



Lawbreakers had one chance to escape the inevitable death penalty: Reach the area's place of refuge before your enemies reached you, and all was forgiven.

seize his prized neck ornament. (Taking it off your enemy's body was symbolic of defeating him.) As he was leaning over Ke's body, Kiwala'o was beamed on the head by a sling stone hurled by one of Kamehameha's warriors, and fell backward. Ke, who wasn't dead from his spear wound, painfully crawled to the unconscious Kiwala'o and slit his throat with a leiomanu (a Hawaiian version of brass knuckles, but with razor-sharp shark's teeth embedded on the outside). Thus Kamehameha was able to defeat his nemesis and rule western Hawai'i.

Battles such as these are a constant throughout Hawaiian history after the 12th century. Rival chiefs or kings were quick to take each other on. Warriors would often congregate on opposite sides of the battlefield and shout insults to each other in an attempt to intimidate. (Insults about lineage were always a real hit.) During battles, spears, sling stones and clubs were used with remarkable efficiency. Shark tooth-studded leiomanus

were often given to old men who would go out onto battlefields after the fighting was over to slit the throats of those still alive. Though it may sound harsh (OK, OK—it *is* harsh), this was their way and not considered abhorrent to them.

Soon you come to **Pu'uhonua o Honaunau** (pronounced HOE-NOW-NOW).

Also called **Place of Refuge**, this is an *awesome* spot to visit. It is a site of great importance and a fun place to explore. In ancient times, commoners' lives were governed by the kapu system. There was a dizzying number of laws to observe. Those of lower classes weren't allowed to look at or even walk on the same trails as the upper classes. Men and women were forbidden to eat together, citizens were not allowed to get close to a chief or allow their shadows to fall across them, etc. All manner of laws kept the order. The penalty for breaking any of the laws was usually the same—death by club, strangulation, fire



or spear. (Well, it's nice to have choices, at least.) If the offense was severe enough, the offender's *entire family* might be executed. It was believed that the gods retaliated against lawbreakers by sending tidal waves, lava flows, droughts and earthquakes, so communities had a great incentive to dispatch lawbreakers with haste. If a lawbreaker could elude his club or spear-wielding pursuers, however, he had one way out of his mess—the area's Pu'uhonua (Place of Refuge). This predesignated area offered asylum. If a lawbreaker could make it here, he could perform certain rituals mandated by the kahuna pule (priest). After that, all was forgiven and he could return home as if nothing had happened, regardless of the violation. Defeated warriors could also come here to await the victor of a battle. They could then pledge their allegiance to whoever won and live out their lives in peace.

Pu'uhonua o Honaunau is such a place. Designated as a national park by Congress in 1961, it is the finest example of a Place of Refuge in all the islands. Here you will find neatly kept grounds featuring a remarkable stone wall, called the Great Wall. Built in the 1500s, this massive wall is 1,000 feet long, 10 feet high and 17 feet thick in most places. It separated the Pu'uhonua from the Ali'i's palace grounds. Though the wall has a chiseled appearance, it was made without dressed (cut) stones and without mortar. Also on the grounds you will find reconstructed Hawaiian houses, temples, and a few petroglyphs (rock drawings). There are wood carvings of gods (including one that is anatomically correct, assuming that's how the gods were endowed). The reconstructed thatched structure called **Hale-o-Keawe** was originally a mausoleum, containing the bones of 23 chiefs. Bones were thought to contain supernatural power, or *mana*, and there-

fore ensured that the Place of Refuge would remain sacred.

There are many other sights here, as well. Overall, this place is easy to recommend. The walk around the grounds is gentle, and there are facilities such as drinking water and restrooms. Coconut trees (which have an almost magical, calming effect) are scattered all over. There is a \$5 per car entrance fee, but sometimes no one is there to collect it because they "can't afford the manpower to collect the money." (Only the government could come up with that kind of logic.)

Honaunau is particularly enchanting an hour before sunset, the best time to visit. Swaying coconut trees have a golden glow as large turtles munch limu in the water near the canoe landing. You won't find a more relaxing or soothing place to finish off the day. Then head over to the middle/southern end of the park where picnic tables and BBQs await. Local families often bring their keiki (kids) to play in the nearby tide-pools. Drive to that area using the dirt road to the left of the visitor center after you enter the park.

For the less cerebral, you'll find unbeatable snorkeling and SCUBA diving in Honaunau Bay to the right of the boat launch. There are also hiking trails, including the 1871 Trail, so named because area residents paid their taxes in 1871 by fixing up this formerly dilapidated trail. (We have a call in to the IRS to see if the offer's still good.) The trail goes all the way to Ho'okena Beach, but the portion outside of the park is pretty bleak.

Leaving Honaunau, you'll continue up Ke Ala o Keawe Road to Painted Church Road. Hang a left onto it to get to St. Benedict's Catholic Church, known simply as the **Painted Church**. It's a charming little building dating back to the 1800s. Between 1899 and 1904, Father



A REAL GEM