

A Haole's Guide to Ka'u

Thank you for your interest in Hale O Honu (The House of the Turtle). Hale O Honu is located in a lush tropical rain forest in Wood Valley, Hawaii, 75 miles from Kona and 50 miles from Hilo. Close to everything yet lost in a world of its own, Hale O Honu is a true artist and naturalist's retreat.

Location:

Wood Valley is on the Northwest side of the big island of Hawaii just north of Southpoint and just south of Volcano National Park. You will need a rental car to get around since Wood Valley is far from the main tourist area. You can fly into Keahole Airport in Kona which is approximately a 90 minute drive without stops along the way. Or fly into Hilo for a shorter drive of 1 hour. The ride is pleasant either way and offers many points of interest and a way to see more of the island.

Things to do In the Immediate Area (10-30 minutes):

Wood Valley is an incredible tropical paradise that begs for exploration. Once a populated plantation village, Wood Valley is now one of the most secluded areas in the Hawaiian Islands. Originally settled by Chinese laborers who harvested extensive sugar cane fields, Wood Valley is currently speckled with coffee and Mac nut farms. For the most part it has been allowed to return to its natural jungle and is filled with draping flowers, 40 feet eucalyptus and haole koa trees and Chinese taro with leaves that dwarf you in size. There is one county road that loops through the valley and less than an hour's walk offers spectacular views of the forest and the ocean below. Or explore the valley at night and watch the stars blaze. You don't have to worry about traffic because there isn't any. Only 14 families live in this valley full time. An important part of your stay at Hale O Honu is to simply relax and awaken your senses to beauty of this Green World and Hawaii.

The **Wood Valley Temple and Retreat Center** can not be missed since it is our closest neighbor in the Valley. This non-sectarian Buddhist Temple was built at the turn of the century by a Japanese Nichiren Mission. In 1973, the grand lama Nechung Rinpoche officially ordained this temple as a sacred place of learning. Retreats are held here covering a wide range of topics from foundational philosophy to the Highest Yoga Tantras and Dzogchen. Visitors are welcome to enjoy the immaculate gardens complete with wandering peacocks and to visit the quietude of the temple. The only requirement is that you remove your shoes before entering.

Punalu'u State Park is 10 minutes from the house. You take the Wood Valley Road through Pahala to Highway 11. Take a right onto Highway 11 and continue for @ 5 miles until you see the sign for Punaluu State Park. Turn left onto the access road for @ one mile to the beach. This black sand, palm tree lined beach is breathtaking and discovered by few. Although tour buses do make a stop here on the way to Volcano, very few tourists make it past the concessions to the beach. As a added daily attraction, Green Sea Turtles feed and swim in the waters, frequenting the limu (seaweed) bar around the lava rocks that jut out from the beach to the sea. It is said that the first Polynesians landed on this beach about 500 A.D. and dying of thirst they struck land and fell to the ground unconscious. During the night underwater springs flowed to the surface of the beach and filled their mouths with fresh water, saving them from death. If you look closely, near the shoreline, you will see the rivets of water that are still produced by underwater springs creating crystal clear water for snorkeling and swimming. Although the entrance may be rocky, the water abounds with sealife and is well worth a dip.



Millionaire's Pool, an Olympic size mineral hot springs that is cooled by the ebb and flow of the sea. To get there you continue west on Route 132 until you come to a fork in the road. There you turn left onto Route 132 and take it several miles to the end of the road. At this intersection you turn right on 137 for about a mile. Millionaire's has no official sign. It is identifiable by a parking lot that is across the street from a fenced in yellow house. A sign in the yard gives the official hours of the park, (open 7a.m. to 7p.m.) and cars are often park along the road as you approach. Walk in the yard through the opening at the fence and follow a path to the front of the house to the pool. This little known spot was once owned by a millionaire who later donated the land and this homemade pool to the state of Hawaii for all to use for free. You can snorkel and view some of the fish that are swept in at the narrow sea entrance. Or simply float and enjoy the warm soothing waters. This is at least a half day affair and is @ one hour from the house.



Hawaii's Volcano National Park houses the world's most active volcano's, Kilauea. Although much of the volcanic flow is in lava vents underground, you can still see (on a clear day), a mushroom cloud of steam that marks the spot where it pours into the sea. The park is rich in history and is worth time for exploring. From the steam vents to hikes along extinct caldera to a moderate lunch or a four star dinner at Volcano House, overlooking Kilauea caldera, there is something for everyone to investigate. The museum at Volcano offers changing exhibits that are spectacular.

Entertainment:

Rural Hawaii offers little in the way of entertainment except for the incredible natural world around you. A few things of interest in the area are:

Naalehu Town Movie Theatre located on Main street shows fairly current movies every Friday and Saturday night in an old theatre building that doubles as an art gallery, playhouse and civic center.

Golfing at Sea Mountain at Punalu'u (808) 928-6222, an 18 hour course by the sea is located next to Punaluu State Park, just 10 minutes from the house, and is beautifully landscaped with coconut and banyan trees.

Volcano Golf Course and Country Club located in **Volcano National Park (808) 967-7331** is the only 18 hole course in the vicinity of an erupting volcano with elevations of 4200 feet.

Volcano Winery offers daily tours with an unusual and delicious selection of fruit and rich grape wines.

Both Hilo (one hour drive) and Kona (1 1/2 hour drive) offer shopping, movie theatres and dining. Hilo is a Hawaiian city and is far less touristy than Kona.

Dining:

The rural area of Wood Valley and the entire district of Ka'u offers these few but choice dining locations:

Perched on the crater's edge, the **Volcano House** is a four star restaurant with a spectacular view of the caldera of Kilauea. A variety of fresh fish dishes and succulent prime rib are offered at a price range from

\$20-\$30/plate. Credit cards are accepted. Breakfast and a buffet lunch are also served at moderate prices.

Further up the road in **Volcano Village** is the **Kilauea House**. This four star establishment may not have as spectacular a view as the Volcano House but the cuisine is slightly superior. They accept all credit cards and is worth the extra few miles to get there. Turn left off of highway 11 at the sign for Volcano Village. Volcano village also host the Steam Vent that offers real cappicino and pastries and a diner that has some fast food fare.



Akaka Falls

There are three places in **Na'alehu** that are casual and offer delicious food. The **Na'alehu Fruit Stand** is located on highway 11 in the center of town. Besides being a health food store, video shop and bakery, they offer an excellent pizza and sandwich selection that can be taken out or eaten on their porch lined with picnic tables. Save room for dessert. Their pies and cookies are heavenly and their homemade fruit and nut breads (carrot mac nut, chocolate zucchini, coconut...) make for a great tropical breakfast.

The **Punalu'u Bakery** makes the best sweet egg bread on the islands. It offer lunch in a beautiful Japanese garden at moderate prices. Punalu'u bread is a must while at Hale O Honu and makes extraordinary French toast.

The **Na'alehu Coffee Shop** is located off the parking lot for the Island Market in the center of town in a meticulous yellow house. The owner serves simple but delicious dishes including fresh fish sandwiches, stuffed papaya salad and teriya ki steak. It's moderately priced and casual. They don't accept credit cards.

Grocery stores near you are the **Island Market** and the **Na'alehu Fruit Stand** in Na'alehu and **Mizunos Market** in the Pahala Shopping center. There is a bank at the Pahala Shopping Center and a money machine at the Island Market in Na'alehu.

Weather:

Although it's still popular, December through March are officially the winter or rainy season in the Hawaiian Islands. The average temperature year round is 75 degrees varying only 5 degrees from summer to winter. Hale O Honu is in the mountains at an elevation of 2000 feet and is somewhat cooler at night and in the early morning, especially in winter. You may expect rainfall in the afternoon during the winter although this is not a golden rule. We have spent many a sunny day in this tropical rainforest while some days have rained all day. If it is rainy in the valley, there is a good possibility that it may be sunny at Punaluu 10 miles away. There are 38 different eco-systems on this one island and you can basically choose your weather. If you rain is getting to you, point your car to the south and soon you'll be basking in the sun.

Clothing to Bring to Hale O Honu:

Hawaii's days are typically warm with an average temp of 75 degrees even in the winter. At this elevation, the temperature drops quickly with the sun. To be prepared, you'll need pants and sweat shirts and/or a light jacket for the evenings and early morning hours.

Recommendations:

Buy a copy of Hidden Hawaii for details to the areas mentioned as well as the history and local news in Hawaiian Island chain. A good map is available for about \$3.00 at most markets along the way.

Enjoy the natural world. Hale O Honu is a rare place in an equally rare valley. It will lift your senses and take you into another world.

Enjoy your stay and Aloha!



