

tect the ankles. The footing on the Hoapili Trail is made of mostly fist-sized chunks of lava and is obnoxious.

An ancient phrase associated with this area is “the cloudless rain of Honuaua.” Many a time we’ve hiked in this area and felt rain, though no cloud was even remotely nearby (due to the strong winds along the flank and the rain clouds up the mountain).

Just over 2 miles into the lava field trail you’ll see lots of vegetation at the shoreline (700 feet away). A spur trail leading there starts at a small lava rock wall just to the right of the main trail. The main part of the spur trail leads to Keawanaku Beach. (Other vague trails leading off the spur trail are avoidable.) This area has several structures, including the remains of a Hawaiian heiau (religious site).

Normal trade winds build up along the southern flank of Haleakala and often howl along this part of the island. The beach itself is normally protected from these trade winds. We’ve hiked to this beach during unusually strong trade winds, when gusts exceeded 50 mph and the ocean was an ugly mess of whitecaps, only to find the bay at Keawanaku calm, windless and protected. (During less common Kona winds from the south, it would be a different story.) The snorkeling off to the left (east) of the bay is exceptional along the 10–20 foot lava wall, covered with coral and loaded with fish. The bay is usually (but not always) protected from much of the surf, and the water can be beautiful and clear. The natural protective wall extends farther than it looks from the shore, bending around to the left and extending farther. The right side has several caves that you can explore if there’s no surge or surf. (Surge would bounce you around in there.)

This beach is a jewel set amid the unforgiving lava, mostly black sand with white and a touch of green sand. (The latter comes from a semiprecious gem called olivine.) There are some beach boulders near the shoreline, but a generous repository of sand offshore *usually* keeps the shoreline relatively sandy, except after severe storms, which can temporarily move the sand offshore, usually during the summer. The area (and a nearby point) was called Keawanaku, and some old-time Hawaiians used the name for the beach, but it is not listed in any of the old literature as having that name. (Perhaps because the flow is relatively recent and the beach so new, the Hawaiians never named it.) Nonetheless, we have deferred to the old-timers and called it Keawanaku Beach. Sit on the beach under a kiawe tree and watch the waves striking the columnar lava. Piles of rocks attest to those hardy souls who have tried camping out here. (If only they’d known *before* that at night, the beach becomes *alive* with cockroaches.)

It was 3 miles getting to Keawanaku but only 2 going back since you’ll stay on the Kings Highway all the way.

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

Have you ever visited a large aquarium and wished you could observe the fish and sharks from the *other* side of the glass? Here’s your chance and the experience is ridiculously cool.

Three times a week the **Maui Ocean Center** in Ma’alaea allows two pairs of divers to spend around 40 minutes swimming with sharks, stingrays, puffer fish and all the other species in their three-quarter million gallon exhibit. And while the draw might be the 20 or so sharks in the tank, it’s surprising that

after a short amount of time many people start to forget that they’re supposed to be afraid of sharks and find themselves oddly at home. Actually, we found it one of the most relaxing dives we’ve ever done, and during our dive the spotted eagle ray was the star. She loved to be touched and fed clams in their shells. We never realized how incredibly *loud* rays are when they crunch clam shells. In fact, you might not realize just how noisy the open ocean is until you’ve dived in this quiet tank. And with no current, surge or long swimming, you may be amazed at how little air you draw from your 50-cubic foot tank.

There’s nothing about this dive we didn’t like—except the price. It’s almost **\$200** per person and *doesn’t* in-

clude SCUBA gear, which you’ll have to rent elsewhere. (They say the price is steep because their insurance rates are so high.)

Don’t think of this as a death-defying shark encounter. The sharks don’t seem very interested in feeding on divers. Think of this as the best chance you’ll ever have to spend quality bonding time with sea creatures. In the open ocean these animals avoid you. But in this tank, you’re one of the gang. The adventure here is to discover just how wondrous these animals really are when you’re given the chance to observe them close up for so long.

You need to be a certified SCUBA diver and since they take so few people, call the **Maui Ocean Center** (270-7075) well in advance.

It’s hard to believe that swimming with sharks can be so relaxing. But on this dive, it is.

