



HIKING HAWAII'S
MOST EPIC VOLCANO

COOL AND COSY AUSSIE
WINTER ESCAPES

UBUD: A VERY DIFFERENT
FAMILY PARADISE

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Jetstar

FREE TO TAKE HOME

MAGAZINE

HELLO SEOUL

Take a closer look at the
megacity surprising the world



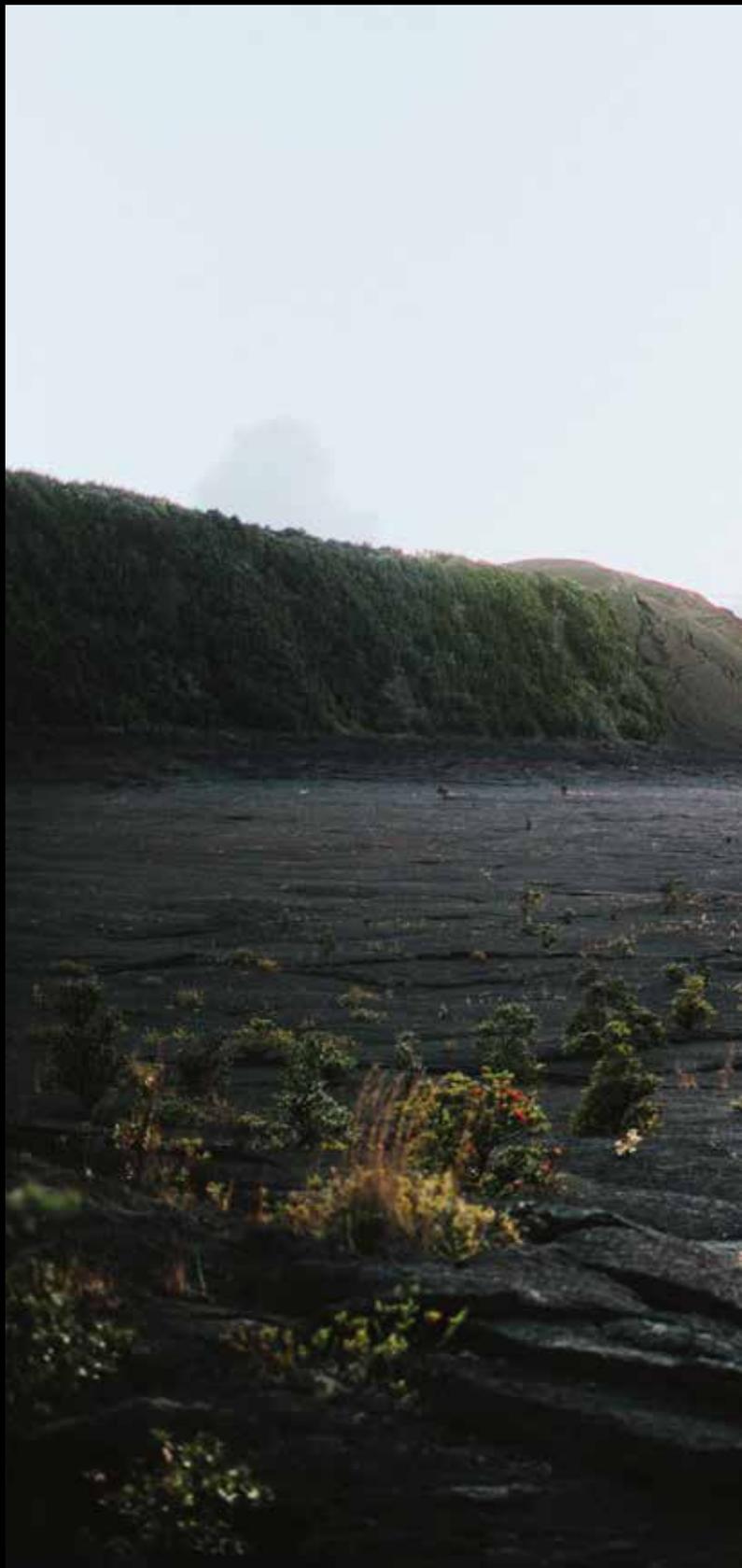
VIETNAM SUNSHINE COAST OSAKA BANGKOK HOBART QUEENSTOWN MANILA CAIRNS COOK ISLANDS

**SOME
LIKE IT**

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ADVENTURE

—Hiking mountains is great but what about climbing a volcano?
Bill Fink laces up his boots and heads straight for the crater on
a thrilling journey to discover the otherworldly appeal of the
Big Island's Hawaii Volcanoes National Park—

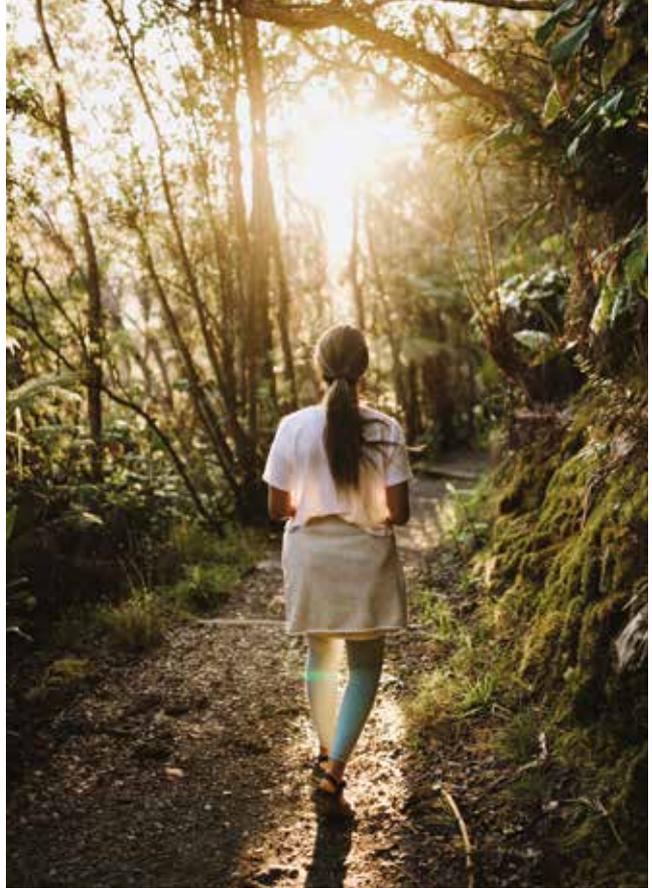


Standing upon a vastness of blackened stone, I am surrounded by hissing steam vents, sulphurous smells and jagged outcroppings that rise from the blasted earth and reach towards me like a petrified ocean of claws.

On all sides, a 13-kilometre ring of 125-metre tall cliffs looms like a scarred prison of rock. Standing in the middle of the Kilauea caldera, in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, is enough to make a person feel small and fragile.

Fortunately, there are signs of life here, even from the volcano's depths. Lush green jungle rims the crater, beckoning me upwards to a tropical paradise. Cairns – little stacks of stones called *ahu* in Hawaiian – mark my path along the recently re-opened Kilauea Iki Trail, which offers an escape route up a gently sloping track to the surface.

The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park encompasses about 1300 square-kilometres on the southern side of the Big Island, stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the 4100-metre summit of Mauna Loa – one of five volcanoes on the island. The area offers a wealth of opportunity for the adventurous to explore the might and majesty of nature's dark side.



ON THE KILAUEA IKI TRAIL

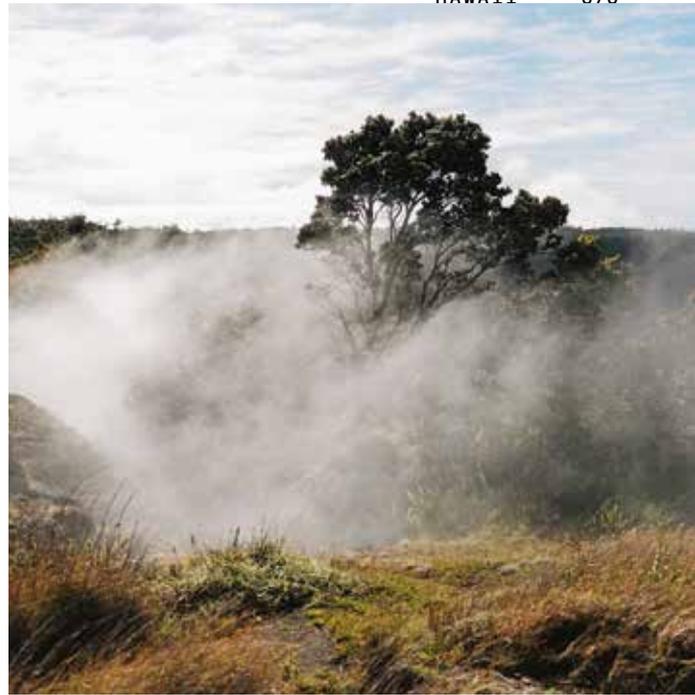
Hikes around the park range from short, flat, wheelchair-accessible viewing boardwalks, to multi-day backcountry adventures through rock, jungle and even to a frigid, snow-capped mountain summit.

I have decided to drive to the centre of the action along the aptly named Crater Rim Drive, a roadway that allows vehicle access to the north-east edge of the Kilauea caldera. It takes me to the Kilauea Iki Outlook car park, the starting point for my trek along the Kilauea Iki Trail, an eight-kilometre “moderate to challenging” round-trip walk with a 122-metre descent to the solidified floor of the crater.

Before I launch into my hike, I stop at the Kilauea Visitor Center to check for updated information about the volcano's condition and potential safety closures (the centre also offers educational materials and a multimedia theatre show). After Kilauea's 2018 eruption, the park and surrounding areas suffered significant damage – many trails were closed or changed by lava flow and earthquakes. The good news is that the volcano is currently dormant and many of the hikes have reopened. Some of the damage from last year's eruption even created new, interesting opportunities for exploration – including the informally named End of the Road hike along a destroyed section of Crater Rim Drive to the edge of the crater, where old roadways drop disconcertingly into the abyss.



MAPS ARE AVAILABLE AT KILAUEA VISITOR CENTER



STEAM RISING OFF THE VOLCANIC LANDSCAPE



STONE CAIRNS (AHUJ) MARKING THE TRAIL

With the all clear and my map in hand, I head down a track and make my way towards the edge of the crater. At the side of the trail, I spot a single pineapple, incongruously plopped on a paper plate. The juicy fruit is a humble offering to Pele, the Hawaiian volcano goddess whose infernal fires continue to shape the Hawaiian Islands. Locals know that Pele's wrath can be destructive and leave offerings such as fruit to appease her anger. I start to feel nervous about intentionally walking into a volcano but as I watch a family of four cheerfully trot down the path, I feel obligated to continue – I can't let two kids show me up!

Looking out over the ancient caldera, which measures about three kilometres across and 13 kilometres in circumference, the scope is truly magnificent. I feel like a tiny speck of lava dust perched on the edge of a chasm carved by primordial forces, with ant-sized people scuttling along the surface below. Across the caldera, the Halemaumau crater literally had the bottom fall out during the 2018 eruption, sinking from a depth of 85 metres to over 480 metres. In former years, visitors could actually see bubbling red lava pools (or the glow from them) but now, Pele's living presence has been reduced only to steam, smell and the rocky creations from her prior work.

Entering the Kilauea Iki Trail, I am soon immersed in a tropical jungle a world away from the car park and bleak rock vistas below. Giant ferns surround me and the feathery leaves of the hapu'u pulu ferns gently sway amidst the spiny red flowers of the Ohia lehua trees as chirping Hawaiian honeycreeper birds



LOOKING DOWN INTO THE CRATER



KILAUEA IKI OVERLOOK

flit about. I half-expect a velociraptor to come charging from the trees Jurassic Park-style, but in reality, it's only the endangered native nene geese that might waddle onto the path.

The trail gradually becomes sparse and ragged the further I descend, with only a few hardy shrubs clinging to the rocky surface. Without the shelter of trees, the sun beats down on me with lava-like intensity. As a regular hiker, I don't find the trail hard but the heat and humidity make it a tougher workout.

As I reach the floor of the crater's now-solidified lava lake, I feel like I am entering a danger zone. Geologically speaking, it's only been an instant since the 1959 eruption created a bed of molten lava where my feet are now stepping. But with the volcano officially dormant for the first time in decades, I can peacefully marvel at the wide vista of lava rock formations around me.

Escaping the crater, I backtrack my way up the trail. It's a sweaty journey to the surface and as I stop to catch my breath at the overlook, my gaze returns to the caldera. The panorama of steaming vents, shattered plateaus of rock and ocean-sized waves of black stone, frozen in time, make me feel like I've been transported a million years into the past, to the very creation of the Hawaiian Islands.

It is humbling and awe-inspiring and I can now understand why it assumes god-like significance in Hawaiian culture. Now there's just one thing left to do – find a fruit platter as soon as possible and make my own offering to the fire goddess, Pele, just in case.

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NEED TO KNOW

- > Hiking trails and conditions can vary due to volcanic activity. Check on the latest updates.
- > Start early to avoid crowds and heat, stay on the path marked by rock cairns and respect closed signs and barriers.
- > The park has a \$35 entrance fee per vehicle. For more information, visit [nps.gov/havo](https://www.nps.gov/havo)

5 MUSTS FOR THE BIG ISLAND

> Drive the Chain of Craters Road

A stunning drive through national park to the coast, winding 35 kilometres past an array of photo opportunity stops and culminating in a stunning lava field-meets-Pacific Ocean vista.

> Spend the night on the volcano

Stay overnight at the hotel, cabins or camp sites at Volcano House (hawaiiivolcano.com) to get great early-morning access to hiking trails.

> Drink at the Kona Pub and Brewery

Volcano hiking is thirsty work so visit the source of Kona Brewing Co (konabrewingco.com), a popular local beer, to quench your thirst. You can even go on a tour of the brewery.

> Learn about (and taste) Kona coffee

The Big Island is famed for its Kona coffee, with hundreds of farms small and large growing the beans. Enjoy a cup at any café or go on a tour at a plantation and roaster like Greenwell Farms (greenwellfarms.com) south of Kona.

> Swim at the island's best beaches

Wash off that lava dust in the Pacific Ocean with a snorkel at a beach like Hapuna or make like a triathlete and take a long swim in Kailua Bay, where the annual Ironman World Championship takes place each October.