

## Tom's Gone to Hilo

1. Tommy's gone on a whalin' ship,  
**Away, to Hilo**  
Tommy's gone on a damn long trip.  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

2. He never kissed his girl goodbye  
**Away, to Hilo**  
He left her and he told her why  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

3. She'd robbed him blind and left him broke  
**Away, to Hilo**  
He'd had enough, gave her the poke  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

4. His half pay it went, it went like chaff  
**Away, to Hilo**  
She hung around for the other half  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

5. She drank and boozed his pay away  
**Away, to Hilo**  
with a weather eye on his next pay-day  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

6. Tommy's gone and left and left her flat  
**Away, to Hilo**  
Tommy's gone, and he won't come back.  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

Hear this short and popular version sung by **Bob Davenport** at [youtu.be/XsVG0zuwv9g](https://youtu.be/XsVG0zuwv9g)

### Notes

A **tops'l halyard** shanty

**Alternative names:** John's gone to Hilo, Tom's gone to Hilo

*Glorieta del Ilo*, by Reinaldo Ponce

The pavilion / gazebo of José Galvez  
Port of Ilo, Southern Peru

from [wikimedia commons](#)

**Hugill**, Stan, 1994, *Shanties from the Seven Seas* :

"*Tom's (or John's) Gone to Hilo* was a tops'l halyard song, and one which never found favour with the afterguard, as it took too long to hoist the yard to it on account of the slow and lethargic way in which it was sung by a good shanty man. It was rather difficult to sing correctly, but even so it was popular with the crowd, particularly for heavy lifts.

"... The place name Hilo – whether in Hawaii or Peru – is pronounced with a soft "i", but seamen always pronounced the soft i's in songs as "eye", e.g. Rio – Rye-O, California - Califor-nye-O, etc. Therefore Hilo was sung High low. ...

**Hugill's** version has 19 verses, starting

1. Tommy's gone, what shall I do?  
**Away, you Hee-lo-o-o**  
Tommy's gone, an' I'll go too!  
**Tom's gone to Hilo.**

2. Tommy's gone to Hilo town  
Where all them girls, they do come down.

3. Hilo town is in Peru  
It's just the place for me an' you.

4. Tommy's gone to Liverpool ...

It goes on to name a range of destinations for Tom.

### Where is Hilo?

The [Shropshire Boatmen](#) wrote:

The present day Hilo is a large town on Hawaii while the Hilo referred to in the shanty is more likely to be ['Ilo' in Peru](#) where many sailing ships went to load nitrates.

Hear their version at [youtu.be/atSefUTr9Yg](https://youtu.be/atSefUTr9Yg).

**Ilo** - read about the Peruvian port of Ilo on [wikipedia.org](https://wikipedia.org)

