



TRIP OVERVIEW

The island of Hawaii (affectionately also known as the Big Island) is the 'Island of Discovery' and there is so much to unearth both along the coast and inland. The youngest and largest island in the Hawaiian archipelago, it is twice the size of all the others combined. The Big Island is less than a million years old and still growing - Kilauea, the world's most active volcano, spews lava down to the sea and this volcanic activity generates a unique landscape of black lava, scattered with lush arable pasture, desert, and moisture laden valleys.

We swim along the island's sunnier west coast, which is shielded from winds by Mauna Loa and offers ideal swimming conditions. Dotted with volcanic rock, the result of frequent volcanic activity over the years, the waters are clear and feature a never-ending aquarium of marine life as we swim. Sea turtles, manta rays, spinner dolphins and monk seals are just some of the species that we may well meet during our journey.

Our base is Kona, the laid-back seaside town, home to the Ironman Triathlon World Championships. It is ideally located in between our swim sites over the week and is a great spot from which to explore the rest of the island, should you wish to do so.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip offers a combination of exploration, observation and swimming. It is ideal for the swimmer who is keen to explore craggy volcanic coastlines as well as viewing wildlife below the water with fantastic visibility.

Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average swim distance of 2.5 km prior to the start of the trip. The average daily swim distance is around 5 km (split over two swims).

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Kona

The lush and tropical coastline of Kona spans almost two-thirds of the entire west side of the island of Hawaii from just south of Anaehoomalu Bay to Kau. Along this section are dotted coffee farms and historic Hawaiian landmarks. In fact, King Kamehameha actually spent his final years in Kona.

Kealakekua (Captain Cook) Bay

Kealakekua Bay is a piece of paradise, both on land and under water. The bay holds one of the most abundant coral reefs on the island and is located on the lush and tropical Kona coast. The centre of the bay is deep and you can often find a pod of spinner dolphins that use the bay as resting grounds. The bay is where Captain James Cook was killed following an argument with the local inhabitants. We will swim



directly up to the Captain Cook Monument which is situated where he fell all those years ago.

Kahalu'u

The reef at Kahalu'u Bay is a living, breathing ecosystem and home to numerous creatures. The centre piece of this habitat is the coral reef. As you swim keep your eyes focused for sea turtles, octopus, sea urchins, eels, and dozens of fish species including yellow tang, bullethead parrotfish, Hawaiian spotted boxfish, and more.

TRIP SCHEDULE

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Start Point | The Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/koacy-courtyard-king-kamehamehas-kona-beach-hotel/ |
| Start Time | 14:00 on Day 1 |
| Finish Point | The Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel |
| Finish Time | 11:00 on Day 7 |

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

We will meet outside on the pool deck of our hotel. There we will hold our welcome meeting and safety briefing before hopping into the waters nearby for a refreshing acclimatisation swim in the sea. The swim begins right off Kailua Pier at the start point of the swim leg of the Ironman World Championships. This is an excellent chance to familiarise yourself with the local conditions before we head back to the hotel and then out again for our first dinner of the trip.

Day 2

Today we head north in our main support boat along the Kona coast. It's a great way to see the coastline up close. Our first swim starts from Kiholo Bay in a protected series of calm, turquoise tidal pools, which hold a mix of salt and freshwater. Before we start, we can explore a flooded lava tube. The swim takes us south west - keep an eye out for resident honu (green sea turtles) who like to feed in the shallow pools! The lava along this stretch of coastline offers countless opportunities to explore. On arrival into Luahinewai we are greeted by a stunning black sand beach with landlocked pool behind it, connected to the sea via a subterranean tunnel. There is plenty of time to enjoy a snorkel in these crystal-clear waters. For our second swim we head back towards Kona, from Kukia to Kua Bay. Again, the lava filled coastline offers a variety of tunnels and passageways. It's easy to find your way as the reef below is like a line to follow. On our recce swim here, we spotted numerous spotted eagle rays which seemed to glide below us as we swam.



On arrival back into Kona, there is ample time to relax before we meet at the hotel pool for a swim session of videoing and technique advice, for those who would like to attend. Later in the evening, there will be time to playback the video to assist with swim technique points for the rest of the week.

Day 3

This morning we travel down to the southern section of the Kona coast which is sure to be one of the highlights of the week. The first swim is one of the most exposed swims of the week. It feels like we are well away from it all, as we start swimming from Keawekaheka Bay which contains one of the Big Island's most beautiful reefs. From here we swim along the coast and feel the rolling ocean push us along our course. Lava-formed bays can offer natural stopping off points along the way. The swim culminates with an arrival into the awe-inspiring Kealakekua Bay and a monument to spot where the explorer Captain James Cook fell in 1779. It's a unique way to arrive at such a significant monument!

After time to hydrate, relax and explore the area around the monument we then hop back into the water for our crossing across Kealakekua Bay. The bay is surrounded by steep cliffs which makes access from land difficult, so the water is undoubtedly the best way to explore. During the crossing it is possible to see the bottom most of the way across as the reef comes up close to the surface. Manta rays were spotted here during our recce and if you come across them on this swim it is sure to be a mesmerising experience.

Day 4

Today after a slightly later breakfast, we start our swim a little closer to home as we undertake the route of the Kona Ironman swim course. With good visibility, you can see the bottom most of the way. Above the water you can identify the peak of Mauna Loa laid out in front of you. There are plenty of fish to keep you company and dolphins are also often spotted here. It's a great morning swim!

The afternoon is yours to do what you like. You may choose to go to Puuhonua o Honaunau National Park, with it's historic place of refuge or maybe up to the start of the hike to Mauna Kea with its amazing views of the Big Island. For the keen swimmers, there is the Kona Community Aquatic Centre with its 50m pool. In addition our guides can work with you on your stroke development, should you so wish.

Day 5

Today we are back on our escort boat as we travel north to Mahai'ula Bay for our coastal journey to Awakee Bay. The reef here is plentiful and full of character and home to countless species. The beach at Puu Alii Bay is an idyllic halfway point which is a great spot for a drink and snack break. It's possible to walk along the coast at this section, so if you don't fancy the full morning swim you can always hop out and continue on foot. On arrival you are greeted with some of the most extensive sand dunes in Hawaii home to an extensive shoreline bird sanctuary. At the end of the swim, there is time to stay in the water and explore the reef below.

After some time to rest and relax and maybe even explore on land, our second swim is just up the shore as we commence our swim journey at Kahoiawa Bay and take in both Kua and Kakapa Bays before finishing at Kikaua Point which has stunning views over to the distant island of Maui. Large volcanic



boulders are present over the course of the swim and seem to be an attraction for the local fish populations. The sandy bottom, interspersed with detailed reef formations, offers an idyllic afternoon swim.

Day 6

Today is our last full day of swimming and our last day on our escort boat. We get collected at Kailua Pier, directly in front of our hotel, and then head south. Our swims today may well be selected on the day itself. That way we can take advantage of the best conditions, minimum swell and the most interesting wildlife that may be in the vicinity. Swims could be Magic Sands, Kahalu'u or Keauhou. The majestic "End of the World" lava formation is another great swim site. Whichever is selected they are sure to be both memorable and exciting.

On arrival back at Kona, you have time to relax before we head out for our last dinner of the trip.

Day 7

After the exertions of the week, it is time for a relaxing swim on the beach just by Kailua Pier, directly in front of our hotel, before the trip finishes later in the morning.

TRIP INFORMATION

Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

| ✓ | ITEM | ✓ | ITEM |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Swimming Costume (x 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Towel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Swimming Goggles (x 2)* | <input type="checkbox"/> | Light Sweater/Fleece |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sun Hat and Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> | Walking Shoes / Sandals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterproof Sun Cream | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aqua Shoes / Sandals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Small Daypack | <input type="checkbox"/> | Insect Repellent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterproof Jacket | <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal Drink Bottle (x2) |

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

SwimTrek will supply swim hats, water and electrolyte drinks. The guides will no longer distribute shared drinks bottles, but rather will fill up each individual guest's personal drink bottle. Please ensure these are clearly marked to help our guides identify yours. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest, snorkel or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you. For more on our Updated Packing



List check out our [Covid-19 guidance](#).

Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 15. The group will be split into a maximum of three groups, based on speed, with each group being accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Boat support on this trip includes one main boat and two support craft crewed by your SwimTrek guides. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.

TRIP GRADING

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

Swimming Distances

| Swim | Distance | Swim | Distance |
|---|----------|--|----------|
| Kiholo Bay - Luahinewai (Black Sand Beach) | 2½ km | Manini'Owali (Kua Bay) - Kukio Bay | 2 km |
| Keaweakeheka - Captain Cook Monument | 3½ km | Crossing of Kealakekua Bay (Captain Cook Bay) | 2 km |
| Kona Ironman Course Swim | 3.8 km | Afternoon off | - |
| Mahai'ula Bay - Awakee Bay | 3 km | Kahoiawa Bay - Kikawa Point | 2 km |
| Kahalu - Keauhou | 3 km | Keauhou - Magic Sands | 2 km |
| Kona Pier - Old Airport | 2 km | | |

Swimming Conditions

Hawaii's isolation means that roughly 25 percent of its fish species are endemic, which means they are found in Hawaii and nowhere else in the world. Swimming here is a fantastic experience with warm crystal-clear waters bursting with underwater flora and fauna. You need to be aware that certain marine life such as jellyfish, sharks, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In the areas that we swim, there is a long history of snorkelling and swimming, so sea life is used to human interaction. If you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking. Sea swell tends to be bigger than in a lot of places on the US mainland. This only adds to the challenge and fun of the trip, but if you're unfamiliar with these kinds of conditions, feel free to consult with the office.

Walking Conditions

The west coast of the Big Island benefits from the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail which runs in many places along the coast. While the focus of the trip is undoubtedly the swimming there may be some opportunities to walk small sections of this historic trail should you wish to do so.



Most walks take place on designated paths and tracks. Please note that comfortable shoes or sturdy sandals are recommended for all walks and treks.

Temperatures

| Month | Water Temperature* | Air Temperature* |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| October | 26-28°C / 78-82°F | 25-27°C / 77-80°F |

* Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

GETTING THERE

The easiest way to get to the start of your trip is to fly into Kona International Airport (KOA). It is important to remember that the Big Island has two international airports, Kona is on the west coast and Hilo (ITO) on the east coast. For this trip, **Kona International Airport (KOA)**, also known as Keāhole, is the most convenient option for you. Of course, if you are looking to spend time in Hawaii before or after your SwimTrek, then flying into one airport and out of the other may well work.

As SwimTrekkers come from all over the world, and join our swimming holidays in numerous destinations, we don't currently offer flights as part of our SwimTrek packages. We do however want to do as much as we can to ensure that our guests get the best deals when travelling to one of our trips so check out [SwimTrek's tips to help you get the best deals for your flights](#) page on the website.

Transfer from Kona International Airport to Kailua-Kona

Our accommodation, the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, is located on the bay at Kailua-Kona. It is around 9 miles south of the airport and a taxi will cost around \$35. For more information on Ground Transport from the airport visit the [Kona Airport Website](#)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

For the duration of our trip we stay at the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, ideally located within a few metres walk of Kailua Pier and the waters of Kailua Bay. The waterfront hotel benefits from an infinity pool, surrounded by lush tropical gardens.



All rooms at Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel are en suite with air conditioning and either two queen beds or one king bed with balcony. There are three room categories that we offer: Standard Rooms (Guest Rooms) with a balcony; Superior Rooms (Resort View) with a balcony and superior view; Deluxe (Ocean View) have a partial ocean view from the balcony. Whichever room type you choose we can offer them on twin share, double occupancy or for single occupancy. All rooms and occupancy types are subject to availability.

Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you wish to extend your stay at the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel before or after the trip please contact the hotel directly via email to reservations@konabeachhotel.com

Food and Drink

All breakfasts are included on the trip, taken at a local restaurant which offers an extensive breakfast menu. Four lunches are also included, excluding Day 4 when you have an afternoon off. Dinners are at your own expense, which gives you a fantastic opportunity to explore and experience the local cafes and restaurants of your choice over the course of your trip.

Extra Activities

Around Kailua Bay there are plenty of facilities and activities to keep you busy when not swimming. Take part in rejuvenating paddle board or sit-on-top kayak tours paddling around the bay. Try scuba diving too. Speak to our boat skipper about diving and snorkelling with the manta rays. Visit a Kona coffee farm or live the Hawaii Five-0 opening credits and paddle a traditional Hawaiian outrigger canoe.

Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as dinners, entertainment, souvenirs and drinks. The local currency is US dollars (US\$).

In some countries tipping, gratuities, is not part of the culture in others it has become an expected norm. We believe that tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you have been provided with excellent it may be something you wish to do. Your SwimTrek guides can advise on local norms for service providers like boat crew, waiters, or taxis. Nothing is expected for your SwimTrek guides, but many groups like to present something to the guides at the end of the trip.

Passports and Visas

Non-residents of the United States require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. The majority of visitors to the US require a visa to enter the country. Many nationalities can apply online for the ESTA Visa Waiver Program by visiting www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/esta . For further information about US visas, please visit www.travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html .

Please note that visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.



Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information about travel insurance, please visit www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance.

Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to the US, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Travel Plugs and Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/.