

# Haleakalā National Park Final Air Tour Management Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What are the provisions of the Air Tour Management Plan?**

The plan provides for the continuation of air tours at reduced levels over the park and within a half-mile of its boundary to protect natural and cultural resources, the integrity of Native Hawaiian sacred sites and ceremonial areas, visitor experience, and wilderness.

Authorizes up to 2,224 air tours per year on the designated route within the plan's boundary. This is a 54 percent reduction from the existing average of 4,824 flights per year.

- Limits times that the air tours can occur to between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. local time on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Qualifying air tours using quiet technology may fly from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on those days.
- Designates a single one-way route from west to east over the southern area of the Park. The route avoids Haleakalā crater, where sound levels are among the lowest recorded in any national park, and protects key cultural and natural resources, and park wilderness. Air tours will be limited to this route.
- Establishes minimum altitudes of 2,000 feet above ground level over land and 3,000 ft. above ground level over the ocean. Vertical separation ("stacking") of aircraft along the route is prohibited.
- Sets a ¼-mile buffer on either side of the route that is the acceptable range of deviation that would not trigger enforcement action.
- Identifies no-fly days to include:
  - Wednesdays and Sundays
  - Six commercial-free days that follow the Hawaiian Moon Calendar and Makahiki Season, and which vary from year to year:
    - End of Makahiki (typically in January)
    - Zenith Noon (typically in May)
    - Summer Solstice (June)
    - Zenith Noon (typically in July)
    - Start of Makahiki (typically in October)
    - Winter Solstice (December)
  - Two culturally significant Hawai'i State holidays.
    - Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Day (March 26)
    - King Kamehameha I Day (June 11)
  - Six additional no-fly days of important cultural significance to Native Hawaiians determined through consultation.
- Sets a January 1, 2033, deadline after which all commercial air tours must use quiet technology aircraft.

### **What is the purpose of the Air Tour Management Plan at Haleakalā National Park?**

The objective of the Air Tour Management Plan under the National Parks Air Tour Management Act is to establish acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, of commercial air tour operations on the park's natural and cultural landscapes and resources, Native Hawaiian sacred sites and ceremonial areas, wilderness character, and visitor experience.

### **What commercial air tours are subject to the Air Tour Management Plan? And where?**

Commercial air tours subject to the plan are powered flights for compensation or hire for the purpose of sightseeing over Haleakalā National Park or within a half-mile outside the park's boundary at altitudes below 5,000 feet above ground level. The plan establishes a single one-way route from west to east over the southern area of the Park. The route avoids Haleakalā Crater, where sound levels are among the lowest recorded in any national park, and protects key cultural and natural resources, visitor use areas and park wilderness. Commercial air tours will be limited to this route within the ATMP boundary.

### **Does the Plan require that air tours follow specific routes and/or fly at certain altitudes?**

Yes, the plan establishes minimum altitudes of 2,000 feet (ft.) above ground level (AGL) over land and 3,000 ft. AGL over the ocean. Vertical separation ("stacking") of aircraft along the route is prohibited. If pilots are on or entering a route and encounter weather that does not allow them to proceed further along the route at the prescribed altitude, they must safely exit the route.

Operators may not deviate from the designated route and altitudes except as necessary for safe operation of an aircraft as determined under Federal Aviation Regulations requiring the pilot-in-command to take action to ensure the safe operation of the aircraft. The pilot-in-command should return to designated route and altitude as soon as safely possible after the hazard has passed.

### **Does the Plan specify when commercial air tours may occur? Why are specific operating conditions recommended?**

Yes. Sections 3.4, 3.5, and Appendix A of the Air Tour Management Plan specify the days and times when air tours may occur. The plan for Haleakalā National Park includes conditions designed to protect natural and cultural resources, Native Hawaiian sacred sites and ceremonial areas, Wilderness character, and visitor experience. These conditions include an annual limit on number of authorized air tours, a designated route, minimum altitudes, specific types of authorized aircraft, day and time restrictions, and restrictions for particular events. Section 3 of the ATMP sets out the operating conditions for authorized air tours.

### **Will park visitors be able to hear commercial air tours from the ground?**

Whether a visitor on the ground can hear a commercial air tour depends on a number of factors, including proximity to the flight path, type of aircraft, other sources of noise, and surrounding landscape features. Visitors near an aircraft's flight path are more likely to hear the aircraft passing overhead, but other noise sources such as vehicles, people, insects and other wildlife activity, wind, and precipitation can mask the sound of an aircraft. Terrain features and buildings, which block the direct line-of-sight between a noise source and a visitor also may have an effect.

### **How does the Air Tour Management Plan protect cultural resources in the Park?**

The annual flight limits, designated route, and minimum altitudes in the Air Tour Management Plan, as well as the no-fly days it designates, are intended to protect cultural resources and related cultural landscapes and ethnographic resources throughout the Park by reducing impacts to noise sensitive areas caused by commercial air tours.

### **How would the plan protect Native Hawaiian sacred sites and cultural practices?**

The measures outlined in the plan (routes, altitude, day of week, time of day, annual number of flights) are designed to protect culturally significant lands, properties, ceremonies, and practices. It allows restrictions for particular events, time-of-day, and day-of-week, which are intended to prevent noise interruptions of cultural Native Hawaiian practices and Park events.

### **What factors were evaluated in establishing the Air Tour Management Plan?**

In the Environmental Assessment, each proposed alternative was analyzed for its potential impact on park resources, including:

- Soundscapes (e.g., noise or noise pollution);
- Native wildlife, including federally listed species;
- Cultural Resources including sacred landscapes and Traditional Cultural Properties;
- Wilderness character; and
- Visitor experience.

### **Are the air tour companies paying fees to the NPS?**

Air tour fee payment is required for commercial air tour operations conducted over Haleakalā National Park under 54 U.S.C. § 100904(f) which is a separate legal authority from NPATMA. Air tour operators conducting tours over the Park pay \$25 per aircraft (with a capacity of 25 or fewer passengers) on each air tour. The amount collected varies by year.

**How are air tours regulated outside of the plan boundary?**

Applicable regulations that govern aviation safety are found at [14 CFR § 136](#), [Appendix A](#) (formerly Special Federal Aviation Regulation 71), and any FAA exceptions issued to individual operators as outlined by the [Hawai'i Air Tour Common Procedures Manual](#).

**How many comments were received during the public engagement period in developing the Plan?**

The FAA and NPS received 874 correspondences, including 22 different form letters, which comprised 68%, or 598, of the total number of correspondences. Copies of the comments are included in the Record of Decision for the Air Tour Management Plan.

**What, if any, are the differences between the draft and final Plan?**

A summary of the changes as published in the Air Tour Management Plan:

- Minor updates to the park's boundary resulted in small adjustments to the designated boundary.
- The number of tours per year authorized under Alternative 3 was reduced from 2,412 to 2,224 because one operator is no longer conducting commercial air tours over the Park.
- Minor modifications to two sections of the designated route were made due to changes to the Air Tour Management Plan boundary.
- Route deviation procedures were clarified to specify that the pilot-in-command should return to designated route and altitude as soon as safely possible after a hazard has passed.
- Six additional no-fly days of important cultural significance to Native Hawaiians determined through consultation.
- Clarified that all commercial air tours must utilize exclusively quiet technology aircraft by 2033.