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NICOLE FRANZEN

WANDERLUST

Under the HAWAIIAN SUN *From the Big Island to Lanai, delight in Hawaii's top island-chic accommodations and experiential adventures*

By Paul Rubio

DISCOVER THE RENEWED MAUNA LANI, AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION

Following a \$200-million renovation and rebranding, the grand dame of the Big Island, Mauna Lani, re-emerges as the latest addition to

the Auberge Resorts Collection. Cast across 32 coastal acres in Kalahuihua, a sacred space of wide beaches, fishponds, and lush gardens once reserved for Hawaiian royalty, the reimagined resort exudes an understated contemporary

style that heightens the splendor of its history-steeped grounds and builds upon its former open-air design.

The resort wows at first sight. A linear entrance framed by elaborate wood paneling and

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SCENES FROM MAUNA LANI (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): THE BEACH; MAIN POOL; LOBBY NOOK, WITH DESIGN CUES INSPIRED BY THE ISLAND; OCEAN-FRONT CABANA; DINNER SPREAD AT CANOEHOUSE; DRINKS FROM HA BAR.



whimsical sofa swings leads to a design-forward six-story atrium. At the base shines a single reflection pond, artistically embellished with palm trees, wood slats, and hand-carved outrigger canoes. Vegetation cloaks eco-chic nooks kitted out with sectionals and rockers, accented by floral fabrics and wall paintings. The organic aesthetic extends to the resort's 333 guestrooms and suites, all of which are draped in earthy tones and textures to recall sweeping mountain or ocean vistas.

Refreshed amenities at Mauna Lani also capitalize on Kalahui-pua'a's striking environs. A trio of swimming pools overlook either the Kohola Coast or the ancient saltwater fishponds. A full-service beach setup graces a sandy strip bordered by black lava formations. Facing the Pacific, HaLani restaurant serves locally inspired

breakfasts; think Kona coffee and ube (purple yam) pancakes with griddled pineapple and roasted coconut.

Neighboring Ha Bar and Grill and the Surf Shack are two barefoot spots for tossing back a few Lani Tais, the resort's spin on the Mai Tai. Come late afternoon, oceanfront CanoeHouse offers the island's most memorable dining experience: a front-row seat to the Big Island's pastel sunsets paired with elevated Hawaiian cuisine. Noted restaurateur power couple Matt and Yuka Raso's locavore concept consummates a foodie fantasy. Diners can expect island produce and ocean-to-table assets over dishes like Kahuku corn "ribs," grilled Big Island hearts of palm, and whole Keahole lobster basted with miso butter.

When staying at the Mauna Lani, take advantage of fresh programming spotlighting local culture, folklore, and pride. On an early morning paddle, witness the sun's ascent over Mauna Kea volcano while learning about Polynesian voyaging and ancestral ties to the land and sea. Go back in time to Kalahui-pua'a circa 250 BC with in-house historian Daniel Akaka. At the spa, relax during massage treatments anchored by traditional rhythmic motions and using island ingredients like sandalwood, turmeric, and honey.

With its thoughtful redesign and reconceptualization, Mauna Lani advances to a new era of modern luxury while carefully honoring Hawaii's rich culture and history. (aubergeresorts.com/maunalani)

FLY ABOVE THE BIG ISLAND WITH BLUE HAWAIIAN HELICOPTERS

The saying "bigger is better" rings true in the Hawaiian island chain, where the Big Island exhibits extraordinary natural beauty matched only by its impressive size. The youngest of the



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SOAR ABOVE THE BIG ISLAND WITH BLUE HAWAIIAN HELICOPTERS; A ROOM AT THE FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANAI AND SCENES FROM THE ADULTS-ONLY POOL AND MAIN POOL, BOTH AT THE RESORT.

Hawaiian Islands, this 4,028-square-mile ecological marvel boasts dramatic landscapes spanning disparate climate zones—from wet tropical and dry temperate, to arid desert and polar tundra—and constitutes nearly 63 percent of the state’s landmass. Shaped from five shield volcanoes of different ages, the Big Island’s topography shifts from steam plumes and molten lava to fertile mountains and valleys underscored by towering waterfalls. It’s a mind-blowing natural phenomenon that’s impossible to grasp—unless hovering above it.

On the Big Island Spectacular with Waterfall Landing tour from Blue Hawaiian Helicopters, soar to sights inaccessible by road and zoom out on the island’s volcanic fury and mist-shrouded mountain magic. Beyond the nonstop drone-like vantages, look forward to a descent into the fiery activity of Kilauea volcano. Then, brace for an epic landing at the base of a waterfall hidden among the Kohala Mountains, before rising above its 1,000-foot counterparts that cascade into the

Waimanu Valley. Though shorter island tours are available from Blue Hawaiian Helicopters, spring for the Spectacular for a true once-in-a-lifetime experience. (bluehawaiian.com)

GO OFF THE GRID AT FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANAI

With a resident population around 3,100 and an area of 140.5 square miles, Lanai is Hawaii’s smallest inhabited island—and about as far-flung as it gets within the United States. In this remote land, a sole coastal property houses a self-contained world of luxury and serves as an access point to Lanai’s culture and geography.

Located along the island’s southernmost reaches near the white sand beach of Hulopo’e Bay, the open-air Four Seasons Resort Lanai features everything one could desire from an upscale tropical vacation. A total of 213 guest rooms—brimming with personality thanks to designer Todd-Avery Lenahan of TAL Studio—are spread throughout heavily landscaped acreage in multiple low-rise structures. The

heart of the resort is a lagoon-style pool overlooking Pacific Ocean blues. Oversized daybeds and cabana cocoons are tiered along the hillside, maximizing privacy. Close by is the Retreat, an adults-only pool and lounge encircled by lava-rock grottos and a waterfall. Big-deal names headline the restaurant offerings, including farm-to-table Malibu Farm (which services poolside food and beverage) and iconic Japanese sensation Nobu. There’s also the fabulous Hawanawana Spa and daily complimentary wellness programs, including restorative morning yoga on the beach.

This excess may not sound very off the grid, but that’s where the activities center comes in. Explore Lanai’s interior by horseback or venture through the forest on a guided off-road Polaris tour. Rent a house Jeep and choose your own adventure across endless dirt roads and windswept rocky terrain, likely without encountering another human the entire time; along the journey, discover petroglyphs, storied places, and secluded beaches. Closer to the resort, hike the short cliffside path to



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Pu'upehe (Sweetheart Rock) or opt for the longer Kapiha'a (Fisherman's) Trail, a craggy path that skirts the southern coastline. Under the sea, it's a similar story of exploration and discovery, specifically within Lanai's 13 dive sites; none are more ethereal than Cathedrals, a collection of lava arches and tubes resembling submerged stained glass.

Whether you're looking to leave it all behind at a distant destination or fully immerse in the experiences therein, Four Seasons Resort Lanai



FROM LEFT: THE DROOLWORTHY AVOCADO TOAST AT HAU TREE; THE REFRESHED, RETRO-GLAM LOBBY AT KAIMANA BEACH HOTEL.

entices with exotic escapism at its finest. (fourseasons.com/lanai)

STOP OVER IN RETRO-CHIC

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU

The Hawaiian Islands are well connected with multiple daily flights, but interisland COVID testing requirements may prescribe an overnight in Honolulu, Oahu, to await results from the state's main rapid-testing facility (check hawaii.tourismauthority.org for the latest information).

Even if a layover isn't mandated, spending a few nights in the Hawaiian capital is worth it to feel the city's pulse and experience its legendary beach and surf cultures. Stay at Waikiki's

Kaimana Beach Hotel, a mid-century icon on Honolulu's most prized stretch of beach that recently removed the bandages from a major facelift courtesy of Hawaii-based interior design firm Henderson Design Group. Embrace its modern boho vibe, most palpable in the colorful lobby festooned with beach-inspired art and hanging surfboards.

To go all out, book one of the five top-floor suites to enjoy breathtaking panoramas from an outdoor balcony and dine beachfront under the stars at Hau Tree, a shared-plates concept by James Beard Award-nominated chef Chris Kajioaka. It's currently the hottest table in Honolulu. (kaimana.com) ◀◀

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Promotion and Events

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