

Seven Sacred Pools, sounds so appealing you just gotta check 'em out. Also because the swimming is usually so good and the setting so beautiful. What's not to love?



A REAL GEM

Back when nobody had ever heard of Hana, the owner of the Hotel Hana Maui wanted desperately to attract people here. He had a choice: Tell people they could visit the fabulous *'Ohe'o Gulch* or the wondrous *Seven Sacred Pools* (which he made up). Which do you think looked better on a brochure? (For the record, there are not seven of them, and they never were sacred.)

When a retired airline executive from the mainland named Sam Pryor planned to build a house right near the pools back in 1960, articles began to appear in local papers warning that access to the pools would become a thing of the past. Pryor realized that the pools were so beloved by residents that he contacted the people who sold him the land and insisted that they trade it for land elsewhere, saying the pools should belong to everyone. He later contacted his old friend Laurance Rockefeller and convinced him and others to buy 52 acres around the pools and eventually donate it to Haleakala National Park. So today, the pools are protected forever.

The park became one of the best places in the world to jump off waterfalls because they were so user-friendly, and for decades people came from all over the world to do just that. Falls, pool, falls, pool, falls, pool. It's an ideal playground where visitors jumped for joy into deep pools till their hearts content. But an accident, lawsuit and subsequent giant settlement in 2009 changed all that. Park officials responded by banning jumping off anything, plastered the area with warning signs, and rangers vigorously patrol the pools. You will be fined and perhaps even

arrested if you jump off anything. Their message is quite clear: *We want to save you from yourself...and we want to save ourselves from your lawyer.*

They will let you swim in the lower pools—*sometimes*. But they'll often close them off to public access at the mere hint of rain up in the mountains (which happens more days than not). Over the course of months, they were closed more times than they were open for "safety reasons."

When you can swim here, it's absolutely great. And even if you can't swim, it's still drop dead gorgeous. Whether you want to swim, hike or just watch, the park is a great place to polish off a day. People *staying* in Hana have it best, because they can get here before the crowds do. There is often nobody at the falls in the morning. In the afternoon, expect *a lot* of people to join you in the fun.

Park at the lot past the 42 mile marker. The lot sometimes fills up around peak time (2 p.m.). The loop trail from the lot to the pools and back is just over ½ mile.

Part of Haleakala National Park, it's \$10 per car for entrance here, sometimes on a quasi-honor system. This fee also gets you into the park at Haleakala's summit and vice versa, so save your receipt.

Camping is available; see page 175. There are restrooms at the park *but no water*. At the visitor center there are opportunities to learn about the Hawaiian culture and their relationship with the land. You can also go on guided hikes or visit a taro-farming area. Check with park personnel to find out what's available.

The huge valley above the pools, stretching all the way up the mountain to Haleakala Crater, is a wondrous area. Called **Kipahulu Gap**, it has resisted the introduction of most foreign plants brought by man, making it one of

Whether you get to swim in them or not, the pools at 'Ohe'o Gulch are some of the most scenic on the island.

