

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FALL FOR THE NATURE OF HAWAII
New Land is Born, Old Tales are Told in Hawai'i's National Parks

HONOLULU – The best advice for a fall visit to the Hawaiian Islands? Park it! Not sit on the beach and watch the waves “park it.” Not a wander the great green gardens kind of “park it.” This kind of “park it” is an invitation to visit the eight, count them - eight - national parks in the State of Hawai'i.

To offer a bit of historical perspective, Washington D.C. was declared a national historic site in 1790. Yellowstone became a national park in 1872. The African Burial Ground was named a National Monument in New York in 2006. Over the years, the National Park System has honored, set aside and named hundreds of amazing places; battlefields, islands, lake and seashores, rivers, home sites, monuments, trails and preserves across the country and the Pacific. Hawai'i's first national park, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, was founded in 1916.

Fall is the perfect time for a Hawai'i park adventure. The days are cooler and the trails less crowded than the busy summer family vacation months. Parks can be reached by air, rental car and mule rides. In Hawai'i, the National Park Service has named some of its most unique, accessible parks, honoring pre-recorded-to-modern history.

Hawai'i has the only national park with a twenty-plus year continuous molten lava flow. Hawai'i's park sites date to a time long before a voyager named Captain Cook took word of the islands to his western world. Hawai'i's national parks, trails and preserves celebrate the temples, cities and fishponds of ancient peoples. They are adorned with the earliest recorded Pacific history, petroglyphs. They top a 10,000-foot mountain with a crater large enough to hold Manhattan. They honor the human history and inhuman treatment of a people suffering a dreaded disease and celebrate the brave warriors who protected America.

BEGIN ON THE BIG ISLAND

Hawai'i's Big Island has four of the state's national parks and one National Historic Trail. The parks on this island are drive up and drive in, with easy walking trails, museums, and spectacular sites to see.

Three major parks are located on the Kona side of the Big Island. Pu'uhonua O Hōnaunau National Historical Park, a place of refuge, is protected by the "great wall" 1,000 feet long, 10 feet high and 17 feet thick, constructed entirely without mortar. Warriors or commoners who arrived there were protected. Trails here are easy to walk. Cultural specialists share legends. Green sea turtles nibble the *limu* (seaweed) along the rocky shore. They are protected but often "pose" for photos.

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historic Park is the site of Hawaiian settlements. The park's massive fishponds, built before the arrival of European explorers, are an amazing example of successful aquaculture. The goal of the park restoration is to rehabilitate and restore the fishponds so they will again function, providing fish harvest for the community. Centuries of storm damage have caused movement of stones in the original walls. Richard Boston, manager and archaeologist at the site says, "we have reached a milestone in restoration at this park, even using divers to move and replace underwater stones in their original wall locations." Petroglyphs at this site include a carving of Captain Cook's ship.

The Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site is a sacred stone *heiau* (place of worship) known as the Temple of the Hill of the Whale, built over 200 years ago by Kamehameha the Great. The sacred temple measures 224 feet long by 100 feet wide. It is 16 to 20 feet high on the landward side. Workers lived on the surrounding hills for years as they gathered and fitted the massive stone structure.

The Big Island's Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail is a 175-mile preservation corridor filled with cultural significance, including hundreds of early Hawaiian settlement sites.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park has America's only active, continuously erupting, volcano. The park features ancient petroglyphs, tree-fern forests, miles of hiking trails and extraordinary museums. According to Dr. Dieter Mueller-Dombois, one of the foremost botanists in the Pacific, "this park is the only ecosystem on the planet where just a few steps from the road visitors can stand atop a live volcano, at the edge of a 200 year-old lava flow, and see a new-growth forest sprouting from soil blown into the crevices." Equally amazing is that the site is only a 30-minute drive down the

mountain to the place where fresh lava pours into the ocean. Mueller-Dombois' book, "Life From the Ashes," soon will be published by Mutual Publishing, tells a Stephen Spielberg-worthy tale from 1959 of the 36-day eruption of Kīlauea 'Iki, the 400-foot deep lava lake that devastated the rainforest and of the new growth forest returning in only 50 years.

In the park, Crater Rim Drive runs in every direction, leading to steam vents and sulfur banks that feel like a sauna for the face. Deep in the vent, wild orchids thrive surrounded by silver lava mounds. A walk through the 450-foot long Thurston Lava Tube is a truly Jurassic experience. Well-marked trails are everywhere. The Jaggar Museum is a technophile's delight, filled with seismometers, computers, videos and how-to-be-a-volcanologist displays.

According to the volcanologists at the Hawai'i Volcanoes Observatory, great fountains of lava have and may again shoot skyward in the ultimate fireworks show. The Kīlauea Visitors Center offers a visual "master's degree" in volcanoes. At the Volcano Art Center, island artists show and sell international quality works of art, inspired by *Pele*, goddess of the volcano. On the way down Chain of Craters Road, to view the moving lava show, the trail leads to thousands of petroglyphs, carved in the ancient lava fields.

Kīlauea appears to be a "civilized" volcano, sending lava through tunnels and tubes from deep in the heart of the mountain, creating hundreds of acres of new land as it flows into the sea. At the bottom of the Chain of Craters Road, a well-marked trail leads hardy hikers to a view of the ocean-side lava action. Safety signs and warnings must be observed, but on a clear day the photo op beats any other vacation snapshot.

Volcano House, originally built in 1846, is the park's hotel, perched on the edge of Kīlauea Caldera. The flames in the lobby fireplace are said to carry the image of *Pele*. The "new" hotel was completed in 1941. Lobby windows look directly into the caldera. Photos taken here tend to look like the moon.

MANHATTAN ON MAUI

No rumbling can be felt on the island of Maui, but it was a short two centuries ago that the volcano that formed East Maui erupted. At 10,000 feet, Haleakalā National Park, the House of the Sun, is the entire top of a dormant volcano. That's dormant, not extinct, meaning it could become active again. The crater at the top, 3,000 feet deep,

21-miles around, could easily hold Manhattan. Thousand-foot high cinder cones rise from the bottom of the crater. Some life forms here are among the rarest on earth, including the strange silversword plant that grows for 20 years, shoots up a 9-foot high bloom and dies. Here the *nene* (Hawaiian goose) runs wild, rescued from near extinction.

The most spectacular moment in a day on Haleakalā is watching the light of the rising sun spill into the crater. Standing at the observatory railing, it is easy to imagine the demi-god, *Maui*, throwing a giant rope around the sun to slow it and make Maui days last longer. Across the summit, visitors can watch as the shadow of a 10,023-foot mountain recedes, bringing dawn to the West Maui mountains. The experience is equally as impressive at dusk as the sun goes down.

There are 36 miles of hiking trails in the crater. One- to three- day hikes are advised for strong hikers only. The high altitude requires moving slow. The "sliding sands" trail, much like the surface of the moon, was used for training by U.S. astronauts. Areas of the park are dry forest zones with 10 inches of rain per year. The other side of the mountain is lush rainforest with 400 or more inches of rain. The park stretches down the mountainside to the ocean.

MOLOKA'I MEMORIAL

The Kalaupapa National Historical Park on the island of Moloka'i contains the site of the Hansen's Disease settlement where Father Damien de Veuster dedicated his life, ministering to the sufferers of leprosy. More than 8,000 persons in Hawai'i were taken away from family and delivered to this remote point of land, separated from the world by thousands of feet of steep cliffs. Damien's grave and his church, St. Philomena, are the most visited sites. A cure for the disease was found in 1946, but the residents of the colony still live in the tiny community at the base of the world's tallest sea cliffs.

The settlement was once home to Hawaiian royalty. Deep valleys allowed abundant game hunting. Fish were plentiful. The park now easily claims the most unusual mode of arrival and departure travel, a mule ride down the 2,000- to 3,000-foot steep switchback trail. For the non-riders, tour planes can land at the tiny airport. No roads connect this hauntingly beautiful location to the rest of the island of Moloka'i.

O'AHU HONORS

It's a fact, Elvis Presley and Hawai'i are connected far beyond his famous movie, "Blue Hawaii." Funds were needed to construct a gracefully arched memorial over the USS Arizona, the final resting place for 1,177 United States military crewmen who lost their lives in the World War II attack on December 7, 1941. Elvis volunteered a fund-raising concert. The USS Arizona Memorial, built by private contributions, is owned by the U.S. Navy and administered by the National Park Service. It is free, and open to the public, every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days.

Visitors can tour the museum, view a 20-minute documentary on the Pearl Harbor attack and board a Navy shuttle out to the Memorial. Inside, a solemn roster of names carved in marble stretches skyward. Everyday for the past 55 years, tiny oil droplets have risen to the surface, reinforcing the reality of this monument to our country's brave warriors.

KAUA'I FOR WILDLIFE

Kaua'i, known as the Garden Isle and the most verdant of the islands, offers three National Wildlife Refuge experiences unlike anywhere else in the world. Two of these lush open spaces have rivers running through them, which offer the only kayaking adventures in Hawai'i on navigable rivers.

Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge, encircled by Hanalei Valley's dramatic waterfall-draped mountains, is a 917-acre refuge on the north shore established to provide habitat for endangered Hawaiian waterbirds. Outdoor enthusiasts can take a leisurely kayak journey down the beautiful Hanalei River, one of 14 nationally recognized American Heritage Designated Rivers by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which offers impressive views of the islands flora, fauna, and natural landscape, including famous Bali Hai (Makana Peak).

On the southeast side of the island, kayak expeditions on the Hulē'ia River take adventurers through the Hulē'ia National Wildlife Refuge located next to the ancient Menehune Fish Pond, a registered National Historic Landmark. The refuge is approximately 241 acres and was established to provide open, productive wetlands for endangered Hawaiian waterbirds. Thirty-one species of birds, including the endangered ae'o (Hawaiian stilt), 'alae ke'oke'o (Hawaiian coot), 'alae 'ula (Hawaiian mud hen), and koloa maoli (Hawaiian duck) can be found here.

The Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge is open to the public and known as one of the best bird watching destination in Hawai'i spanning 203 acres. Located on northernmost tip of the island, migratory birds such as the Pacific golden plover, Laysan albatross, and the *nene* goose (Hawai'i's state bird) are some of the wildlife that call this refuge home. The Kīlauea Lighthouse, found on the refuge, was built in 1913 as a navigational aid for commercial shipping between Hawai'i and the Orient. For 62 years, it guided ships and boats safely along Kaua'i's north shore. Humpback whales, Hawaiian monk seals, and spinner dolphins can also be observed here.

For information on park visits, camping, days and hours of operations, and park regulations, visit the National Park Service website at NPS.gov/Hawaii.

Information about Hawai'i's National Wildlife Refuges, visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at FWS.gov/Pacific.

For information about planning your next vacation to Hawai'i – The Islands of Aloha – visit HVCB's website at GoHawaii.com or call toll-free 1-800-GOHAWAII.

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Editor's Note: High-resolution images of Hawai'i's national parks are available upon request.

Special note to media: The Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) recognizes the use of Hawaiian diacritical markings (e.g. glottal stop [ʻ], macron [ā] in place names of Hawai'i such as Lāna'i). However, HVCB respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

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