



The Big Island is a snorkeler's paradise. This is at the Captain Cook Monument in Kealakekua Bay.

Take a deep breath and do some stretching before you read this chapter, because the Big Island has so much to see and do that you're likely to pull something just reading about it all. Among the more popular activities are fishing, golfing, snorkeling, SCUBA, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, helicopter tours, boat trips, submarine rides and whale watching. Whatever you're into—even snow skiing!—you're likely to find it here on the Big Island.

Activities can be booked directly with the individual activity providers or through activity companies. *Sometimes* you can get better deals through activity companies or online. Many resorts have activity directors and booths, sometimes run by



the activity providers themselves, so be aware that their "recommendations" are sometimes biased. Many of the booths spread around the island are actually forums for selling timeshares. That's not a dig at timeshares; it's just that you need to know the real purpose of some of these booths. They can be very aggressive. (Don't get skewered by one of the long metal hooks.) Free breakfasts and "island orientations" are often similar to activity booths. So if you are steered to XYZ helicopter company and assured that they are the best, that's fine, but consider the source. We walk up to these booths frequently. Some are reputable and honest, and some are outrageous. We have no stake in *any* company we

recommend; we just want to steer you in the best direction we can.

## ATVS

These are those 4-wheeled things that look like Tonka Toys on steroids with knobby tires. They are often used by ranchers these days to chase cows, and they're quite a bit of fun to ride. **ATV Outfitters** (889-6000) is our favorite. They'll take you around private land near the northern tip of the island on ATVs. For \$129 you cruise along for 1½ hours, taking in the coastal scenery. They'll provide beverages and long pants (if you left them at home) for a fee. The ATVs are easy to operate with automatic transmissions. (Riding wimps will do fine on these.) You need to weigh between 90–300 pounds. They also have a 22-mile, 3-hour deluxe tour for \$249. All in all, these trips are lots of fun, and the coastal scenery they show you is great. They also have a 2-hour waterfall ride for \$179 that's even more fun. If you have two people on one ATV, ask for the side-by-side model, unless you want to ride super slow or are interested in bouncing out your spouse.

Also available but less interesting is **Kahua Ranch** (882-7954) that has 1½-hour tours for \$105.

**Ride the Rim** (775-1450) is a great and incredibly misleading name for an ATV company. The impression left by their brochure is that you'll be cruising along the rim of beautiful Waipi'o Valley. I guess it's easier to market than **Buy the Farm**, which is what you're *really* doing—buying a dirt road tour of a eucalyptus tree farm with only *two* views of Waipi'o Valley, if the clouds are cooperating, and one small, pretty falls and pool. Nearly all of the 15-mile

circuit is among the skinny trees as you scoot along at 16–18 MPH for about two hours. Nice folks and all, but there are *way* better things you can do with your \$159 per person.

## BIKING

With a moniker like the Big Island, you would expect an endless variety of biking choices. Sure enough, many of the highways, such as Queen K where they run the Ironman, have nice bike lanes so you can cruise long distances. But be prepared for strong crosswinds in Kohala. If it's **mountain biking** that you prefer, and you are willing to transport a mountain bike somewhere, these three rides can be fun:

**South Point**—See map on page 79 and the description of the area. You can ride from South Point past Green Sand Beach on the 4WD roads—lots of fun. The wind is usually with you coming back. This is wide-open country with good mountain bike roads.

**Volcano**—There's a dirt "escape" road that leads through beautiful rain forest from Thurston Lava Tube to Chain of Craters Road and the Mauna Ulu Trailhead. (See maps on pages 92 and 197.) The 4-mile road is well maintained and very scenic, with green assaulting your eyes from both directions. Return on the escape road, or take Chain of Craters road back up (right) 1½ miles, then take Hilina Pali Road as far down as you want to go before returning.

**Mana Road**—This road leads through Parker Ranch in Waimea and winds around Mauna Kea to near Saddle Road. It starts near the 55 mile marker on the main highway in Waimea. See maps on