

HAWAII

Birds, Beaches, and Geology

19.62° N - 22.23° N

March 22 - Apr 1, 2026



Wild **LATITUDES**
WORLDWIDE NATURE TOURS

HAWAII

Birds, Beaches, and Geology

Greetings, Fellow Explorer!

You know many of the icons of Hawaii... Palm trees, hula dancers, surfers, and pineapples. The islands have plenty of these, for sure, but they also have a rich and fascinating natural history—one that few visitors ever get to know.

Escape the chill of winter and join us to experience the wild side of Hawaii! See rare endemic birds and plants. Learn about Hawaii's evolution, ecology, geology, and pressing conservation issues. Along the way, we'll take time to relax on sunny beaches and take in Hawaii's iconic landscapes.

Hawaii is the most isolated archipelago on the planet. As such, it has been a hotbed of evolution and speciation. The famous **Hawaiian Honeycreepers** diversified spectacularly—many species evolved from just one ancestral finch that arrived about 6 million years ago. We'll seek out many of these special endemic birds on our trip.

Our adventure will take us to two islands: Hawaii ("**The Big Island**") and **Kauai**. On The Big Island, we'll start on the west side in the town of Kona. After birding in that region, we'll spend a day in **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**. With some luck, we may see evidence of very recent eruptions.

Then we'll make a home base in the city of Hilo. We'll venture into the mountains to explore **Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge**. This is home to amazing endemic songbirds like the **I'iwi**, **Hawaii Akepa**, and **Akiapolaau**. While in Hilo, we have options for visiting excellent museums and a great farmers market, overflowing with tropical fruit.

On our journey back to Kona, we'll travel the wild northern coast resplendent with tropical beauty. We have one last exciting activity before we leave the Big Island: a boat tour to look for seabirds! We hope to find birds like **Wedge-tailed Shearwater**, **Red-footed Booby**, and **Brown Noddy**. We might even encounter some whales!

We then fly to the beautiful island of Kauai. Major highlights here include a visit to the jaw-dropping **Waimea Canyon** and the **Kilauea Lighthouse**. The latter is on the northwestern coast, where seabirds like **White-tailed Tropicbird** and **Great Frigatebird** wheel in the skies.

This tour is the perfect combination of birding, natural history, conservation education, ocean fun, and a dash of cultural activities.

TRIP DETAILS

Start Date: Mar 22, 2026

Duration of Main Tour: 11 days

Number of participants: Max of 12

Price of Tour: \$6,395 per person

Deposit: \$3,200

Single Supplement: \$1,400

Trip Leaders: Steve Backus, Zoey Greenberg

Activity Level: Easy to Moderate

Included:

- Double-occupancy lodging
- Ground and water transportation
- Breakfasts and lunches
- Excursions and park fees
- Guiding services

Not Included:

- Flights
- Dinners
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal items
- Optional gratuities for guides



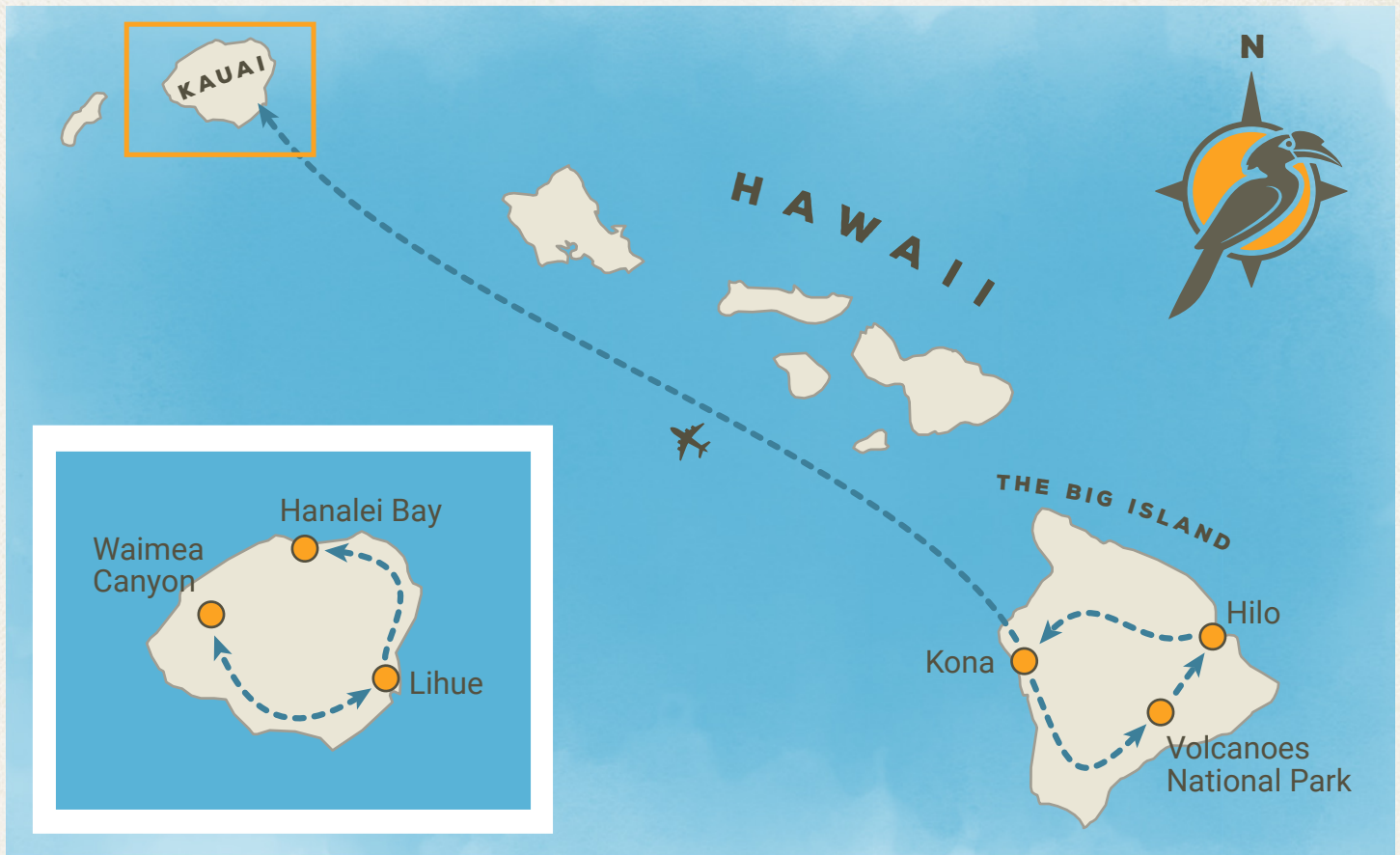
Steve Robertson and Ivan Phillipsen

Co-owners and Lead Guides at Wild Latitudes

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ITINERARY

Tentative and subject to change depending on weather, road, or other conditions.

Day 1 - Mar 22 - Arrival

Aloha and welcome to the magical archipelago of Hawaii! Our adventure begins on the sunny, dry side of the **Big Island**. Your guides **Steve Backus** and **Zoey Greenberg** will pick you up at the airport before heading to our hotel in the town of Kona after some light birding. Following a brief orientation and introductions all around, we'll enjoy our first dinner together and rest up for tomorrow.

Lodging: [Royal Kona Resort](#)

Day 2 - Mar 23 - Birding in the Kona Area

Today, we'll head up the slopes of the looming volcano, Hualalai, where we'll enter a tract of natural cloud forest. On a slow-paced hike in the leafy shade, we'll be on the lookout for native birds. Possibilities include honeycreepers like **Apapane** and **Hawaii Amakihi**. With luck, we might spot a **Hawaiian Hawk** soaring overhead.

After lunch, we'll be exploring several sites in the region around Kona. Our introduction to birds in Hawaii will include some familiar waterbirds along with over-wintering specialties such as **plovers** and **curlews**. We should encounter a number of non-native bird species that we'll get to know well including **Saffron Finch**, **Yellow-billed Cardinal**, and **Java Sparrow**.

Back in Kona, we'll enjoy ice-cold beverages before dinner as we begin to fill out our bird list.

Lodging: [Royal Kona Resort](#)

Day 3 - Mar 24 - South Point and Volcanoes National Park

We depart Kona early this morning towards the southernmost point in the United States. At the cliffs and adjoining fields of **South Point** we'll look for skylarks and seabirds. Heading east, our main activity today is exploring the geological wonders of **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**. This is an incredible place with many fascinating sites. We'll take short walks to see black basalt from recent lava flows, endemic birds, and unique plants. With lots of luck, we may see the glow of erupting lava: we'll just have to see



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what conditions are like as our visit nears, as the terrain changes from year to year with all the volcanic activity.

Lodging: [Volcano House](#)

Day 4 - Mar 25 - Exploring the Southern Big Island



Akiapolaau

The southern region of the Big Island is rich with options for the curious visitor. After a morning in the forested region around the park we'll explore the dry slopes of **Mauna Loa** which offer a contrasting ecosystem to the lush lowlands surrounding Pahoehoe. The sea-cliffs where Noio, the **Hawaiian Black Noddy**, typically roost are one of the many destinations we might visit on our day of exploring this area.

In the afternoon we'll head towards the city of Hilo, where we'll aim to have some free time before dinner to relax and enjoy this beautiful destination.

Lodging: [SCP Hotel Hilo](#)

Day 5 - Mar 26 - Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge

This is without a doubt our most important day for seeing Hawaii's endemic forest birds. With an expert local guide, we'll drive up the eastern slope of **Mauna Kea** volcano to enter the **Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge**. We'll spend the better part of the day here walking through the forest and enjoying the beautiful native vegetation as we search for birds. This is the haunt of the incredible l'iwi, with its vermillion plumage and deeply downcurved bill. Other special birds we hope to find



Hilo Farmer's Market

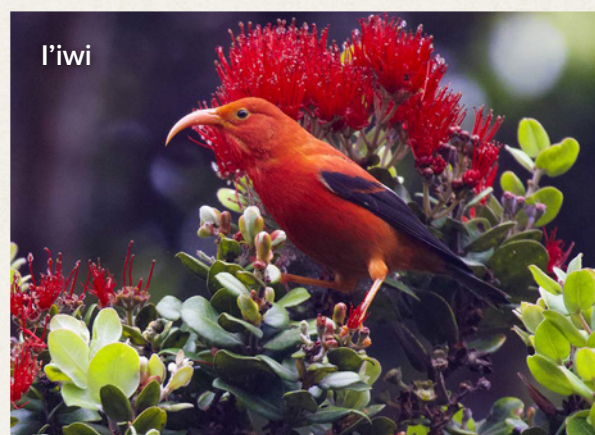
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Beach near Kona on the Big Island



Green Sea Turtle



I'iwi



Waimea Canyon

To register for this tour, email or call: info@wildlatitudes.com, 503-714-3504

are **Hawaii Akepa**, **Akiapolaau**, and **Hawaii Creeper**. In the evening, we'll go through our bird list and celebrate the day we had in the Hakalau Forest.

Lodging: [SCP Hotel Hilo](#)

Day 6 - Mar 27 - Hilo and Hawaii's Northern Coast

We'll have a relaxing morning exploring Hilo's downtown, including its well-known farmers market full of tropical fruits and local handicrafts. Gardens with a surprising array of bird-life and fascinating museums are some of the many attractions of the largest city on the island.

As the day progresses we'll stop at epic waterfalls along the lush northern route back to Kona, taking in views of Maui to the north. Leaving the windward wetter side of the island we'll make several scenic stops before pulling into Kona for the night.

Lodging: [Royal Kona Resort](#)

Our Commitment to Conservation

On every Wild Latitudes tour, we aim to make a positive conservation impact wherever we travel. We utilize the services of local guides and, when possible, stay in environmentally-sensitive, locally-owned lodges. Through our partnership with the Rainforest Trust, a portion of all international tour fees goes to purchasing rainforest acreage, for its protection in perpetuity. On every trip, we also make a contribution to a local conservation effort that works to protect a native species or ecosystem.



Hawaii Akepa

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Day 7 - Mar 28 - Pelagic Birding Trip

Get ready to venture out onto the waves, because this morning we're doing a pelagic birding tour! Our local guide and boat captain will help us find interesting seabirds off the west coast of the Big Island. Some species we hope to see are **Wedge-tailed Shearwater**, **Red-footed Booby**, both **Black** and **Brown Noddy**, and **Sooty Tern**. We may also see some charismatic megafauna like **Humpback Whale**, and the famed **Spinner Dolphin**!

Afterwards we'll wind down with a relaxing last evening on the Big Island.

Lodging: [Royal Kona Resort](#)

Day 8 - Mar 29 - Fly to Kauai and Poipu

It's time to leave the Big Island and fly to **Kauai**, the "Garden Isle." After a stunning flight



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over the island chain we'll land in the town of Lihue before making our way to the iconic beaches of Poipu. This gentle beach is on the map for its beauty, and is also where we might find some **Hawaiian Monk Seals** lounging on the beach.

We'll head to our Hotel in Kapa'a in the early evening, beautifully situated directly on the east shore of the island.

Lodging: [Kauai Shores Hotel](#)

Day 9 - Mar 30 - Waimea Canyon

Now on the island of Kauai, we'll head to its west side where we'll take in the amazing scenery of **Waimea Canyon**. This colorful geological wonder is known as the Grand Canyon of the Pacific. On short hikes and walks we'll look for some of Kauai's endemic birds: **Anianiau**, **Kauai Amakihi**, and **Akekee**. The astounding views here are breathtaking and a clear example of the forces that shape these islands. Koke'e State Park's grounds offer beautiful exploration opportunities and detailed interpretation as we head back down towards the shore.

Before returning to our hotel we hope to visit **Kawai'ele Waterbird Sanctuary**, a salt pond often full of waders and shorebirds on the western shore.

Lodging: [Kauai Shores Hotel](#)

Day 10 - Mar 31 - Relaxing day in Hanalei Area

Today we'll head to the northeastern side of Kauai. Our primary activity is to spend some quality time at the famous **Kilauea Lighthouse** and surrounding **Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge**. In addition to the amazing ocean views, we should see some interesting birds here. **Hawaiian Geese** (Nene) waddle across the grass. **Great Frigatebirds** and **tropicbirds**—both Red-tailed and White-tailed—circle over the waves and lush cliffs. We may spot other seabirds from our vantage on the high cliff.

Afterwards we'll visit the waterbirds of **Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge** before our final dinner together in the charming beach-side town of Hanalei.

Lodging: [Kauai Shores Hotel](#)

Day 11 - Apr 1 - Departures

Time for us to head to the airport, say our last *alohas*, and fly home.

YOUR GUIDES

STEVE BACKUS

Steve is an avid birder and naturalist with a background in the maritime industry hailing from North Carolina. Through his work and personal travels he has gotten to see many beautiful corners of the world and loves to share what he has experienced.

An infinitely curious person by nature, Steve is drawn to explore the life around him and the environments they occupy. Though the particulars of the individual organisms are incredibly exciting, he feels particularly drawn to the stories told of the relationships in the world around us and how those came to be. The constant flux of the natural world is of endless interest to him, and sharing the things he has learned is a great passion of his. Learning how life interacts and connects is a true passion of Steve's.

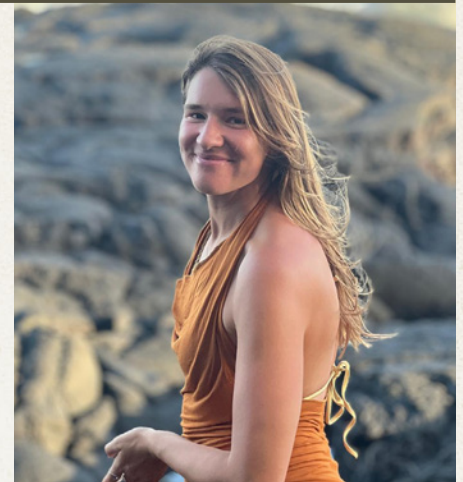
As a mariner, waterbirds are of particular interest to Steve and his time as a ship's naturalist, a captain of wildlife cruises, a point counter at migration hot-spots, and many other employments and community science efforts has deepened his appreciation of them. Though our feathered friends are Steve's primary area of expertise, he can be found peeking under logs and listening by swamps at night for the creeping and crawling life found beneath us.



ZOEY GREENBERG

Zoey grew up in Bellingham, Washington, where the Salish Sea and temperate rainforest catalyzed her love of the living world. Along her path she was a deckhand on tall ships in the eastern U.S., a vulture trainer and youth educator at Penn State's nature center, a curriculum writer and science outreach coordinator at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, a migration counter along a golden eagle flyway in the Appalachians, and a whale watch guide in the San Juan Islands.

Zoey has a B.A in human ecology from the College of the Atlantic in Maine and an M.S. in environmental studies from the University of Montana, where she wrote a thesis of prose poems critiquing conservation ethics. She centers her career around illuminating overlooked corners of the animal kingdom. For this, vultures are her north star.



She is now the science writer for the Journal of Raptor Research, a naturalist and zodiac driver for National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions, the raptor ecology specialist for HDOnTap, and a facilitator for outdoor writing workshops with Freeflow Institute. She also compiles the North and South American updates for the IUCN's biannual newsletter on global vulture research. Zoey enjoys volleyball, ultimate frisbee, bellydance, and the color turquoise. She oscillates between the Pacific Northwest and the Big Island of Hawai'i.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

THE PACE AND STYLE OF OUR TOURS

The primary goal of our trips is to experience and learn about the natural world, especially the region's birds and other wildlife, and of course, to have fun! As birding is often a primary focus of our tours, and birds are active in the morning, we will sometimes have early morning outings before breakfast. That said, our style of birding may not be ideal for hard-core "listers." We prefer to spend time observing the species we encounter, and learn a bit about their natural history, rather than rushing through the field to add the maximum number of species to our bird list. We also make diversions for interesting, non-avian wildlife, plants, geological wonders, and cultural activities. The pace of most of our trips is moderate, and we encourage anyone in good health to attend and enjoy the experience. Please contact us about if you need specific information on the types of physical activities on a tour and their physical requirements.

We strive to immerse participants in the local culture and to that end, wherever possible, we stay in locally owned and operated hotels that are designed and run in an environmentally sustainable way. Though some accommodations may be more basic than others, all are safe, clean and comfortable. We also utilize the services of local guides, visit local markets, and other culturally significant sites.

TOUR DATE AND TRIP LEADER CHANGES

Leaders and schedules are determined up to a year in advance of our tours. In the event that we have a change in a tour's dates or leaders, we reserve the right to do so, and will strive to inform participants as early in the process as possible. Additional leaders may be added to tours according to the group size, and will be specified in the tour itinerary. We also reserve the right to cancel any trip for which there are insufficient reservations.

HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE TOUR

When you're ready to sign up for the tour, please let us know by doing one of the following:

- Send us an email at info@wildlatitudes.com
- Call us at 503-714-3504

Then we'll send you the link to our online registration form. You can choose to pay your deposit by credit card or check. See 'Deposit Policy' below.

DEPOSIT POLICY

A deposit is due at the time of registration. ***A deposit is the only thing that guarantees your place on the trip.*** Registration can be made over the phone with a credit card: 503-714-3504. *Note:* there is an additional 3.0% fee for credit card payments. This is only what we are charged by the credit card company.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Checks are happily accepted and should be made out to *Wild Latitudes LLC*. Include the tour name on the memo line of the check and send to:

Wild Latitudes, PO Box 25115, Portland, OR 97298.

PAYMENT POLICY

Full payment is required **90 days** prior to the tour departure date for international tours or any tour involving flights; and **30 days** prior to the tour departure date for local (i.e. in the Portland, Oregon area), van-based tours.

CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event a participant needs to cancel a reservation for any tour, the following policies will apply:

- **90 days** or more prior to tour departure date, the deposit will be refunded, minus an administrative fee of \$100.
- **Less than 90 days but more than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, all payments refunded, minus 50% of deposit.
- **Less than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, no refunds will be given.

We *strongly* recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself from unforeseen circumstances.

If for any reason Wild Latitudes cancels a tour prior to the start of the tour, full refunds—minus the cost of any internal/in-country airline tickets purchased and/or any non-refundable deposits or expenses already made by Wild Latitudes—will be given to all participants. In the event that the tour is canceled while underway due to unforeseeable events such as but not limited to natural disaster, military activities, social uprising, or other extremely dangerous conditions not within the control of Wild Latitudes, no refund will be issued.
