

tours. (See the photo on page 128 to see if it's worth it to you.)

Whether you want to pay for the falls or not, while you're on the highway, *be sure* to backtrack $\frac{2}{10}$ mile from the highway bridge turnout, then take the road on the mauka side across from the 16 mile marker and turn right at the T. This 4-mile-long, one-lane country road passes through sugar land before it takes you to a small tree tunnel and several striking gulches. This is the Hawai'i of yesteryear, when life moved a bit slower. You might want to do the same. Stop at one of the old bridges and enjoy the peace. Vine-covered trees and ever-

chirping birds give this area an unforgettable feel.

Early into this road is the **World Botanical Gardens** (963-5427). Started in 1995, it's still a bit stark for a garden, though it's starting to fill out. They used to control access to the Umauma Falls lookout, which was their most compelling asset. Now that they don't have the waterfall, it's hard to get excited about this garden.

Just past the botanical gardens, across from a sign that says THE UMAUMA EXPERIENCE, is a bridge. If you park across from that sign there is a super-short, steep, treacherous (especially when muddy) trail

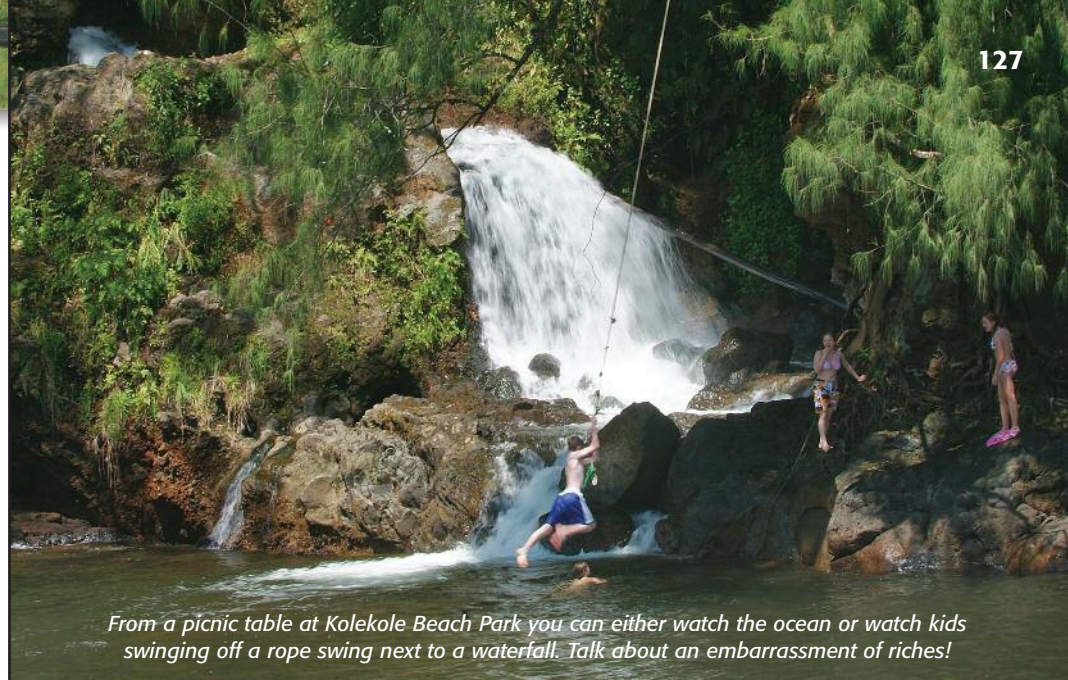
that leads down to a pretty waterfall and perch from with to observe it. From looking at county TMK maps it *appears* that the land here is part of a roadway easement, meaning you're allowed to be there, but it's hard to say for certain.

Still on this 4-mile back road, one of the small Depression-era bridges crosses **Nanue Stream** (it's stamped into the bridge).

The nearside of the bridge has a crude and *steep* trail that leads down to the stream. From there a person could walk over to the top of the falls (don't fall off), or go upstream where another waterfall awaits. (The upstream falls, though only 900 feet away, require *very* awkward stream hiking. See ADVENTURES on page 237.) If you don't have mosquito repellent, be prepared for the bloodletting of a lifetime.

Bypass any opportunities

What a drop! 'Akaka Falls tumbles 420 feet.



From a picnic table at Kolekole Beach Park you can either watch the ocean or watch kids swinging off a rope swing next to a waterfall. Talk about an embarrassment of riches!

to reconnect with the highway until you pass rarely used **Waikaumalo Park** near a pretty stream.

When you reacquire the highway just north of the 19 mile marker, you may want to backtrack less than a mile to see the densely jungled gulch and waterfall visible from the highway that you missed before continuing north.

As you effortlessly cruise these gulches on our modern bridges of today, try to visualize what a nightmare it must have been to cross them in days gone by. It took many days to get from Hilo to Waipi'o Valley. When author Isabella Bird toured this area by horse in 1873, she wrote of the utter dread she felt as she plunged down and then trudged up gulch after harrowing gulch on her way to Waipi'o, fording raging streams on a snorting, terrified horse. Today, the hardest thing about traversing these gulches is resetting the cruise control after a sharp bend.

Just past the 25 mile marker is the road leading mauka to the town of **Lau-pahoehoe**. (The short road on the ocean side sports a nice view of the point men-

tioned below.) The town itself doesn't offer much other than a '50s-style restaurant (see ISLAND DINING), plus a store down a road on the *ocean* side of the Hwy $\frac{3}{10}$ past the 24 mile marker. It's just a store, and they usually only have one hot meal to eat, so just ask what's for lunch today. (Their curry stew's not bad.)

Also on the highway is the **Lau-pahoehoe Train Museum** (962-6300). This assortment of artifacts and photos of Hamakua's history with trains is somewhat interesting. They have over a dozen volunteers. Some are extremely knowledgeable...and some aren't. It's \$4.

Just past the 27 mile marker is a road on the ocean side that leads 1 mile down the cliffs to **Lau-pahoehoe Point**. To many on the Big Island, Lau-pahoehoe is associated with tragedy. During the April Fool's Day tsunami of 1946, twenty-one schoolchildren and three adults were swept to their deaths. Following this, the village was moved topside. The views from the road down to the rugged point sport dramatic views of the sea cliffs beyond and is well worth the

