

UNLIKE NATIVE HAWAIIANS MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS WELCOME TOURISTS



The results of a recent survey conducted among 1,650 Hawaii residents proved that the attitude toward tourism has improved. However, Native Hawaiians are criticizing the current situation and call for action.

Tourism in Hawaii is one of the most crucial industries as it accounts for 17% of the state economy and nearly 150,000 people are employed in tourism-related sectors. It is crucial to promote tourism while carefully preserving the unique Hawaiian culture, which is the major lure for all tourists. The Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) was interested to learn what the attitude toward tourism is among the general public and decided to conduct a survey to pinpoint the most relevant data.

A similar survey was conducted in 2007 and for the HTA it was important to see if there has been an improvement in the public opinion. And indeed, the news is positive. Out of the 1,650 Hawaii residents, of all ethnic backgrounds and ages, **78% agree that tourism has brought more positives than problems to the state.** That is an increase by 7% compared to 2007 survey results. The economic benefits are simply more relevant for the majority of respondents.

On the other hand, Native Hawaiians speak a completely different language. They feel that tourism is threatening their culture and claim they cannot see how tourism contributes to preserving it. They perceive tourism as a money-making machine which only longs to profit from their uniqueness.

The HTA is trying to make peace, however, and in this fiscal year will spend \$ 600,000 on promoting and supporting local culture. The money will finance - among nearly 30 projects - The Hawaii Book and Music Festival, the restoration of Puukohola Heiau (a cultural site on the Big Island), and the Hula Preservation Society. Last year was not a particularly strong year for tourism here and for the future, it is crucial for all Hawaiians to be on the same page.

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