

Big Island Driving Etiquette Guide

Driving on Hawaiʻi Island is different than driving almost anywhere else. Roads are shared daily by residents, workers, emergency responders, farmers, and visitors — often on the same narrow stretches of highway. This guide is designed to help you drive safely, respectfully, and confidently while exploring the island.

Why Driving Etiquette Matters Here

Many Big Island roads are two-lane, winding, and remote. There may be no shoulder, limited cell service, livestock crossings, sudden rain, fog, or lava rock edges. When traffic backs up, it affects real people trying to get to work, school, medical care, or home. Good driving etiquette keeps everyone safer and reduces stress.

Pulling Over for Faster Traffic

If cars begin stacking up behind you, the safest and most respectful thing to do is pull over when possible. This is not an insult or a judgment — it's a local norm that keeps traffic flowing smoothly.

- 1 Use designated pullouts when available.
- 2 If safe, pull fully off the roadway to allow cars to pass.
- 3 Do not stop in travel lanes or blind curves.
- 4 Signal early and re-enter traffic carefully.

One-Lane Roads & Rural Highways

Some roads narrow to a single lane with occasional pullouts. Yield to oncoming traffic as posted, drive slowly, and expect local drivers to know the road better than you. If you are unsure, pause and yield.

Night Driving on the Big Island

- 1 Expect minimal lighting outside towns.
- 2 Watch for cattle, goats, pigs, and wildlife.
- 3 Slow down in rain, fog, or volcanic haze.

4 Avoid driving tired — distances are longer than they appear.

Emergency Vehicles & Road Courtesy

Always pull over safely for emergency vehicles with lights or sirens. If traffic is stopped, remain patient. Emergency responders may be serving your destination — or someone's home.

Rental Cars & Local Awareness

Rental cars may not be equipped for all roads. Avoid off-road driving unless explicitly permitted, and never block driveways, gates, or access roads. Respect posted signs — many areas are private land.

A Final Reminder

You are sharing the road with people who live here year-round. Slowing down, pulling over, and staying aware is not just polite — it's how everyone gets home safely.

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