

## Further Afield »

# Escape to Maui

**A wealth of recreational opportunities will keep you happy and busy**

From sky to sea, Maui is a recreation mecca.

You can hike across a volcano's crater or along the coast, bike down a volcano, explore a lava tube, kayak the sea, or snorkel to see stunningly beautiful marine life. And that's but a slice of the adventures to be found on this Hawaiian island.

### Hike in a Volcano

At 33 miles wide and 24 miles long, Haleakala is a huge volcano that makes up the bulk of the island. By geologic time, Haleakala is still an active volcano; its last explosion was in the 1790s. The 37-mile drive to the summit is full of great views. Be sure to stop at the Pu'u Ula'ula summit (10,023-foot elevation) for its 360-degree awe-inspiring panorama.

While you can hike to the top of Mount St. Helens, its volcanic activity precludes hiking across the volcano's floor, as does the water at Crater Lake. That's not the case at Haleakala, or House of the Sun, with its arid half-mile deep crater inside Haleakala National Park. About 30 miles of trails at the summit range from short and easy to long and extremely strenuous.

Hiking the crater comes with caveats, however. Clouds usually gather later in the day, so start early; wear layers because it can be surprisingly cold, even freezing; walk slowly in the thin, dry air. Bring everything you'll need, including water, because nothing is sold at the three visitors centers.

It's impossible to judge distances in the immense opening, so seeking a ranger's advice can help you avoid errors and exhaustion. They'll help you match your fitness and experience to the right trail. Rangers also advise watching for altitude sickness symptoms, such as dizziness, headache, shortness of breath and nausea. If you're nervous about going down to the crater floor for any reason, take a twice-weekly short ranger-guided walk.

The three biggest surprises in this volcanic landscape are the colors, the cinder cones, and the silversword. As the sun crosses the crater, it transforms the landscape into a palette of browns, grays, reds and rose. Cinder cones rise like sculptures in the desert, hundreds of feet high. The perfect plant in this harsh terrain is the Hawaiian silversword, which only grows on

lava at high altitudes in the park and can live for decades before blooming. From June through October, admire the stalks, up to several feet tall, with pink and lavender flowers and silver hairs on the swordlike leaves. After it blooms, the plant dies and its seeds try to survive.

### Bike Down a Volcano

The world-famous ride down Haleakala is not the same as a few years ago, and that's probably a good thing. Then, it was a cruise from the 10,000-foot elevation near the summit to the ocean, but the National Park Service banned tours starting in the park for safety reasons.

Tour companies now start at 6,500 feet. Hundred of accidents and deaths have marred too many rides, so the young and inexperienced should opt out.

Investigate your tour options, such as whether to finish at the ocean (not all tours do) and what speed companies want you to keep before you decide to take the ride.

For another biking option, consider the Skyline Road that descends on the other side of Haleakala. Commercial tours aren't allowed here.

### Walk Through a Lava Tube

*We turned off our flashlights and were in the dark. Not dark like lights out in a house, dark as the inside of the Ka'eleku Caverns, also known as the Hana Lava Tube.*

Getting here is half the fun: the 52-mile stretch of the Hana Highway from Kahului to the caverns features more than 50 one-lane bridges (some historic) and more than 600 sweeping curves.

Chuck Thorne bought the land with access to the lava tube in 1996 and later started Maui Cave Adventures.

Sights along the quarter-mile self-guided tour in the 2-mile-long cavern (the 18th longest in the world) include the Chocolate Waterfall, Hershey Kisses, Bowling Alley, a rare lava stalagmite and gold sparkles on the cave walls that are rock-eating bacteria. It's so interesting that it seems much longer than a standard quarter-mile jaunt. The signage explaining the geology and formations is excellent and is certainly worth reading.

The cavern is also home to white, eyeless

## Maggie Savage & Sharon Wootton

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**Kayaking over coral reefs with a chance to see green sea turtles is part of the fun in Maui. Photo by Ron Dahlquist Photography.**

crickets and a rare rappelling planarian flat-worm.

"I've seen it rappel from ceiling cracks on ultra fine filament to the floor," said Thorne, who may have been the first person to see this creature at work, according to the experts that he brought in to verify the sighting.

## Paddle On the Ocean

Continue to exercise your muscles by taking a guided kayak tour or rent a kayak. If on your own, do it after you've gathered information on beaches whose approaches range from easy to challenging.

Be sure to find out which direction the wind blows in the afternoon and plan on letting it push you back toward the put-in.

Our advice: start early, and never, ever underestimate the power of the wind.

## Snorkel Through Coral

*A rainbow of fish swam below us, seemingly unimpressed with our colorful snorkeling gear and lack of tan.*

Excellent snorkeling can be enjoyed at Honolu'a Bay, one of the best sites on Maui if

## Hike Along the Ocean

The Wai'anapanapa Coastal Trail is a 3-mile one-way moderate coastal hike that shows off the most recent lava flow in the Hana area. Erosion of this flow created the black sand beaches.

Start at Wai'anapanapa State Park. Expect a rugged coastline, terrific views, black lava promontories, sea cliffs and arches, six-sided lava columns and a combination of striking colors.

Warm water, coral, green sea turtles and some of the 250 fish species that live in this water can be enjoyed with a minimum of effort. Picture parrotfish, convict tangfish, trumpetfish, Moorish idols, clownfish, triggerfish, pufferfish, porcupine fish and goat fish only feet away.

On a snorkel trip, make sure the guide knows if you wear glasses and roughly how bad your eyesight is. Newer masks have some correction in them to help most of the eye-challenged.

We were more than satisfied

**Maui has a wealth of accessible waterfalls, most of them on the Road to Hana. Courtesy of Maui Visitors Bureau.**



it's a good day (no rain, no recent swells from the north). The best snorkeling is on the right side of the bay. Or try the north side of Kapalua Bay, the north end of La Perouse Bay, or the point separating Po'olenalena Beach from Palauea Beach.

with our teacher/guide, Suzzy Robinson, the owner of Maui Snorkel Tours and a former Kent, Washington, resident, who enthusiastically led us to colorful underwater life.

**The bonus to hiking the Haleakala crater is the long-lived silversword, which dies after blooming once. Photo by Ron Dahlquist Photography.**

## Head for the Black, Red and Tan Beaches

Eventually it's time to head to the beaches. The choices are many, including seclusion (possible), views (always impressive) and even sand color (take your pick).

If it's seclusion you seek, it is generally best to stay away from the resort stretch with few views of rocky outcroppings. On the other hand, resorts offer a convenient home base.

Finding black and red beaches takes a little more effort, but the novelty is appealing. In east Maui, the striking Honokalani Black Sand Beach is located in the Wai'napanapa State Park. Even if you don't have time to walk down, there is a view that captures the setting among lava cliffs.

Kaihalulu Beach, also known as Red Sand Beach, is an isolated beach south of Hana Bay that takes a determined walker to navigate the challenging path, particularly after rain.

While there are hundreds of beaches on Maui, the most highly rated beach in America, according to several sources who rate such things, is Wailea Beach on the south shore, complete with resorts.

The decision to head to the beach can be made on the spur of the moment on Maui. All along Highway 30, on the west side, you'll find easy to access "pocket parks" which help spread out the beach-going population.

Does Maui have it all? As far as we could tell, it has everything except an overlook to ooh and aah over red-hot flowing lava. The incredible number of recreational opportunities here could keep you busy for a week, a month or a lifetime. ♦

**AT LEFT, ABOVE: As the sun moves across Haleakala, it transforms the landscape into a palette of colors including shades of browns, grays and reds.**

**AT LEFT, BELOW: Colorful tropical fish and coral are accessible if you have a mask and can float. Both photos by Ron Dahlquist Photography.**



### If You Go

#### Maui Visitors Bureau

(800) 525-6284, [www.visitmaui.com](http://www.visitmaui.com)

#### Haleakala National Park

(808) 572-4400, [www.nps.gov/hale](http://www.nps.gov/hale)

#### Hana Lava Tube

(808) 248-7308, [www.mauicave.com](http://www.mauicave.com)

#### Maui Snorkel Tours

(808) 268-9840, [www.mauisnorkeltours.com](http://www.mauisnorkeltours.com)

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