

Solyiat: The lava fields and Black Beaches of the island of Po'Tak

In the Pokorian island chain sits the island of Po'Tak the 2nd largest island in the chain. It's home to 2 active volcanoes which create molten lava streams that dominate the north eastern coast of the island.

The Lava fields are dominated by many small lava streams which funnel into 2 major rivers of fire that then empty into the sea. At the height of an eruption, the ash being thrown in the air and the steam from the coast gets so thick that if the winds are blowing in the right direction the entire island is covered in its thick cloud making travel dangerous due to the low visibility and hot ash floating in the air.

The Black Beaches of the north western and western coasts are the remnants of the old lava field from centuries before and during the hottest days the sun baked sand makes the area extremely uncomfortable and a person could become dehydrated quickly. Travelers and locals are warned to keep themselves well hydrated when visiting the area.

These beaches are also dangerous to swim in due to the shallow water level, strong rip tide and the numerous sharp and sometimes large volcanic rocks in the water. It's not unheard of for a rip tide to pull an unsuspecting swimmer out to the ocean dragging them along the sharp rocks causing life threatening injuries. Not to mention the potential for drowning once out to sea.

Another potential hazard found on the islands are Lava Tubes, these tubes are a type of lava cave formed when an active low-viscosity lava flow develops a continuous and hard crust, which thickens and forms a roof above the still-flowing lava stream. Tubes form in one of two ways: by the crusting over of lava channels, and from lava flows where the lava is moving under the surface.

There are cases where visitors have broken through the ceiling of a tube and fallen into the caves below, sometimes the cave is only a few meters deep leading to minor injuries to much deeper caves or if near the active lava fields still full of molten lava which of course lead to fatalities.

The major problem with lava tubes is they can appear wherever a lava flow existed and there are cases where ancient tubes have been "discovered" where previously a lava flow was never known to be.

Anchialine pools of various types occur near and around Punalu'u and Ninole Cove. These pools are rare and localized brackish waters along coastal lava flows that exhibit tidal

fluctuations without a surface connection to the sea. They include open pools near the shore as well as undisturbed pools in collapsed lava tubes, cracks, and caves.

These pools when the tide goes out can quickly empty out to the ocean and expose a vast cave system normally accessible at high tide. The danger comes in when the tide does come back these caves and pools fill rapidly and with limited exits and sharp slippery rocks that if not timed properly you won't make it out of the caves in time.

There have been cases where survivors were able to find air pockets big enough to wait till low tide again and escape the underwater caves.

As for the wildlife on the island there are many tropical birds, snakes, insects and spiders, but in these areas only Sea Turtles and birds come to nest on the beaches. The only dangerous creature in the area is the giant rock cracker crab. It is the largest land-living arthropod in the world, and is probably at the upper size limit for terrestrial animals with exoskeletons in recent times, with a weight of up to 6 kg. It can grow to up to 1.5 m in length from leg to leg.

Its claws are strong enough to crack small rock, hence the name rock cracker and crabs feed on fruits, nuts, seeds, and the pith of fallen trees, but will eat carrion and other organic matter opportunistically. There have been reported cases where pirates and other groups use these crabs as a form of torture and execution by immobilizing the victim and allowing the crabs to eat the victim alive.

Although the occasional injured or drunken tourist that passes out on these beaches were either killed by the crabs mistaking their heads for large nuts or being eaten alive by these crabs.

Weather Stats -

The average temperature is about 21.1°C year round. In the cooler dry season the lowest it normally gets is 15.5°C while the highest recorded temp during the height of the wet season is 29°C.

The wet season consists of day long rain storms, hurricanes and high levels of humidity. During these long rain storms coastal flooding, lava tubes collapsing and landslides are common especially in the lava fields.

While during the dry season it only rains a few days a month or when the volcanic activity produces large steam clouds over the island.

Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coconut_crab

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lava_tube

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punalu%27u_Beach - for black sand and the Anchialine pools