

MAUNA LOA

- **Name:** Mauna Loa (in Hawaiian 'long mountain')
- **Location:** [Hawaii](#), [USA](#)
- **Height:** 4,169 metres (13,679 feet)
- **Last eruption:** March 25th 1984

Mauna Loa is one of the largest volcanoes on Earth. And, once upon a time, it was one of the most active: Mauna Loa erupted 33 times between 1843 and 1984. It has been silent for more than 30 years now, but scientists think a new eruption is due.



The crater of Mauna Loa viewed from the air

Mauna Loa is long and low in shape (there's a clue in the name). This is because it oozes runny lava when it erupts, rather than ejecting sticky lava that would build a steep, cone-shaped volcano over time, or blowing its top like [Mount St Helens](#)! Scientists call Mauna Loa a shield volcano.

Does all of this oozing make it less dangerous than other volcanoes around the world? It's true that unlike the devastating eruptions of [Etna](#), [Vesuvius](#) or Indonesia's Mount Merapi, few people have been killed by the eruptions of Mauna Loa. But the lava flows can be fast-moving, running downhill to meet the sea in just a few hours. The damage to property can therefore be huge, as there's no time to protect buildings. In 1950 an eruption overran a nearby village and the Hawaii Route 11 highway. The village was destroyed.

This volcano's last eruption, in 1984, spread lava across an area of almost four and a half thousand hectares (eleven thousand acres) – that's the size of over 6,000 football pitches! As the lava flowed down the north-east side of the volcano, scientists feared for the people of Hilo, a town on the coast. It looked like the hot, molten rock might flow right into town.

Thankfully, the lava flow didn't get that far before the eruption stopped. It didn't even shut any major roads. Phew!

In 2016 Mauna Loa's stomach continues to grumble. A number of earthquakes took place in the month of May, but this is nothing out of the ordinary. Today, Mauna Loa is carefully monitored, because Hawaii is a popular place to go on holiday – and no-one wants to be caught off-guard by a volcano, that's for sure.

Mauna Loa is one of five volcanoes which, together, make up the Pacific island of [Hawaii](#). – it's actually nick-named 'Big Island'. And Mauna Loa is by far the biggest volcano! All of the Hawaiian Islands were created by the eruption of volcanoes from the bed of the Pacific Ocean.

The location of Hawaii's volcanoes is unusual as they aren't found near a plate boundary. They sit above a hot spot in the Earth's [mantle](#).