



Isolated and unknown, Makalawena is one of the finest beaches on the island. Access requires a 15–20 minute walk or a 4WD.

less common during the week. From Hwy 19 take the paved access road between the 88 and 89 mile markers. Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., **closed Wednesdays**. Note that the waves here have a lot of power, so if the surf's up, don't go in. No shade *at the beach*, but restrooms and shaded picnic tables are available behind it. One caveat: Behind the northern end of the beach are a couple of palm trees adjacent to a freshwater spring. The water looks like a nice place to splash the saltwater off. *Don't!* What looks like inviting sand on the bottom is actually quicksand created from the rotting palm fronds of countless generations of palm trees. If you jump in, you will find yourself up to your chest in the most putrid, disgusting rot you ever saw or smelled and will require help getting out while you recoil from the stench and pull snails off you. If this warning sounds particularly de-

tailed...let's just say we're still picking scum out of our gear.

❖ Makalawena



To many, this is the choicest beach on the island...if you don't mind walking to it. In fact, Makalawena is as idyllic a beach as you will find anywhere in the islands. Gobs of superfine, clean white sand, plentiful shade and no crowds. The setting is utterly beautiful. Consisting of a number of coves and rocky points united by a long, curving stretch of beach, the best swimming is in the largest inlet backed by high sand dunes. **Boogie boarding** can be great here. There's a freshwater pond (see map on previous page) where we like to rinse off the saltwater before walking back. A herd of wild goats visits this area often, so keep an eye out for them.

Backed by private (Bishop Estate) land, you get there over the trail from the red houses behind Mahai'ula Beach (about a 20-minute walk). It's a lava trail

through an 'a'a field, and the footing is a little annoying. As you walk this trail, try to imagine how ridiculously difficult it would be to walk through the field itself without the trail. Then imagine doing it *barefoot*, as the ancient Hawaiians did. As you approach Makalawena from the Kekaha Kai side, the 'a'a trail suddenly gives way to sand dunes. But if you climb the dunes, rather than finding ocean, you find more 'a'a, indicating that this had been shoreline until a lava flow of 'a'a came along and added more real estate, cutting off the dunes from the sea.

If you have a 4WD (and your fillings are tight), you can take the nasty road from the highway between the 88 and 89 mile marker. It'll take you just north of the beach before a gate forces you to walk like the rest of us dogs. By the way, because it's so isolated, people sometimes travel light to this beach, omitting such extraneous things as their bathing suits. (Yeah, *that* must be the reason.)

❖ Kekaha Kai State Park; Also Mahai'ula/Ka'elehuluhulu



This beach is outside of Kona town and pretty. It's usually fairly uncrowded. **Mahai'ula Beach** (which you access after a 5-minute walk to the north from the first parking area) offers good swimming and interesting strolling. Just around the southern corner is a pocket of sand called **Ka'elehuluhulu Beach** (park at the second parking area at end of the lava road), not as good as the northern beach. The entire area was once owned by a prominent part-Hawaiian family called the Magoons. They sold the land to a Japanese investor who had visions of a resort. When the state refused permission, the investor sold it to the state which turned it into a park. The abandoned Magoon house is still located at the northern end of Mahai'ula Beach. This area abounds with freshwater springs that bubble to the surface, occasionally forming ponds. At the farthest northern part of



Kekaha Kai—Kona Coast—Mahai'ula Beach... whichever name you use, this beach works.