

A Guide for Responsible visitors to *Āina a ke akua e noho a I* (Land where the God dwells)

With red-hot lava moving toward the sea, swirling clouds of volcanic fog shrouding the peaks of Kilauea and Mauna Loa, and dozens of endemic plant and animal species found nowhere else on Earth, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is an International Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage site full of superlatives—highest and hottest among them. The U.S. National Park Service, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, and the World Heritage Alliance for Sustainable Tourism have teamed up to preserve the park's natural wonders and unparalleled biodiversity and promote responsible tourism.

The Dynamic World of Hawai'i Island

A journey through Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, inscribed as a natural UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987, reveals an ethereal landscape laden with beautiful lush native rain forest, lava tube caves, crevices of molten lava, and moon-like crags of *pahoehoe* and *'a'a* rocks—some of the youngest on Earth. Pele is the creative energy that resides at Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes. Immense Mauna Loa is the largest volcano in the world, rising 56,000 feet from sea floor to summit, almost twice the height of Mt. Everest. The park encompasses 333,086 acres which includes seven different ecological zones. Thirty million years without connection to other landmasses have resulted in the evolution of some very unique species: From one single kind of island finch, more than 57 species of honey creepers have evolved, for example, adding their distinctive birdsongs to the island's inimitable soundtrack. In fact, nearly 90% of Hawaii's plant, bird and animal species are found nowhere else on earth. Carnivorous caterpillars, hawksbill turtles, hoary bats, and delicate orchids all call the island of Hawai'i their exclusive home.

The Kumulipo an ancient Hawaiian cosmogonic creation chant tells us that people are biologically and genealogically connected to the land, sea and sky. This essential teaching continues to resonate in the native people of today as it is reflected in the way they *mālama 'āina*, take care of the land. Kupuna (elders) say, "Take care of the land and the land will take care of you." Responsible travelers can remember to *mālama 'āina* as they explore the lush natural beauty, discover the otherworldly and ever-changing landscapes, and seek a spiritual connection for themselves. In addition to the extensive local ecosystem, nearby towns offer interactions with the island's people. The hula is an interpretation of nature's movements and dynamic power; it depicts the connectedness of the Hawaiian people to the land, sea and sky. It is an excellent way for visitors to learn about the area's unique culture.

Responsible Travel to Hawai'i Volcanoes

Just as the near constant eruption of Kilauea volcano molds the land, the influx of tourism—about 1.5 million visitors every year—can affect the ecosystem of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Follow these nine actions to preserve and enhance not just the park but all of Hawaii.

Respect the spirituality of this place. This is a *wahi kapu* or *sacred place*. Be sensitive to your surroundings, silence is important. Turn off your vehicle, allow yourself to be a part of the landscape, quietly listen to the wind, rain, birds, feel the heat of the steam and new land, smell the forest, steam, sulphur, ocean.

Don't pile rocks. Share the concept of Leave no Trace; leave the landscape the way you found it.

Offerings. Instead of leaving a tangible offering leave a chant, prayer, song or dance to the power of nature you have come to witness.

Take a tour. Ranger-guided group tours reduce traffic and wear and tear within the park. Or support the local economy by hiring a native guide.

Protect fragile landscapes. Practice *mālama 'āina*, or “care for the land.” Posted trails and warnings keep you safe and protect the ecosystem, stay on the trail.

Preserve native species. Hawaii's plants and animals are threatened by climate change, invasive species, and human activity. Help protect them by not feeding animals and disposing of all fruits and seeds in proper bins. Slow down for nēnē (Hawaiian goose).

Explore the island. Reduce park congestion by visiting the island's small towns and villages, home to dazzling waterfalls, archeological sites, and white, black, and green sand beaches.

Increase your knowledge. To learn more about volcanoes, the parks biodiversity and the Hawaiian culture purchase a book from the Hawaii Natural History Association Book Store at the visitor's center. Proceeds raised from book sales fund educational programs at the park.

Mind your manners: Be respectful to Native Hawaiian practitioners by allowing them their privacy while they continue to practice their ceremonial rites, as part of their rich cultural heritage.