



# 'ĀINAPŌ TRAIL & ROAD and CABIN AT HALAWAI

Nā Ala Hele Trails and Access Program · Division of Forestry and Wildlife

## DAY USE

Day use of 'Āinapō Trail and Road does not require a permit; however, hikers and campers are required to contact Kapāpala Ranch at 928-8403 to obtain the combination for the locked gate. This combination is changed daily. **Please contact the Ranch with your permit information during the hours of 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm the night before entry.** On the day of entry, call again between 4:30 am – 7:00 am for the day's lock combination. It is *your responsibility* to contact Kapāpala Ranch to make arrangements for entering through the gate.

## 'ĀINAPŌ/MAUNA LOA TRAIL COMBINATION

Hikers who intend to travel through the **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park** must register and obtain a permit from the Kilauea Visitor Center's Backcountry Office, (7:45 am - 4:45 pm daily). Permits are issued on a first-come basis no earlier than the day before your hike. Call (808) 985-6000 for information.

### MINIMUM IMPACT CAMPING

All hikers are required to pack out everything they pack in. Do not bury or burn your trash. Please pack it out.

## TRAILHEAD

The 'Āinapō Trail begins at the 5,650' elevation, within the Kapāla Forest Reserve. The Trailhead is accessible via an 8-mile, 4-wheel drive road (5.7 miles of which pass through Kapāpala Ranch) originating at the cattle guard between the 40 and 41 mile markers on Hwy 11. *Departing from the legal public access corridor prior to entering Kapāpala Forest Reserve constitutes trespassing.*

**Motor vehicles and mountain bikes are not allowed above the Trailhead.** Horses and mules are not allowed on 'Āinapō trail above the stonewall.

### TRAIL HAZARDS

Be alert for holes from tree molds and lava tube skylights adjacent to the trail. Hikers should be aware that Kapāpala Forest Reserve is open year-round for game mammal hunting—**bright colored clothing is recommended.**

## OVERNIGHT CAMPING

**Camping is prohibited** except at the 'Āinapō Cabin at Halewai and the primitive emergency campsite at the 11,400-ft. elevation.

All overnight 'Āinapō Trail and Cabin users must register and purchase a camping permit. Permits for 'Āinapō Cabin at Halewai rentals may be obtained by visiting the Department of Land and Natural Resources camping permits website ([camping.ehawaii.gov](http://camping.ehawaii.gov)), or in person at your nearest Division of Forestry and Wildlife office. Cabins can be booked no earlier than the one month in advance.

## HALEWAI CABIN

The 'Āinapō Cabin at Halewai is located at the 7,750' elevation. It is furnished with six bunks with mattresses, six stools and a table. There are no heating facilities—*bring warm clothes!* A 400-gallon water catchment tank provides water. The water is suitable for washing and other uses, but it is not recommended for drinking unless it has been treated. A composting toilet is provided—please follow the posted instructions prior to use. Do not cut living trees. **Open fires cause forest fires and are prohibited.** No dogs allowed.

## TRAIL CONDITIONS

The trail ascends 2,100' in 2.7 miles from the trailhead to 'Āinapō Cabin at Halewai, passing through mixed mesic koa (*Acacia koa*)/'ōhi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) and subalpine shrub/'ōhi'a forest. The level of difficulty on this section is considered moderate to challenging. Hiking time in this section is approximately 2.5 hours.

Above Halewai, the trail ascends through alpine stone desert for another 5,500 feet in 7.5 miles to the Mauna Loa Summit Cabin on the rim of Moku'āweoweo within Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. This section of the trail is considered challenging. It should not be attempted by novice hikers or those unfamiliar with the extreme environmental conditions which may be encountered. Hiking time is approximately 8 to 12 hours.

## WEATHER HAZARDS

‘Āinapō (translated literally means “darkened land”) hints to the often foggy conditions. Be prepared for rain, mud and fog below the Cabin at Halewai. Above Halewai, be prepared for severe weather conditions any time of year, including blizzards, whiteouts, snow, hale, high winds, and driving rain. Temperatures commonly drop below freezing at night. In this area, weather changes are abrupt. The *ahu* (stone cairn) trail markers can be obscured by fog and lead to hiker disorientation. At the elevation, sunlight is extremely intense, especially with snow cover. Sunglasses and sunscreen are recommended.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

All plants, non-game animals, rocks and other natural and archaeological or cultural features are protected by law against removal, injury, or destruction.

## CULTURAL HISTORY

The ‘Āinapō Trail from Kapāpala to Moku‘āweoweo, the summit caldera, was pioneered by prehistoric Hawaiians. Probably most early ascents were made to honor Pele, the volcano deity, since no adz stone quarry is known to exist on or near the summit of Mauna Loa.

Archibald Menzies, the surgeon of the Vancouver Expedition, is the first European known to have ascended to Moku‘āweoweo. For this reason, the trail is sometimes referred to as the Menzies Trail. With the permission and assistance

## HUNTING

**Game mammal hunting within Kapāpala Ranch or the National Park is prohibited.** No dogs are allowed at ‘Āinapō Cabin at Halewai. Kapāpala Forest Reserve is a Unit B hunting area, however. Contact the Division of Forestry and Wildlife for applicable regulations.

of King Kamehameha, he made the ascent in February of 1794.

Until 1915, when the Mauna Loa Trail within the National Park was built, ‘Āinapō Trail was the preferred route to the summit. From 1870, horses and mules were used along this route. In 1913, Kapāpala Ranch workers modified the trail (and probably realigned portions) to create a bridle path. The blazes you can observe on some of the older koa trees probably stem from this time.

In 1914, volcanologist Thomas A. Jagger, traveled the ‘Āinapō Trail to observe an eruption at the summit.

His experiences on the route prompted him to lobby for construction of the Mauna Loa Trail.

Since then, the ‘Āinapō Trail gradually fell into disuse with portions of it becoming "lost" until Division of Forestry and Wildlife crews re-established the route under the auspices of the Nā Ala Hele Trails and Access Program in 1993.

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