

## ***Mauna Loa - Observatory Trail***

*August 31, 2005 by Jim Albertini*

It was an experience of a lifetime. Prepare for it well. The Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park map brochure on Mauna Loa says: "Do not leave from the observatory after 10AM." That's very good advice! A day trip up and back to the rim of Moku`aweoweo Caldera will take a good six hours. Maybe more. Don't rush it. Plan for plenty of rest stops. Check your boots before starting. Make sure the soles are in good condition and securely attached to your boots. Take plenty of duct tape just in case. My hiking partner's boots soles came off after  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile. Fortunately with duct tape she made it back to the car and put on a second pair. Good thing we were not further along.

The road up to the 11,000 foot Observatory has lots of pot holes, so take it easy. Allow for extra time getting there and to acclimate before hiking. We drank plenty of water and took two aspirin on the drive up. Once at the Observatory we stayed at least one hour before hiking. Fortunately we didn't get altitude sickness.

The hike itself is grueling, but spectacular. From a distance, Mauna Loa looks like a gradual incline. The reality is something else. It's very steep and every mile at that elevation is a journey. Be sure to have layers of clothes to meet all sorts of weather. I wore gloves just in case of a fall on the sharp lava. We took walking sticks and found them especially helpful on the descent.

The lava formations and colors are a marvel, but don't forget to look behind you on the way up and enjoy the spectacular views of Mauna Kea, Hualalai, Kohala, and Haleakala! Chicken skin! On the way down the clouds will likely be rolling in.



*Enjoy the spectacular view of  
Mauna Kea from along the trail.  
(click on photo for larger version)*



Going to Mauna Loa is an important part of truly learning and discovering who we are. Indeed it was an experience of a lifetime!

*The trail is very steep*  
(click on photo for larger version)

Jim Albertini Sept. 20, 2005