

The Virgin Islands Consortium

From Virgin Islands To Cuba, Another Historic Landing For Hokulea

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ST. CROIX -- Hokulea, the legendary voyaging canoe from Hawaii internationally known for its pioneering travels -- which stopped in the territory by way of St. John late February, it's arrival marking the canoe's first landing in a U.S. territory since Hokulea visited Pago Pago in American Samoa in October 2014 -- has reached another "first" in its Worldwide Voyage: arrival on the shores of Cuba.

The vessel reached Havana on Friday at 7:30 a.m. local time, after traveling over a thousand nautical miles from the British Virgin Islands, where the canoe was [most recently docked](#).

"Being part of this hardworking crew who just completed a historic sail to this island country in the Caribbean Sea is nothing short of amazing," said Kalepa Baybayan, captain and pwo navigator. "We're anticipating great learning experiences to emerge from our engagement with Cuba's local community and customs. Our crew is also looking forward to sharing with Cuba's residents Hokulea's Malama Honua message of taking care of our precious natural resources."

While in Cuba, the crew plans to visit Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and meet with I.C.A.P. (Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples) about US-Cuban relations. They also plan to meet with leaders of urban sustainability and marine conservation efforts in Cuba.

From Cuba, Hokulea will sail up to U.S. waters and stop at Key West before making her arrival in the continental U.S. at Everglades City, FL at the end of March. From Florida, the canoe will travel up the U.S. East Coast. She is scheduled to arrive in New York City by June 8, 2016 to be part of the United Nations' World Oceans Day.

Since departing Hawaiian waters in May 2014, Hokulea has sailed more than 21,500 nautical miles and made stops in 12 countries and 55 ports, weaving a "Lei of Hope" around the world. Along the way, more than 160 volunteer crewmembers have helped to sail Hokulea accompanied by escort vessel Gershon II to spread the message of malama honua (or taking care of Island Earth) by promoting sustainability and environmental consciousness, as well as exchanging ideas with the countries she has visited.

So far, crew members have connected with over 45,000 people in communities across the South Pacific, Tasman Sea and Indian Ocean including Samoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa and Brazil.