

You'll find crowds of wild pigs rather than crowds of hikers during your stay in Waimanu Valley.



end to one of Big Island's most rewarding adventures.

HIKE TO FLOWING LAVA

This one is difficult to describe for the simple reason that we won't know where lava is flowing at the time you read this. It may be flowing right at the end of Chain of Craters Road in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, making this description unnecessary. But maybe not. The lava flows change location all the time, so we'll tell you how to find out where they are and how to get there.

You can call the park at 985-6000 for an eruption update. Unfortunately, they sometimes don't say exactly *where* it's flowing, and they may have false or misleading information on the recording. You can also look at the map posted at the park visitor center.

Our web site at www.wizardpub.com has an updated lava flow map on it and a link to the official USGS lava flow status, usually updated daily. Check it before you leave on your trip to Hawai'i. The flows should be somewhere between the

end of Chain of Craters Road in the park and the end of the lava road in Kalapana. If you hike from the park, you are nearly always permitted to hike to the unsupervised flows. They may *imply* that you can't, but it is almost always permitted.

What if it's flowing *outside* the park? If you look at the map on page 100, you'll see where Hwy 130 ends and a lava road leads toward a lava-destroyed subdivision. This lava road gets you about 2 miles closer to the flows and was cut on top of the old state road out to *near* the park boundary. Until 2001, it was a junky 4WD road and access was disputed. Then the county saw a way to make money: Fix it up for regular cars and charge \$5 per car to drive it. (Two weeks after it opened, lava covered it again, so the \$5 seems very fair given how many times they'll have to repair it.) If lava is flowing on *this* side of the volcano, this is the road to take. If it's not flowing here, the county may not have the road open during your visit. Call the county at (808) 961-8093 for an update on the road and viewing conditions.

The general rule of thumb is that eastern flows on the county side (from Kalapana) are rigorously supervised, and you won't be able to get as close. Western flows near Chain of Craters Road are supervised by the park, and they are pretty good about letting you get close when it's safe. Flows in the park more than a mile from Chain of Craters Road are usually *unsupervised*, and only your own common sense is there to supervise you. (And maybe your smarter spouse.)

At the flows you are presented with several dangers. Lava benches form seaward of the old seacliffs. They can collapse at any time, taking viewers with them, so *don't* go on the benches below. Collapses also can hurl rocks inland. Lava tubes travel under you. Hot water can splash on you. There may be signs where the flows enter the ocean telling you to go no farther. Heed them. There may be surface flows; watch for them.

Lava flows are *least* impressive between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. (because the red lava is competing with the sun.)

Don't hike here in the dark without flashlights. Our preference is to hike out in the late afternoon, so we get to see lava during the daylight and at night.

There are other dangers, as well, such as bad gases that trade winds *normally* blow to the southwest, and we are counting on your own good judgment to keep you out of trouble. We are not attempting to convey all the dangers present on this hike. You'll have to evaluate some on your own. The park has a brochure about viewing lava safely that you may want to pick up. This is a thrilling hike of a lifetime, but not for the faint-hearted, and bad decisions can result in tragedy. Contrary to what you might think, *smaller* lava flows, with less steam at the ocean, are much more dramatic than large ones since they're less likely to be completely engulfed by steam.

There's nothing but your own good judgment to keep you out of trouble—and off the lava bench on the right side—when the lava's flowing in remote places.

