



Foundation Document Overview

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Hawai'i



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK is to protect, study, and provide access to Kīlauea and Mauna Loa, two of the world's most active volcanoes, and perpetuate endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and the traditional Hawaiian culture connected to these landscapes.



Significance

Significance statements express why Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park protects and interprets the largest and most continuously active shield volcanoes in the United States and provides the best physical evidence of island building processes that continue to form the 2,000-mile-long Hawaiian archipelago.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park's active volcanoes serve as a living laboratory for scientific investigations that began more than a century ago and continue to advance global understanding of volcanic processes.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park protects, restores, and studies unique and diverse ecosystems and endemic species that are the result of more than 30 million years of evolution on an isolated environment characterized by its active volcanic landscape and wide climate variations.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park encompasses the largest and most ecologically diverse wilderness in the Pacific Islands.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park embraces the Native Hawaiian spiritual significance of this landscape and interprets related cultural traditions.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park encompasses sites, structures, objects, and landscapes that document more than 600 years of human life and activities on an active volcanic landscape.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park provides access to two of the most active volcanoes in the world and an opportunity to understand and appreciate the distinctive geology and natural and cultural adaptations to the land.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Volcanoes and Associated Volcanic Features and Processes**
- **Body of Scientific Knowledge and Investigations**
- **Opportunities for Scientific Research and Monitoring**
- **Biological Diversity**
- **Ecological Integrity**
- **Natural Sounds**
- **Night Sky and Scenic Vistas**
- **Remote and Challenging Experiences**
- **Natural Landscape Character**
- **First-hand Volcanic Experiences**
- **Pelehonuamea**
- **Wahi Kapu (Sacred Places) and Wahi Pana (Celebrated Places)**
- **Opportunity for Traditional Cultural Use**
- **Cultural Resources**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Monitoring the daily pulse of active volcanoes in Hawai‘i leads to new discoveries and advances in the understanding of volcanic eruptions and hazard monitoring.
- The approachable active volcanoes of Mauna Loa and Kilauea allow first-hand discovery and connection with one of the most fundamental forces in our world, in both its creative and destructive roles.
- In Hawai‘i, active volcanism created an isolated home for a few immigrant species and gave rise to a rich yet fragile endemic biota. Due to the accelerating change brought about by human actions and introduced plants and animals, much of that unique heritage is being lost to extinction, challenging all of us to learn from the past and work together to preserve and restore the remaining native plants and animals.
- The park’s designation as a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve attests to the compelling values that the park’s unique geologic resources and island biota hold for people worldwide and its global importance as a benchmark for monitoring environmental change.
- Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park protects a diverse wilderness that stretches from rich coastline to stark alpine summit, providing visitors with opportunities to connect with nature’s challenges, remote solitude, and wild spirit.
- Kilauea Volcano, the home of Pelehonuamea, and Mauna Loa Volcano are sacred to many Native Hawaiians. The park is a place of birth and the physical representation of many spirits and forces; the active volcanism, the features of the terrain, and the plants and animals that live there are all important to the Native Hawaiian sense of identity, unity, and continuance.
- The journeys of the Hawaiian people, and those who followed, portray cultural clashes, adaptations, and assimilations that provide enduring lessons about human resourcefulness, interdependence, and respect on an active volcanic landscape.

Description

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, located on the southern end of the Island of Hawai'i, was established by Congress on August 1, 1916.

Today, the park protects approximately 330,086 acres of public land, including some of the most unique geologic, biologic, and cultural landscapes in the world. Extending from sea level to 13,677 feet, the park encompasses the summits and rift zones of two of the world's most active shield volcanoes— Kīlauea, representing the newest land in the Hawaiian Archipelago, and Mauna Loa, the largest volcano in the world.

The park's volcanic topography, which spans seven ecological zones, supports one of the most biologically diverse landscapes in the world. Located more than 2,000 miles from the nearest continent, Hawaiian plants and animals have evolved in almost complete isolation for the past 30 million years. As a result, more than 90% of the native terrestrial flora and fauna in Hawai'i are endemic, and close to 70 species within the park are either listed or proposed for listing as federally threatened or endangered.

Considering this diversity of life and its distinction on the planet, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is a laboratory for studying biogeography and evolution in the Pacific Islands.

The park also plays a role in the human history of the Hawaiian Islands and remains an important home to living cultures. Over five centuries before the establishment of the park, Native Hawaiians helped shape its landscapes as they lived, worked, and worshipped on this sacred ground. Later, adventurers, explorers, scientists, and philanthropists left their mark on the landscape. Today, ancient petroglyphs, stone walls, and footpaths remain between massive lava flows, and historic districts, structures, and roads dot the developed corridors of the park.

The park protects 123,100 acres of wilderness set aside in 1978. In 2012, an additional 121,015 acres were determined eligible for wilderness in Kahuku. In 1980, Hawai'i Volcanoes and Haleakalā National Parks were jointly designated as "Hawaiian Islands International Biosphere Reserve" by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Seven years later, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park was also declared a World Heritage Site.

