

Akaka Falls State Park  
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Haole for Life  
Big Island of Hawaii: Travelogue

Directions: From Hilo, go north on Hwy 19 to mile marker 11, turn right on Hwy 220, drive slowly through town being sure to locate Ed's Bakery on the left (for an ice cream pit stop after the falls and a home baked cookie), take the right at the end of town and follow the road till the end.

Amenities: Bare bones restroom. Now and again a local selling necklaces and souvenirs.

Akaka Falls is a must stop for every one of the tour buses making their daily circuit around the island; and as such, it can be a crowded locale. Down a steep path that leads from the parking lot, visitors are given the option of turning right or left. Nearly everyone goes right, so I say go left. If you do, your first stop will be in about 50' and will feature a short 10' tall warm-up falls -- that if you are lucky a locale will be busy enjoying, and hence ignoring the no swimming signs. (Not recommended).

Of course, the real reason to go to the left is that the trail is easier this way and in 100 yards or so you'll find yourself staring at the big falls along with dozens of others. Wait a few minutes -- their tour bus will be leaving soon enough -- and in a moment you will have the place to yourself as you become one with the water, commune with your dyadic self, and tumble in spirit along with the water as it cascades 442 dizzying feet down to the crystal pool below. I especially like how the water splatters against the large flat boulder at the bottom, but that's just me. Five, ten, or fifteen minutes later and most folks have had enough.

If you go back towards the parking lot up the other path, the going will be a little steeper and uneven, but you'll have the joy of squeezing past another load of tourists fresh of the next bus, which is sure to be arriving, as you take in the surrounding tropical wonderland.

Akaka Falls is at a fairly low elevation on the Hilo side so rain is to be expected. But as humid as it is, I've never had a problem with the mosquitoes. Wear shorts. Take your time. And trust me, the tour buses will be leaving soon enough. Wait it out and you'll have the place to yourself in no time.