on the island of Ni'ihau