THE ULTIMATE ROAD TO HANA GUIDE

Free Preview -- Sample Chapters from the 2026 Edition

A free look inside our complete Road to Hana guide: current conditions, the route at a glance, the big how-far-should-you-drive decision, start times and the daylight planning guideline, the first section of our stop-by-stop planner, Waianapanapa reservations, our Book This First list, and our most popular one-day itinerary -- exactly as they appear in the full 50-page guide.

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About this free preview

You are reading eleven sections from The Ultimate Road to Hana Guide 2026, reproduced exactly as they appear in the full guide. Some sections mention chapters that are only in the full guide. Planning details were checked as of November 21, 2026; road conditions, reservations and prices change, so use the official links in each section for final verification. Some links are affiliate links; if you book through them, we may earn a commission at no additional cost to you.

Welcome to the Road to Hana

How to use this guide

The Road to Hana is one of the most famous drives in the United States, and one of the easiest to plan badly. On a map it looks like a pleasant coastal drive. In reality it is a narrow, winding highway with hundreds of curves, dozens of one-lane bridges, limited legal parking, no gas between the Paia area and Hana, and a long drive back the way you came. You cannot stop everywhere, and trying to is the single most common way this day goes wrong.

This guide is built to be your actual trip plan. It tells you how far to drive, when to leave, which stops are worth your limited time, which to skip, where you can legally park, how to build the day around your Waianapanapa reservation, whether to stay overnight in Hana, how to handle Kipahulu and the Pipiwai Trail, and what to do when you are running late or the weather turns.

LAST VERIFIED: November 21, 2026

Road status, reservation rules, fees, hours and trail status in this guide were checked against official Maui County, Hawaii Department of Transportation, Hawaii State Parks (DLNR) and National Park Service sources on this date. Conditions on the Road to Hana change quickly with weather and roadwork. Check the official links in the next chapter the night before and the morning of your drive.

Partner disclosure

Some links in this guide are affiliate links, including Shaka Guide, Expedia, Booking.com and our Viator shop. If you book through them, Adventure Family Vlog may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. That never changes what we recommend. Official reservations -- Waianapanapa State Park, Haleakala National Park, campgrounds and any government permit -- always go through the official booking sites listed in this guide, never through a third party.

How this guide is organized

Start with the big decision: how far you will drive. Then use the stop-by-stop planner, which labels every stop MUST DO, WORTH IT, OPTIONAL, SKIP IF SHORT ON TIME or DO NOT STOP. The middle of the guide covers Waianapanapa, Hana, Kipahulu, safety, food, gas and bathrooms, kids, tours and the back side of Hana. The back of the guide has eight itineraries, a running-late guide, a turnaround matrix, a printable day checklist and a one-page stop comparison table.

A note on names and mile markers

Hawaiian place names are written here without the okina and kahako marks so they display correctly on every device (Waianapanapa for Wai'anapanapa, Kipahulu, Pipiwai, 'Ohe'o and so on). Mile markers are approximate. Route 360 (the classic Road to Hana) starts again at mile 0 near Haiku and reaches Hana town around mile 34; past Hana the road becomes Route 31 and the markers count down. Different maps place stops a few tenths of a mile apart, so use mile markers as a guide, not a guarantee.

Current Road to Hana Conditions

Check before you drive

Conditions on this road can change in a single afternoon. Heavy rain in East Maui can close the highway for flooding, landslides or fallen trees, and officials sometimes restrict the road to local traffic only during severe weather. Treat this chapter as a snapshot, then check the live sources below.

CURRENT CONDITIONS -- as of November 21, 2026

East Maui roads: No emergency East Maui road closure was posted at the time of this update. Conditions can change quickly after heavy rain; check Maui County and NWS again the morning you drive. Hawaii DOT lists routine weekday roadside work on Route 360 in late November (roving shoulder work between roughly mile 3 and mile 30, early morning to 11 a.m.) and a holiday lane-closure restriction Nov. 26-29. Expect short delays, not closures.

Waianapanapa State Park: Open by reservation. Eastern parking and campervan camping are closed for facility improvements; the campervan lot is in use for day use and tent camping, tour-bus parking has moved along the access road, and beach access is through the western park entrance.

Kipahulu (Haleakala National Park): Pipiwai Trail and Kuloa Point Trail are listed as open. The Pools of 'Ohe'o are not accessible for swimming; view them from Kuloa Point Trail.

Beyond Kipahulu / Kalepa Point: Repair work has affected this section of Piilani Highway, and the construction schedule may have changed since the last County notice. Check Maui County road and project updates immediately before driving beyond Kipahulu.

Recent storm history

Late-October 2026 flooding and rockfalls temporarily closed sections of Hana Highway and Piilani Highway. It is a good reminder that this road can change overnight -- always check the live sources below.

Where to check, the night before and the morning of

Scan these codes or tap the links. Maui County posts road-closure notifications; Hawaii DOT lists scheduled lane closures on state highways; the National Weather Service in Honolulu posts flood watches and warnings; the National Park Service posts Kipahulu alerts; and Waianapanapa reservations are only sold on the official state site.

Maui County road notices	Hawaii DOT Maui lane closures	NWS Honolulu forecast and warnings	Haleakala current conditions	Waianapanapa reservations

SAFETY WARNING

If a flood watch, flash-flood warning or official closure is in effect for East Maui, change your plan. Do not drive past closure signs, and do not continue just because you already paid for a reservation. Waianapanapa states that qualifying reservations are refunded when the state closes the park for a storm, and no itinerary is worth a flooded road.

Road to Hana at a Glance

The planning panel

If you only read one page before Road to Hana day, read this one. Every "best" below has a reason; the full explanations are in the chapters that follow.

Best for	Travelers who enjoy scenery as much as destinations, can handle a long day in the car, and are willing to choose a handful of stops rather than all of them.
Minimum time	One full day, turning around near Waianapanapa and Hana town (Option 1).
Recommended time	One night in Hana, which turns two rushed drives into two relaxed half-days and makes Kipahulu easy.
Best start time	Leave Paia by about 7:00 a.m. for a Hana-town day; by 6:30 a.m. or earlier if you insist on adding Kipahulu as a day trip.
Best starting base	Paia or the North Shore (Haiku) puts you at the start of the route. From South or West Maui, add roughly 45 minutes to 1.5 hours each way.
Best direction	The classic way: Paia to Hana and back the same way. It is the route rental agreements, tour apps and most travelers use.
Approximate driving distance	About 52 miles from Kahului to Hana town; about 64 miles to Kipahulu.
Drive time with no stops	About 2.5 hours Kahului to Hana; add 30 to 45 minutes to Kipahulu (12 miles past Hana).
Realistic sightseeing day	10 to 11 hours from South Maui for a Hana-town day with 5 or 6 stops; 12 to 14 hours if you add Kipahulu as a day trip.
Best major waterfall stop	Waimoku Falls at the end of the Pipiwai Trail: a 400-foot fall reached on a managed national park trail with a real parking lot.
Best coastal stop	The Keanae Peninsula: lava-rock coastline and crashing surf a few minutes off the highway, with legal parking and no hike.
Best black-sand beach	Pa'iloa Beach at Waianapanapa State Park (reservation required).
Best hike	Pipiwai Trail (4 miles round trip, about 800 feet of elevation change) in Kipahulu.
Best family stop	Waianapanapa: short paths, a black-sand beach to look at, sea arches and managed parking with a set time window.
Best food stop	Aunty Sandy's banana bread at Keanae Landing, early (it typically closes mid-afternoon); Hana Farms near mile 31 for a sit-down lunch.

Best photography stop	Waianapanapa's black sand and sea arch, then the Keanae Peninsula coastline.
Best bathroom strategy	Paia before you start, then designated stops: Garden of Eden (with admission), Kaumahina or Pua'a Ka'a state waysides, Waianapanapa, Hana Bay, Kipahulu.
Most important reservation	Waianapanapa State Park entry and parking (non-residents). No reservation, no entry.
Best overnight strategy	One night in Hana: Waianapanapa on day one, Kipahulu early on day two before the crowds arrive from the west.
Biggest planning mistake	Trying to fit Twin Falls, the Garden of Eden, five roadside waterfalls, Waianapanapa, Hana and the Pipiwai Trail into one day trip.
Biggest safety concern	Flash floods: streams and waterfalls can rise fast from rain upstream, even when it looks fine where you are standing.
Most commonly overrated stop	Roadside waterfalls you can only reach by parking on a bridge or a blind corner. The photo is not worth the risk or the ticket.
Best stop if short on time	Waianapanapa State Park, if you hold a reservation. Otherwise, the Keanae Peninsula.

The Big Decision: How Far Should You Drive?

Pick your turnaround point before you leave

This is where most Road to Hana itineraries go wrong. People pick stops first and discover the distance later. Decide your turnaround point first, then choose stops that fit. There are four realistic versions of this trip.

Option 1 -- Road to Hana Highlights (turn around near Hana)

Drive from Paia to Waianapanapa and Hana town, then return the way you came. Pick four to six stops on the way out and one or two on the way back. **Best for:** families with young children, slower travelers, first-timers who do not need the Pipiwai Trail, and anyone who wants to finish the narrowest sections in daylight. **Realistic day:** about 10 to 11 hours from South Maui, 11 to 12 from West Maui.

Option 2 -- Hana + Kipahulu as a day trip

Continue 12 miles past Hana to the Kipahulu District of Haleakala National Park for the Pipiwai Trail, Waimoku Falls and the 'Ohe'o overlooks. **Best for:** experienced, early-rising travelers who make the Pipiwai Trail their main goal. **The honest version:** this is a 12- to 14-hour day from South Maui. The Pipiwai Trail alone takes most hikers 2.5 to 3.5 hours, and you still have about 3 hours of driving back. To make it work, you skip most of the early stops. If Pipiwai is a priority, build the entire day around reaching Kipahulu.

Option 3 -- One night in Hana

Drive out on day one with relaxed stops and your Waianapanapa reservation. Sleep in Hana. On day two, reach Kipahulu early, see Hamoa and Wailua Falls, and drive back with time for the stops you skipped. **Why this often wins:** you cut the driving per day roughly in half, you see Kipahulu before the day-trippers arrive, and you never race the sunset. The trade-off is cost and limited lodging, so book early.

Option 4 -- Two nights in Hana / East Maui

Add a full day in East Maui: sunrise at Hana Bay or Koki, an unhurried Pipiwai hike, beach time at Hamoa, a long lunch, and evenings in a quiet town. **Best for:** travelers who want the slow pace East Maui is known for, photographers chasing morning and evening light, and anyone who dislikes long driving days.

Factor	Option 1: Highlights	Option 2: + Kipahulu	Option 3: 1 night	Option 4: 2 nights
Turnaround	Hana town	Kipahulu	Kipahulu (day 2)	Kipahulu, at leisure
Day length	10-11 hrs	12-14 hrs	6-8 hrs each day	Relaxed
Stops possible	4-6 out, 1-2 back	2-3 total before Hana	Most worthwhile stops	All you want
Waianapanapa	Midday slot	Early or skip	Any slot day 1	Any slot
Pipiwai Trail	No	Yes, rushed	Yes, early	Yes, unhurried
Driving after dark	Avoidable	Likely in winter	Avoidable	Avoidable
Best for	Families, first-timers	Strong hikers	Most visitors	Slow travelers

What Time Should You Start?

Your start time decides your whole day

Every hour you start later costs you more than an hour at the end, because traffic thickens, parking fills and the daylight runs out on the return. Here is what each start time realistically buys you.

5:30-6:30 a.m. from your hotel

The best option for Kipahulu day trips and for anyone staying in West Maui. You reach the early stops before the tour vans, find parking easily, and keep a real daylight buffer for the drive home. In winter, the first part of the drive from South or West Maui happens in the dark on main highways, which is fine; you reach the narrow section around sunrise. Pack breakfast to eat in the car or grab it in Paia.

7:00 a.m. from Paia (about 6:00-6:15 from South Maui)

The sweet spot for an Option 1 Hana-town day. You can comfortably fit four to six stops, a midday Waianapanapa slot and lunch, and still start back with daylight to spare most of the year.

8:00 a.m. or later

You are now in the main wave of traffic. Expect full lots at Twin Falls and the waysides, slow-moving lines behind tour vans, and a compressed day. Starting this late forces trade-offs: choose Waianapanapa or several early stops, not both; skip Kipahulu unless you are staying overnight; and plan to drive part of the return after dark in winter.

TURN AROUND HERE -- planning guideline

Allow roughly 2.5 to 3 hours from Hana back toward Paia when building a daylight buffer. Traffic, rain, bridge delays and stops can make the return longer. This is a conservative planning guideline, not an official road-safety rule, and never a reason to speed. In late November and December it suggests leaving Hana around 2:45 to 3:00 p.m.; in June and July, around 4:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Driving After Dark and Sunset Times

Why daylight matters on this road

The Road to Hana is not inherently unsafe, and residents drive it at night all the time. For visitors, though, the narrowest sections after dark combine several things at once: unfamiliar curves, one-lane bridges you cannot see across until you are on them, few streetlights, pedestrians and wildlife near the road edge, and rain that often arrives in the evening. Most visitors are happier finishing the curvy section before dark.

Months	Approximate Hana sunset	Planning guideline: leave Hana around
December-January	about 5:40-6:00 p.m.	about 2:45-3:15 p.m.
February-March	about 6:05-6:35 p.m.	about 3:15-3:45 p.m.
April-May	about 6:40-7:00 p.m.	about 3:45-4:15 p.m.
June-July	about 7:00-7:10 p.m.	about 4:00-4:30 p.m.
August-September	about 6:15-7:00 p.m.	about 3:30-4:15 p.m.
October-November	about 5:40-6:15 p.m.	about 2:45-3:30 p.m.

Sunset times are approximate (Hana's earliest sunset of the year is in late November, around 5:40 p.m.; its latest is around 7:10 p.m. in late June and early July). Check the exact time for your date with any weather app. Hawaii does not observe daylight saving time.

The Stop-by-Stop Planner

Priority labels and what they mean

This is the heart of the guide. We evaluated every stop that commonly appears in Road to Hana itineraries and gave each one a label. The label reflects value for your limited time, legal and safe access, parking, and how well the stop works for families -- not how many times it appears on social media.

Label	What it means
MUST DO	Plan your day around it. Few travelers regret it.
WORTH IT	A strong stop if it fits your timing and interests.
OPTIONAL	Good, but easy to skip without missing the essence of the drive.
SKIP IF SHORT ON TIME	First to cut when you are behind schedule.
DO NOT STOP	Unsafe or illegal parking, trespass risk, or hazardous water. Enjoy it from the car or not at all.

Each stop card lists approximate location, what it is, why to stop, how long to plan, parking, fees and reservations, facilities, swimming, family and accessibility notes, the best time of day, weather sensitivity, the biggest caution, and what to do if you are running late. Card colors match the labels: rust for MUST DO, green for WORTH IT, blue for OPTIONAL, gray-brown for SKIP IF SHORT ON TIME and dark for DO NOT STOP.

Paia to Keanae

The first half of the drive

The first stretch is about setting up the day: fuel, food and a restroom in Paia, then a choice of one or two early stops before the road narrows. Most travelers lose time here, at stops they could easily have skipped.

Route 36, ~MM 7 | PAIA TOWN -- MUST DO	
What it is	A small North Shore town with cafes, shops and gas stations -- the practical start of the Road to Hana.
Why stop	Last easy place for gas, groceries, breakfast and a real restroom. There is no gas between the Paia/Haiku area and Hana.
Time	15-30 minutes.
Parking	MODERATE. Paid lots and limited street parking; busier after 9 a.m.
Fee / reservation	None (paid parking in some lots).
Bathrooms / food / water	Yes, at businesses. Buy lunch and snacks here if you do not want to depend on roadside stands.
Swimming	Not applicable.
Kids / access	Easy. Sidewalks in town.
Best time / weather	Early morning. *Weather sensitivity:* Low sensitivity.
Biggest caution	Do not leave Paia with less than a full tank.
If running late	Grab food to go and keep moving.

Route 36, ~MM 9 | HO'OKIPA LOOKOUT -- WORTH IT	
What it is	A clifftop lookout above Ho'okipa Beach, famous for windsurfing and big winter surf.
Why stop	A quick ocean view right at the start, and sea turtles often haul out on the beach below later in the day.
Time	10-15 minutes.
Parking	EASY to MODERATE. Lookout lot.
Fee / reservation	None.
Bathrooms / food / water	Beach park facilities below; no food.
Swimming	Ho'okipa is a lifeguarded beach, but its surf is for experienced water users. Watch, do not swim, on a Road to Hana morning.
Kids / access	Good from the lookout. Keep kids back from the cliff edge.
Best time / weather	Morning for light on the water; afternoon for resting turtles (stay well back and never touch them). *Weather sensitivity:* Low.
Biggest caution	Cliff edge at the lookout.
If running late	Save it for the drive home or skip it.

Route 360, ~MM 2 | TWIN FALLS (WAILELE FARM) -- OPTIONAL	
What it is	Waterfalls and a farm stand on a working private farm that allows public access.
Why stop	The first waterfalls of the drive and a good farm stand for smoothies, coconuts and snacks.
Time	45-75 minutes to walk to the falls and back; 10-15 minutes for the farm stand only.
Parking	MODERATE to DIFFICULT. 55 paid spaces, $10 per car, first come, first served. If the lot is full, keep driving. No highway or bridge parking (including the far side of the bridge) and no walk-ins from the road.
Fee / reservation	Parking fee only; no reservations. Closed to visitors on the first Saturday of each month (Hawaii residents only). The trail closes when the stream is high -- check the farm's website or posted signs. Private tours require arrangements with the farm.
Bathrooms / food / water	Portable toilets; farm stand food and drinks.
Swimming	Not recommended. Stream levels change quickly with upstream rain, and water quality is not tested like a beach.
Kids / access	Muddy, uneven path with stream crossings. Not stroller-friendly. Carriers work for little ones.
Best time / weather	At opening, before tour groups. *Weather sensitivity:* HIGH. Closes or becomes unsafe after heavy rain.
Biggest caution	Rising water and slippery rocks.
If running late	Skip it on the way out. It is one of the first stops to cut.

Route 360, ~MM 10.5 | GARDEN OF EDEN ARBORETUM -- OPTIONAL	
What it is	A privately run botanical garden of about 26 acres with hundreds of plant species, landscaped paths and ocean overlooks.
Why stop	Well-kept paths, real restrooms, and views toward Puohokamoa Falls and Keopuka Rock, a sea stack many visitors recognize from the opening of Jurassic Park.
Time	1 to 1.5 hours to do it properly; 45 minutes for a quick loop.
Parking	EASY. On-site lot.
Fee / reservation	$20 ages 16+, $10 ages 5-16, under 5 free; no reservation needed. Current as of November 21, 2026; check before travel because private-business pricing can change.
Bathrooms / food / water	Restrooms for visitors; light snacks at times.
Swimming	None.
Kids / access	Family-friendly; some paths are steep or gravel. Partly stroller-manageable.
Best time / weather	Morning. Open 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily. *Weather sensitivity:* Moderate. Pleasant in light rain.
Biggest caution	Time. It is easy to spend 90 minutes here and fall behind.
If running late	Skip it. Choose either the Garden of Eden or Twin Falls, not both, on a day trip.

Route 360, ~MM 12 | KAUMAHINA STATE WAYSIDE -- WORTH IT	
What it is	A forested state rest stop with a picnic area and a viewpoint over the northeast coastline toward Keanae.
Why stop	A free, legal place to stretch, use a restroom and see the coastline you are about to drive.
Time	10-15 minutes.
Parking	EASY to MODERATE. Wayside lot.
Fee / reservation	Free. Open during daylight hours.
Bathrooms / food / water	Restrooms are commonly available (check signage); no drinking water. Pua'a Ka'a is the next restroom stop if these are closed.
Swimming	None.
Kids / access	Easy. Short walk to the view.
Best time / weather	Any time in daylight. *Weather sensitivity:* Low.
Biggest caution	Slippery grass after rain.
If running late	Use it as your restroom stop and keep going.

Route 360, ~MM 16.5 | KEANAE ARBORETUM -- SKIP IF SHORT ON TIME	
What it is	A state forest-reserve arboretum with a short path through rainbow eucalyptus, bamboo and taro patches.
Why stop	The easiest place to see rainbow eucalyptus trunks up close, legally.
Time	20-40 minutes.
Parking	VERY LIMITED. A few spaces at the entrance; do not park on the highway.
Fee / reservation	Free.
Bathrooms / food / water	Facilities not reliably confirmed -- use an earlier designated stop.
Swimming	None.
Kids / access	Short, sometimes muddy path; partly paved near the entrance.
Best time / weather	Morning. *Weather sensitivity:* Moderate. Muddy after rain.
Biggest caution	Parking. If there is no legal space, skip it.
If running late	Skip it; you will see rainbow eucalyptus from the road in several places.

~MM 16.5-17 (Keanae Road) | KEANAE PENINSULA -- MUST DO	
What it is	A short side road down to a small farming community on a lava peninsula, with a historic stone church, taro fields and black lava coastline.
Why stop	The best easy coastal stop on the drive: dramatic surf against black rock, a few minutes off the highway, with no hike. Aunty Sandy's banana bread is here.
Time	20-40 minutes.
Parking	MODERATE. Small lots near the landing; this is a residential area, so park only in obvious public spaces.
Fee / reservation	None.
Bathrooms / food / water	Food at Aunty Sandy's (hours vary; cash may be needed). Restrooms: facilities not reliably confirmed -- use Kaumahina before or Pua'a Ka'a after.
Swimming	No. Surf and currents are dangerous.
Kids / access	Easy walking on flat ground; keep kids well back from wave-washed rocks.
Best time / weather	Morning, when banana bread is fresh and before crowds. *Weather sensitivity:* Moderate. Big surf is spectacular but makes the rocks dangerous.
Biggest caution	Rogue waves on the lava shelf. Stay well back from the water.
If running late	Grab banana bread and go. Even 15 minutes here is worth it.

Route 360, ~MM 17 | HALFWAY TO HANA STAND -- OPTIONAL	
What it is	A long-running roadside snack stand (since 1982) with banana bread, shave ice and drinks.
Why stop	Easy parking, quick snacks and one of the few ATMs on the route.
Time	10-15 minutes.
Parking	EASY. Small lot.
Fee / reservation	None.
Bathrooms / food / water	Snacks and drinks (hours vary). Restrooms: facilities not reliably confirmed.
Swimming	None.
Kids / access	Easy.
Best time / weather	Late morning. *Weather sensitivity:* Low.
Biggest caution	None beyond normal pull-in care.
If running late	Skip if you already stopped at Aunty Sandy's.

Waianapanapa State Park

The reservation that shapes your whole day

Waianapanapa is the one place on the Road to Hana where a reservation decides whether you get in. It is also, for most families, the highlight of the drive: black sand, sea arches, lava-rock coastline and short, easy paths, all with managed parking.

Item	Current rule (checked November 21, 2026)
Who needs a reservation	All non-residents, for both entry and parking. Visitors without a reservation are turned away. Hawaii residents with a valid Hawaii ID enter and park free without one; their out-of-state guests still need reservations.
Where to book	Only at gostateparks.hawaii.gov/waianapanapa (official state site). Rules: reservation FAQ; park page: DLNR Waianapanapa.
When reservations open	30 days ahead, released one day at a time at midnight Hawaii time.
Time slots	Reservations are sold in timed multi-hour windows -- the day is divided into four slots, and the official system shows the ones available for your date (published examples: 7:00-10:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.). Enter any time within your slot and leave when it ends. You can buy back-to-back slots to stay longer.
Hours	Park opens at 7:00 a.m. You must enter by 5:30 p.m.; the park closes at 6:00 p.m.
Fees (non-residents)	$5 per person entry (children 3 and under free) plus $10 parking per time slot.
Changes and refunds	Treat reservations as final. The State Parks FAQ says all sales are final and dates and times cannot be changed after purchase; the reservation site's FAQ describes limited changes and refunds with fees. Check the terms shown at checkout. If the state officially closes the park, follow the state closure/refund instructions; qualifying reservations may be refunded automatically, less nonrefundable service charges.
Current construction	Eastern parking and campervan camping are closed for facility improvements (new comfort station). The campervan lot is in use for day use and tent camping, tour-bus parking has moved along the access road, and beach access is through the western entrance.
Cabins	Non-residents $100 per night; book online at least 7 days ahead. Cabin and tent-camping reservations include entry and parking for the listed guests. Campervan camping is closed during construction.
Tent camping	By permit; non-residents $30 per night per site, booked through the state's Explore Outdoor Hawaii system.

What to see inside the park

From the western entrance, follow signs to the black-sand beach overlook and the steps down to Pa'iloa Beach. Short paths along the lava coast lead to sea arches and, when the surf is up, a blowhole. Signed paths also pass small caves and freshwater pools; follow posted signs about where you may and may not go, and stay out of any roped or signed area. A rugged coastal trail continues toward Hana for those with time and good footwear. Plan on 1 to 2 hours.

Swimming and family safety

Pa'iloa Beach is beautiful to look at and hard to swim. There are no lifeguards, the shore break can be powerful, and currents are strong. With kids, enjoy the sand from well above the waterline, especially in winter. Lava rock is sharp and slippery, and the coastal edges drop straight into the ocean. Wear real shoes rather than flip-flops.

Book This First

Your booking priority list

Book in this order. Official sources come first for anything run by the state or the park service.

Priority	What	Where to book (official first)	Timing	Plan B
1	Hana lodging (if staying)	Property directly, or compare on Expedia / Booking.com	As soon as dates are set; it is scarce	Stay in Paia or Haiku and start at dawn
2	Waianapanapa entry and parking	gostateparks.hawaii.gov/waianapanapa only	30 days ahead, released at midnight Hawaii time	Watch for cancellations; build the day around Keanae and Kipahulu
3	Rental car	Your preferred rental company	When flights are booked	Read the agreement for back-side restrictions
4	Guided tour (if using one)	Compare on our Viator shop	1-3 weeks ahead in busy seasons	Self-drive with Shaka Guide
5	Camping (if applicable)	Waianapanapa: Explore Outdoor Hawaii (explore.ehawaii.gov); Kipahulu: Recreation.gov	Kipahulu: rolling 30-day window	Hana lodging or a day trip

Official booking links

Waianapanapa reservations are sold only through the State of Hawaii site. Kipahulu Campground reservations are on Recreation.gov, and the Haleakala entrance fee is paid by card at the entrance station.

Book Waianapanapa at gostateparks.hawaii.gov

Itinerary 1: One-Day Highlights

Best for first-timers and families

The version we recommend for most day-trippers: a relaxed pace, a midday Waianapanapa slot and a daylight return.

1-DAY HIGHLIGHTS (Option 1)	
Departure	6:00 a.m. from Kihei/Wailea; Paia by about 6:45 a.m.
Morning	Breakfast to go and fuel in Paia; Ho'okipa Lookout (10 min); Kaumahina wayside (restroom, view); Keanae Peninsula and Aunty Sandy's (30-40 min); Pua'a Ka'a (15 min).
Midday	Waianapanapa, 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. slot (aim to arrive by about 10:30).
Afternoon	Lunch at Hana Farms or in Hana; Hana Bay (20-30 min). Leave Hana by about 2:30-3:00 p.m. in winter, 4:00 p.m. in summer.
Evening	Optional quick stop at Ho'okipa on the way back; dinner in Paia or back at your hotel.
Approx. driving	About 6 to 7 hours round trip from South Maui.
Reservation	Waianapanapa (required).
Meal plan	Breakfast in Paia, snack in Keanae, lunch near Hana, dinner after.
Bathroom strategy	Paia, Kaumahina, Pua'a Ka'a, Waianapanapa, Hana Bay.
Turnaround point	Hana town.
Sleep	Your home base.
Plan B	If behind by 9:30 a.m., skip Pua'a Ka'a on the way out and do it on the way back.

This Free Preview Ends Here

The complete guide is 50 pages and 67 chapters. Beyond what you just read, it includes:

- The full stop-by-stop planner from Keanae to Kipahulu, with parking difficulty, bathrooms and a skip-if-late call for every stop
- Route overview by mile marker, where you can legally park, and driving etiquette
- Building your day around your Waianapanapa slot, Hana town, and the overnight decision
- Kipahulu, the Pools of 'Ohe'o, Pipiwai Trail, waterfall safety and flash floods
- When to cancel or modify your day, and a rainy-day plan
- Logistics, food stops, kids, motion sickness, and older adults and limited mobility
- Self-drive vs tour, the back side of Hana, car choice, cell service and photography
- Seven more itineraries, a running-late guide, a turnaround matrix, and common mistakes
- Budget, camping, an emergency quick reference, a printable checklist, a quick stop comparison and a 30-question FAQ

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