

15 'Aiea Loop

Type:	Foothill
Length:	5 mi loop
Elev. Gain:	900 ft
Danger:	Low
Suitable for:	Novice
Location:	Leeward Ko'olau Range above 'Aiea
Topo Map:	Waipahu, Kane'ohē
Access:	Open

Trailhead Directions

At Punchbowl St. get on the Lunalilo Fwy (H-1) heading 'ēwa (west). Near Middle St. keep left on Rte 78 west (exit 19B, Moanalua Rd.) to 'Aiea.

While descending Red Hill, take the exit marked Stadium—Hāhāwa.

At the end of the long off ramp continue straight on Ulunē St.

At the road end turn right on 'Aiea Heights Dr.

Pass 'Aiea Sugar Mill on the right.

Climb gradually through 'Aiea Heights.

Reach the entrance to Keaiwa Heiau State Recreation Area.

Drive past the heiau and the camping area to the upper lot and park there (map point A).

Route Description

At the back of the upper lot take the 'Aiea Loop Trail.

Pass a small water tank on the right.

Enter a eucalyptus forest.

Cross an open eroded area with a view back toward Honolulu.

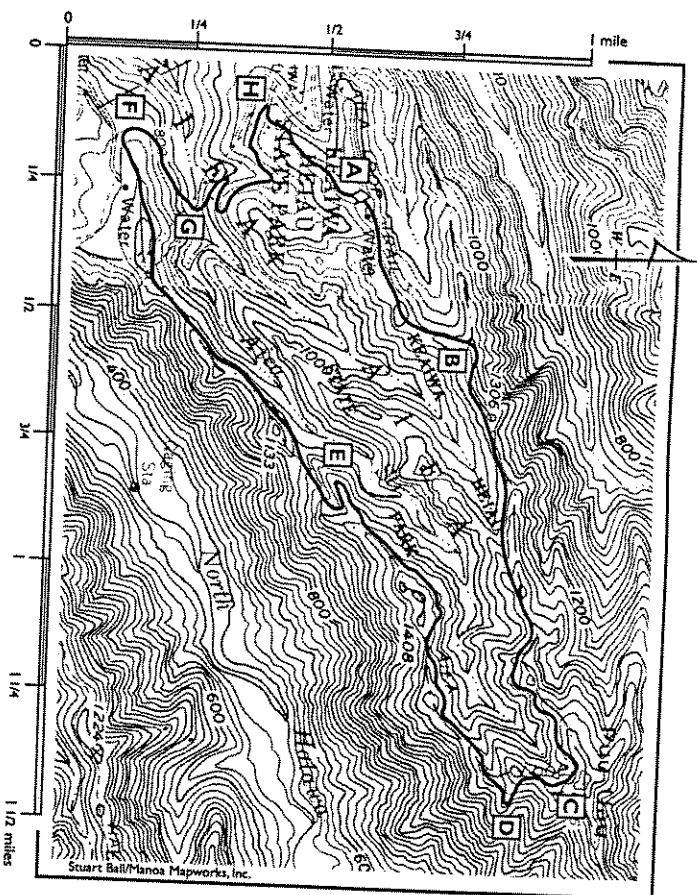
Pass a power-line tower above and to the right.

Shortly afterward reach a junction (map point B). Continue straight on the

loop trail. (The trail to the left leads down to Kalauao Stream.)

Pass a second power-line tower on the right.

Contour on the right side of the ridge just below its top.



Reach a small grassy clearing with several stumps. From there is a good view of the Wai'anae Range in the distance.

Continue contouring well below the ridge line.

Step gingerly through a muddy spot where several logs span the trail. There are smaller logs imbedded in the path for more secure footing.

Right after the muddy spot the trail curves left and then right.

As it begins to curve right, reach another junction (map point C). Continue on the wide loop trail to the right. (The narrower trail to the left is the 'Aiea Ridge Trail, which leads to the Ko'olau summit.)

Cross over to the left side of the ridge. There are good views of the Ko'olau Range through the trees.

Reach the farthest point of the loop by a large 'ōhi'a tree with exposed roots (map point D).

Along the first part of the return leg are views of North Hālawala Valley on the left.

Switch to the right side of the ridge.

Descend gradually, well below the ridge line, through eucalyptus.

In a gully, pass the wing section of a C-47 cargo plane on the right. A steep

trail leads to other wreckage farther down the gully. The plane crashed in 1943.

Pass a power-line tower above and to the left (map point E). Pass a second one.

Stroll through a grove of Norfolk Island pines on a broad trail.

Reach a junction. Keep right on the contour trail. (The eroded trail to the left climbs to a view of Honolulu and Salt Lake.)

Go under some power lines.

Pass another grove of Norfolk Island pines.

In a stand of albizia trees, reach another junction (map point F). Bear right on the wide trail. (The left fork leads to Camp Smith.)

Switchback once and descend into a gulch.

Cross the intermittent stream (map point G) and climb out of the gulch on a rocky, rooty trail with three switchbacks.

Switchback once again past a power-line tower on the left.

The trail levels off.

Enter the camping area of the park (map point H).

Turn right and climb the steps to the middle parking lot.

Turn right again and walk up the paved road to the upper parking lot (map point A).

Notes

It seems as if everyone who has ever hiked on O'ahu has done the 'Aiea Loop Trail. If you haven't, try it. It's a great hike for beginners. If you have, try some of the other novice hikes in this book.

The loop trail receives regular maintenance and is always open. The foot-path is, for the most part, graded and wide. The only rough section is the short climb out of the gulch near the end of the hike.

Most of the vegetation on this hike is introduced. There are some large native koa and 'ōhi'a trees at the far end of the loop.

The return portion of the loop is sometimes used by horseback riders from Camp Smith. If you see horses, stand quietly off the trail and let them pass.

The strawberry guavas along the initial stretch usually ripen in August and September.

The initial section of this hike is also part of the Kaluaao and 'Aiea Ridge hikes.