

## **Civil Defense caves of Hawaii**

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The Big Island of Hawaii is host to one of the greatest concentrations of large volcanic caves in the world. This was recognized in the 1960's when the State was mandated to identify shelters to be used in case of atomic war. While about half of the sites selected were hotels or other large buildings, the remaining sites were large lava tubes with enough room to hold hundreds of refugees. In many cases, these caves appear to have been well-known to local residents for many generations. Some of them may have been used in times of war in the era before Westernization of the island. The civil defense authorities published lists of the cave locations in the local newspapers, placed yellow "atomic shelter" signs by the entrances, and in some case outfitted the caves with food, water, pit-toilets, and walls. In at least one case, school children were taken to the caves in emergency drill exercises. Members of the HSS have used the lists to re-discover several of the caves that have largely been forgotten these days and fallen into neglect. Recent exploration of one of these, Ho'okena Civil Defense Cave, has revealed a large and complex cave with over 6 km of passages and no end in sight. Maui Loa cave is not as long, but features huge passages, a scenic skylight and sunbeam, archeological artifacts, and an interesting pair of narrow labyrinth structures at each of the entrances. A labyrinth entrance is also found in Kalapana Cave of Refuge, with a second entrance overlooking the ocean on a vertical cliff-face. One of the entrances to Kazumura Cave, the longest lava tube in the world, was also a designated civil defense shelter.