

Exploring Hawaii's Big Island October 25 - November 2, 2008

Saturday: Arrive anytime today. Our trip officially starts at 5 pm. We will schedule two airport pick-ups depending on participants' arrival times, and women who are arriving either significantly earlier or later can take a taxi into town. If you do arrive early, you can explore this charming and touristy town. Once we're all gathered, we'll meet for introductions and then go to dinner. Since most of us will be suffering a bit of jet lag, bedtime will undoubtedly be early. Overnight Kona

Sunday: Today a short drive takes us to a state park with an exquisite white sandy beach, reached by a 1/2 mile hike across lava. We'll spend the morning swimming and sunbathing, enjoy a refreshing dip in the "queen's bath" and then share a picnic lunch. In the afternoon we'll go to a completely different beach, a more protected one that is known for good snorkeling and green turtles. This evening we will attend that most Hawaiian of all events, a luau. Overnight Kona

Monday: Today we Leave Kona behind us as we drive across the island to the northern tip and the Waipio Valley. This is a beautiful steep valley that looks like the Na Pali Coast, and we'll offer several options that include a horseback ride on the valley floor or a van tour followed by a hike or time to sit on a beautiful and uncrowded beach in one of the most spectacular settings you've ever seen. Tonight we'll spend the night in a funky hotel in the funky town of Honokaa.

Tuesday: This morning we drive to Volcano National Park, stopping on the way to see one of the most Akaka Falls and enjoy a guided walk through Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden. Continuing past Hilo, we arrive at our totally secluded seven bedroom and six-bathroom house and then head for Volcano National Park. We'll hike out to Pu'u Huluhulu Cinder Cone (shaggy hill), the best place for seeing the glow of lava reflected in the nighttime sky. We'll have a picnic supper atop the hilltop as we watch the sun set and the lava glow begin. Overnight Volcano Retreat

Wednesday: Today we'll spend a full day at Volcano National Park. We'll start with a couple of ranger talks and then do the classic park hike: the Kilauea Iki trail, that goes through rainforest and over an old volcanic crater that still has steam coming out. There are some other great hikes we could do and whenever we've had enough, we'll return to our peaceful lodging for a hearty dinner.

Thursday: This morning we can be a bit more leisurely as we pack up. We'll make one last visit to Volcano National Park and then head to Captain Cook, where we'll stay at a large vacation rental. Although this is the one place we stay where there may be more than two women per room, the incredible setting and location make it an ideal place to stay. Overnight Captain Cook.

Friday: Today visit a small chocolate factory, a natural soap factory, and a coffee. We'll conclude our day with a visit a park that preserves the site where Hawaiians who broke a "kapu", or one of the ancient laws against the gods, could go to avoid certain death. This is the best preserved archeological site in Hawaii and a must see. It is also adjacent to some of the best snorkeling in the area! We'll finish the day with a picnic supper at the beach, watching the sun sink into the Pacific Ocean. Overnight Captain Cook

Saturday: Kealakekua Bay, the largest sheltered natural bay on the island of Hawaii, is known for an abundance of colorful tropical fish, a variety of beautiful coral reefs and visibility often to 100 feet. We'll kayak across to the Captain Cook Monument and then enjoy excellent snorkeling in the shallow waters there. Overnight Captain Cook.

Sunday: We'll pack up this morning and return to Kona. Along the way we'll stop at an exotic animal sanctuary, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to care for injured animals. We'll be back in Kona with time for last minute shopping, exploring, and sharing a final farewell lunch. Depending on everyone's flight schedules, we'll arrange a couple of drop off times at the airport. Most flights leave late in the day so we will be back at the Kona airport by 5 pm on November 2 (exact timing will depend on flight schedules).