

On our drive from
Hilo to Kona, we
stopped at the visitor
center at Mauna Kea.



The visitor center
is halfway up the
volcanic mountain
with a summit that
is over 13,000 feet.

To reach the
summit and
observatory you
need a four-wheel
drive vehicle.





Mauna Kea is sacred to native Hawaiians and wood and stone altars reflect that tradition.





There was a short hike at the visitor center where we could observe native and non-native plants including Hawaiian Silverswords.



Hawaiian silversword (*Argyroxiphium sandwicense*)
is endemic to Hawaii and only occurs at high
elevations on Mauna Kea and Haleakala.



Mamane
Sophora chrysophylla



Native Hawaiian
tuftgrass (*Deschampsia
rubigena*) interspersed
with non-native
invasive mullein
(*Verbascum Thapsus*)
and primrose
(*Oenothera biennis*).



Many of the mullein plants were fasciated possibly due to the high UV radiation at these high altitudes.

