O’ahu is still truly a paradise for hikers. Despite the recent surge in trail use, most of the routes in this book remain relatively uncrowded. They will take you to lush valleys, cascading waterfalls, windswept ridges, and remote seacoasts.

This guide includes fifty-two day hikes on the island of O’ahu. Each hike has a section on highlights, directions to the trailhead, and a detailed description of the route. A narrative section covers points of interest and major hazards along the trail. As applicable, there are short notes about the plants, birds, geology, history, and legends of the area. Each hike also has its own topographic map keyed to the route description.

As you will see, this guidebook is very detailed. The information in it, however, is neither perfect nor up to date because of inadvertent errors and changing conditions. A landowner may revise his access policy. New housing construction may alter the approach to a trailhead. A winter storm may cause a landslide that blocks the route. Do not rely entirely on this book; use your own judgment and common sense as well.

Good luck and good hiking!
Those of you who have used the second edition of my guide will notice some major changes in this updated and expanded edition. I have added ten new hikes: Kaluanui (Mariner’s) Ridge, ‘Ualaka‘a, Ka‘iwa Ridge, ‘Āhuimanu, Mālaekahana Falls, Kahuku Shoreline, ‘Ehukai, Mākua Rim, Puʻu o Hulu, and Kaʻena Point. I have also made major route changes in the Wahiawā Hills and Poamoho hikes.

Unfortunately, I had to delete eight good hikes. Ma‘akua Gulch remains closed because of the 1999 lethal rockfall at nearby Kaliuwa‘a (Sacred) Falls. The landowners/lessees shut off access to Kalena, Dupont, Kawainui, and ‘Ōpae‘ula because of unauthorized use by hikers. Pālehua-Palikea, Puʻu Kaua, and Kānehoa-Hāpapa are currently closed while the Hawai‘i Division of Forestry and Wildlife develops access procedures for them.

For GPS users, I have added UTM coordinates to the route description for the midpoint or endpoint of each hike. The notes section includes expanded historical information from my new book, Native Paths to Volunteer Trails: Hiking and Trail Building on O‘ahu.

HIKING TIPS

CLIMATE

O‘ahu has two seasons: summer (May to October) and winter (November to April). Summer is the warmer and drier season. Daytime temperatures at sea level are in the 80s, and nighttime temperatures are in the 70s. Trade winds from the northeast blow steadily to cool the islands. The trades, however, do produce cloud buildup over the mountains and some rain there.

Winter is the cooler and wetter season. Daytime temperatures at sea level are in the 70s and low 80s, and nighttime temperatures are in the 60s and low 70s. The winds are more variable in strength and direction, sometimes coming from the south or west. Southerly Kona winds produce mainland-type weather—clear skies or heavy cloud cover and rain.

CLOTHING

For short, easy hikes, wear the following:

- hiking boots, running or walking shoes (with tread)
- socks
- tabis (Japanese reef walkers) or other water footwear for gulch hikes
- lightweight pants or shorts, nylon, cotton, or cotton blend (no jeans)
- lightweight shirt, short or long sleeve, polyester, nylon, cotton, or cotton blend
- rain jacket, breathable fabric
- hat, broad brimmed
For long, difficult hikes, add these:

- additional upper layer, polyester or wool
- work gloves

EQUIPMENT

For short, easy hikes, bring the following:

- daypack
- 1 liter water
- food
- sunscreen
- cell phone (fully charged)

For long, difficult hikes, add these:

- extra water
- extra food
- first-aid kit
- space blanket
- flashlight and extra bulb and batteries
- whistle
- compass
- topographic map, hard copy or in-phone/GPS unit

PACK IT OUT

Most of the hikes in this book are trash free. Let’s keep them that way. Pack out all your trash, including cigarette butts, gum wrappers, orange peels, and apple cores.
HEIAU

Heiau are early Hawaiian places of worship with stone or earth platforms. Do not disturb heiau, other ancient sites, or artifacts you may come upon while hiking. In addition, do not build new ahu (rock cairns) as they may confuse other hikers and local archaeologists.

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Many of the trails on O‘ahu are overrun with invasive shrubs and trees, such as Clidemia hirta and fiddlewood. Their seeds are often spread by birds and, yes, hikers. Carefully clean the soles and sides of your boots after every outing.

EMERGENCIES

Don’t have any! Seriously, come prepared with the right clothing and equipment. Bring along this book and follow the hike description closely. Start early, memorize key junctions, and constantly be aware of the route you are traveling. You can never be lost if you know where you came from. Above all, use your common sense and good judgment.

The mountains are a dangerous place for exhausted, disoriented, and/or injured hikers. If you do get into serious trouble, call the emergency number (911) on your cell phone, ask for Fire Rescue, and then settle down and wait. If the call is late in the day, you may have to spend the night out. You did bring your extra layer and space blanket, right?

Never rely entirely on a cell phone for emergencies or a GPS unit for route finding. Both can run out of power or become damaged. Phone reception may be poor or nonexistent in gulches and valleys. GPS results depend on the user and the quality of the unit and its maps.
It is still good practice to tell a relative or friend where you are hiking and when you will be out, especially if you are hiking alone. Make sure they know to call the emergency number and ask for Fire Rescue if you don’t call or show up on time.

HAZARDS

There are hazards in hiking, as in any sport. Described below are the main hazards you should be aware of while hiking on O‘ahu. With the right clothing and equipment and good judgment on your part, you should be able to avoid or minimize these hazards and have an enjoyable outing.

Too Hot

Hiking on O‘ahu is usually a hot, sweaty experience. Drink plenty of water throughout the hike, as it is very easy to become dehydrated. Prolonged lack of water can lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

The need for water on a hike varies from person to person. As a general rule, take one liter of water on the short, easy hikes. Take two or more liters on the long, difficult hikes. If you have to ration or borrow water, you didn’t bring enough.

The sun on O‘ahu is very strong, even in winter. During midday wear a broad-brimmed hat and use lots of sunscreen.

Too Cold

Hiking on O‘ahu can sometimes be a wet, cold experience. A winter Kona storm with high winds and heavy rainfall can make you very cold very quickly. Insufficient or inappropriate clothing leads to chilling, which leads to hypothermia.

Always bring a rain jacket to protect you from wind and rain. Most of the time you won’t even take it out of your pack, but bring it anyway! On the long ridge hikes, take an extra upper layer of polyester or wool that will keep you warm even when wet.
**Leptospirosis**

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease found in freshwater ponds and streams contaminated with the urine of rats, mice, or mongooses. The bacteria can enter the body through the nose, mouth, eyes, or open cuts.

The incubation period is generally one to three weeks. Symptoms resemble those of the flu—fever, chills, sweating, head and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, and vomiting. If you show the symptoms during the incubation period, see your doctor immediately and mention that you have been exposed to stream water. If left untreated, the symptoms may persist for a few days to several weeks. In rare cases, the disease may become more severe and even lead to death.

You can take several precautions to prevent leptospirosis. First, never drink any stream water unless you have adequately boiled, filtered, or chemically treated it. None of the hikes in this book is so long that you cannot bring all the water you need with you. Second, on the stream hikes wear long pants to avoid getting cut and don’t go swimming. That’s harder for some people to do. Only you can decide how much risk you are willing to take.

**High Streams**

O‘ahu streams can rise suddenly during heavy rainstorms. Do not cross a fast-flowing stream if the water is much above your knees. Wait for the stream to go down. It is far better to be stranded for half a day than swept away.

**Narrow Trail**

O‘ahu is known for its knife-edge ridges and sheer cliffs. Trails in those areas tend to be very narrow with steep drop-offs on one or both sides. Oftentimes, the footing is over loose, rotten rock or slick mud.

If narrow sections make you feel overly uneasy, don’t try them. There is no shame in turning back if you don’t like what you see.
Rockfalls

Rockfalls occur sporadically in the O'ahu mountains. Most are small or take place away from the trail or when no one is around. Because of the steep slopes above, the narrow gulch hikes are particularly susceptible to rockfalls. As they occur with little or no warning, there is not much you can do about them. If caught in a rockfall, protect your head with your arms and pack and hope for the best.

Goat/Pig/Bird Hunters

On the hikes in the state forest reserves and parks you may meet goat, pig, or bird hunters. They are usually friendly, as are their dogs. They often use hiking routes to access hunting areas; however, the hunt usually takes place off trail. Stay away from areas where you hear dogs barking or shots being fired.

Hunting dogs are sometimes very aggressive toward other, unfamiliar dogs. Leave your pet dog at home when hiking in areas frequented by hunters.

Marijuana (Paka Lōlō) Growers

The danger from marijuana growers and their booby traps is much exaggerated. The growers do not plant their plots near recognized trails. All of the hikes in this book travel on established routes. Stay on the trail, and you should have no paka lōlō problems.

Hurricanes

Hurricane season on O'ahu is usually from June to December. Before starting a hike during that period, check the weather report to make sure no hurricanes are in the vicinity.

A Final Caution

The hazards just described are the main ones you may encounter, but the list is by no means all inclusive. Like life in general, hiking on O'ahu carries certain risks, and no hike is ever completely safe. You have to decide how much risk you are willing to take.
HIKE CATEGORIES

TYPE

There are four types of hikes on O‘ahu: shoreline, foothill, valley, and ridge. Shoreline hikes follow the coastline. Foothill hikes cut across the topography. They cross a ridge, descend into a valley, and so on. They do this at lower elevations where the topography is relatively gentle. Foothill hikes are usually loop hikes.

Valley hikes follow a valley bottom upstream. Ridge hikes climb a ridge to the summit of a mountain or a mountain range. In both types, the route out is usually the same as the route in.

There are two types of trails on ridge hikes: graded and ungraded. An ungraded trail sticks to the crest of the ridge with all of its ups and downs. A graded trail is built into the side of the ridge just below its top. Although avoiding drastic elevation changes, a graded trail works into and out of every ravine along the flank of the ridge.

LENGTH

Length is the distance covered on the entire hike. If the hike is point to point, the length is one way. If the hike is out and back, the length is round-trip. If the hike is a loop, the length is the complete loop.

Length is measured on the U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps. The plotted distance is then increased by 10 to 20 percent and rounded to the nearest mile. The percentage increase attempts to account for trail meandering too small to be shown on the map.
None of the trails on O‘ahu has been measured precisely. To convert the length to kilometers, multiply the miles by 1.609.

**ELEVATION GAIN**

Elevation gain includes only significant changes in altitude. No attempt is made to account for all the small ups and downs along the route. Measurements are taken from the U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps and then rounded to the nearest 100 feet.

To convert the elevation gain to meters, multiply the feet by 0.305.

**DANGER**

Danger rates the extent of two major hazards: narrow trail for ridge and foothill hikes and flash flooding and rockfall for valley hikes. Those hazards have seriously injured or killed hikers in the past. For ridge and foothill hikes, the rating is based on the length and difficulty of narrow trail sections over steep slopes. For valley hikes, the rating is based on the frequency and severity of rockfall and flash floods.

The categories are low, medium, and high. A rating of low or medium does not imply that the hike is completely safe from those hazards.

**SUITABLE FOR**

Use this index to determine which hikes best match your ability. The categories are novice, intermediate, and expert. Novices are beginning hikers. Experts are experienced hikers. Intermediates are those in between.
Novice hikes generally follow a short, well graded, and marked trail with gradual elevation changes and few hazards. Expert hikes have a long, rough, sometimes obscure route with substantial elevation changes and multiple hazards. Most hikes fall between these two extremes. Some are even suitable for everyone because they start out easy and then get progressively harder the farther you go.

How difficult a hike seems to you depends on your hiking experience and physical fitness. An experienced, conditioned hiker will find the novice hikes easy and the expert hikes difficult. An out-of-shape beginner may well find some of the novice hikes challenging.

Use the index only as a rough guide. Read the route description and notes to get a better feel for the hike.

LOCATION

Location tells the general area of the hike. Given is the nearest town or subdivision. Also mentioned is the state park, state forest reserve, or mountain range where the hike is found.

TOPO MAP

Topo map refers to the U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle that shows the area of the hike. All maps referenced are in the 7.5-minute topographic series with a scale of 1:24,000 and a contour interval of 40 feet.

You can purchase topographic maps online from the Geological Survey at http://www.usgs.gov. Several commercial Web sites offer customized topo maps and map software for O‘ahu. Topo maps are also available locally from Pacific Map Center at 94-529 Uke‘e St., Unit 108, Waipahu; phone 677-6277.
ACCESS

There are two categories of access: Open and Conditional.
You may do Open hikes anytime without restriction.
You may do Conditional hikes subject to the terms required
by the landowner. They usually include obtaining verbal or
written permission. You may have to sign a liability waiver. In
addition, there may be restrictions on the size and composition
of the group and the time when you can do the hike. If you do
not adhere to the landowner’s conditions, you are trespassing.

The outdoor organizations mentioned in the appendix
offer a good means of doing Conditional hikes. The organiza-
tion gets the required permissions, saving you time and trouble.
Check their schedules.

Visit my Web site at http://home.roadrunner.com/~sball/
for updated access information.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Highlights section briefly describes the hike and its major
attractions.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

Trailhead Directions are detailed driving instructions from
downtown Honolulu to the start of the hike. If you are at all
familiar with O‘ahu, those directions should be sufficient to
get you to the trailhead. If you are unfamiliar with the island,
use Google Maps at http://maps.google.com, MapQuest at
http://mapquest.com, or bring along a copy of Bryan’s Sec-
tional Maps, The O‘ahu Mapbook, or James A. Bier’s O‘ahu Ref-
erence Maps to supplement the directions. The printed maps
show the start of some of the hikes and can be purchased at
local drugstores, bookstores, and tourist shops.
For some hikes the directions stop short of the actual trailhead. There are two reasons for suggesting that you do some extra road walking. First, in certain areas it is generally safer to park your car on a main road, rather than at the trailhead. Wherever you park, never leave valuables in your vehicle.

Second, the dirt roads leading to some of the trailheads are narrow, rough, and often muddy. The directions assume you have a two-wheel-drive car and that the road is dry. With a four-wheel-drive vehicle you may be able to get closer to the trailhead. On the other hand, if the road is wet, you may not even be able to drive as far as the directions recommend.

The directions also mention the bus route number and the stop nearest the trailhead. For route and schedule information, check the The Bus Web site at http://www.thebus.org or phone them at 848-5555.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

This section provides a detailed description of the route that the hike follows. Noted are junctions, landmarks, and points of interest. Also mentioned are specific hazards, such as a rough, narrow trail section. Out and back hikes are described on the way in. Loop hikes and point-to-point hikes are described in the preferred direction.

Each hike has its own map. The solid line shows the route. The letters indicate important junctions or landmarks and are keyed to the route description. For example, map point A is always the point where you start the hike. The maps are reproductions of the U.S. Geological Survey quadrangles for the immediate area of the hike. As in the originals, the scale is 1:24,000, and the contour interval is 40 feet.

For GPS users, Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates are provided for the turnaround or midpoint of each hike. They are based on the 1983 North American Datum (NAD83).
This section sometimes uses Hawaiian words to describe the route. They are listed below with their English definition.

- **makai**: seaward; toward the ocean
- **mauka**: inland; toward the mountains
- **pali**: cliff
- **pu‘u**: hill or peak

I have also followed the common local practice of using place names as terms to indicate direction:

- ‘Ewa: westward from Honolulu
- Koko Head: eastward from Honolulu

The word “contour” is sometimes used in the route description as a verb (that is, to contour). It means to hike roughly at the same elevation across a slope. Contouring generally occurs on trails that are cut into the flank of a ridge and work into and out of each side gulch.


**NOTES**

The Notes section provides additional information about the hike to make it safer and more enjoyable. Included are comments about trail conditions, major hazards, and the best time of day or year to take the hike. Also mentioned are scenic views, deep swimming holes, ripe fruit, and hungry mosquitoes. In addition, there are short notes about the plants and birds along the route and the geology, history, and legends of the area. At the end is a brief description of any alternatives to the basic route.
For hikers who enjoy botanizing and birding, I highly recommend two companion guide books: *A Hiker’s Guide to Trailside Plants in Hawai’i* by John B. Hall and *Hawaii’s Birds* by the Hawaii Audubon Society. For more trail history, read my new book, *Native Paths to Volunteer Trails: Hiking and Trail Building on O’ahu*. 
**Koko Crater**
(KOHELEPELEPE)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TYPE:</th>
<th>Ungraded ridge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LENGTH:</td>
<td>2-mile round-trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELEVATION GAIN</td>
<td>1,200 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANGER:</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUITABLE FOR:</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>Koko Head Regional Park near Hawai‘i Kai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPO MAP:</td>
<td>Koko Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS:</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Map of Koko Crater](image)
HIGHLIGHTS

This short, windy hike climbs a steep-sided volcanic cone. Along the way are a narrow rock arch and a chance to spot whales. At the top are the remains of an incline railway and a panoramic view of east O‘ahu.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

At Ward Ave. get on Lunalilo Fwy. (H-1) Koko Head bound (east).

As the freeway ends, continue straight on Kalaniana‘ole Hwy. (Rte. 72).

The highway narrows to two lanes past Koko Marina Shopping Center in Hawai‘i Kai.

Pass the entrance to Hanauma Bay Beach Park on the right.

Turn right at Hālona blowhole lookout and park in the large lot there (elevation 40 feet) (map point A).

BUS: Route 22 to Sandy Beach Park. Walk back 0.4 mile along Kalaniana‘ole Hwy. to the blowhole parking lot.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

From the parking lot, walk back along the right side of the highway toward Hanauma Bay.

As the guardrail ends, bear right and up onto a spur ridge composed of tuff.

Angle up a sloping ledge on the right side of the ridge.

Gain the ridgeline and climb gradually along it. Look for the low-lying native shrub ‘ilima papa with its yellow-orange flowers.

The ridge curves to the right and levels off briefly (map point B).
Ascend very steeply across a natural arch. Use the footholds chiseled into the rock.
Continue steep climbing through scrub koa haole trees.
Reach a junction at the rim of Koko Crater (Kohelepelepe) (map point C). Turn left and up along the rim. Memorize that junction for the return trip.
Climb steeply to the top of a triangular rock formation.
Traverse a narrow, rocky section. Stay on top of the ridge and watch your footing.
Bear right around a large, balanced rock.
Negotiate another narrow stretch.
Jog left and then right through a band of gray rock.
The angle of ascent eases through scrub Christmas berry and koa haole. Be careful of barbed wire on the ground.
Pass two small concrete buildings on the right and some downed utility poles on the left. Watch for the native shrub ‘a‘ali‘i.
Reach Pu‘u Ma‘i, the highest point on the crater rim (elevation 1,208 feet) (map point D) (UTM 04 0636275E, 2354264N). At the top are a partially collapsed metal viewing platform and the remains of an incline railway and a radar site.

NOTES
Koko Crater is the volcanic cone overlooking Hālona (peering place) blowhole and Sandy Beach. The exhilarating climb to its open summit is short and superb, but not for everyone because of several windy, narrow stretches. If the route looks too steep and scary, try the Makapu‘u Point loop just down the road.
Take this hike during winter (November–April) when temperatures are cooler and the sun less intense. Migrating humpback whales are also on view then. Don’t forget the two essentials for this hike—sunscreen and binoculars.
Most of the hike is a steep scramble over crumbly rock and loose dirt. The precipitous crossing of a natural arch is the
most difficult part of the climb. Use the footholds chiseled into the rock. Don’t let the wind catch you off balance in the narrow sections along the rim. Finally, tread gingerly if the rocks are wet and slippery from a sudden squall.

Koko Crater is a horseshoe-shaped double cone built by eruptions from two nearby vents. Much of the spewed ash landed downwind, forming a distinct summit on the southwest side of the crater. Over the years the ash hardened into tuff, the porous, stratified rock that you are walking on. Both Koko Crater and Diamond Head are remnants of the last volcanic activity on O‘ahu, known as the Honolulu Series.

On the spur ridge, look for the low-lying native shrub ‘ilima papa. It has oblong, serrated leaves about 1 inch long. The yellow-orange flowers strung together have been used to make regal lei in both ancient and modern Hawai‘i.

While on the crater rim, scan the ocean for humpback whales and the sky for tropic birds. The whales migrate from the North Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands, arriving in October and leaving in May. They congregate off the leeward coast of Maui and occupy themselves calving, nursing, breeding, and generally horsing around. The red-tailed tropic bird, or koa‘e ‘ula, is white with a black eye patch and two central tail feathers elongated into streamers. Tropic birds feed by diving into the ocean for fish and squid. They nest in burrows or rock crevices on nearby Mānana Island.

Before reaching the top, watch for the native shrub ‘a‘ali‘i. It has shiny, narrow leaves and red seed capsules. Early Hawaiians used the leaves and capsules in making lei. When crushed or boiled, the capsules produced a red dye for decorating kapa (bark cloth).

At the summit is a 360-degree view of east O‘ahu. From the ocean clockwise are Hanauma (curved) Bay, Koko Head (Kuamo‘o Kāne), and the leeward coast to Diamond Head (Lē‘ahi) and Waikiki (spouting water). Completing the panorama are the Ko‘olau (windward) Range ending at Makapu‘u (bulging eye) Point, Mānana (Rabbit) Island, and Sandy Beach. Across
Kaiwi (the bone) Channel is the neighbor island of Molokai. On a clear day, you can also see the islands of Maui and Lānaʻi.

Clustered at the top are several abandoned concrete platforms and buildings, including the upper terminal of an incline railway. The site was a radar complex for long-range detection of aircraft during and after World War II. The railway provided comfortable transportation for soldiers manning the radars. An electric winch and a stout cable pulled a tram up the tracks. The cars featured angled seats that leveled out on the steep gradient below the summit. The railway tracks have recently become a popular and very crowded hiking route to the top.

The old Hawaiian name for Koko Crater is Kohelepelepe, or the inner lips of the vagina. According to a racy legend, the pig demigod Kamapuaʻa hotly pursued the fire goddess Pele on the Big Island. The goddess Kapo, Pele’s sister, detached her kohe (vagina) and flung it to east Oʻahu to divert Kamapuaʻa. The trick apparently worked, as the pig demigod followed the so-called traveling vagina and left Pele alone. The vaginal imprint became the crater known as Kohelepelepe.