

AFM Travel: Kauai's Pace of Play

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On the lush island of Kauai, world-class golf, spa and resort operations harbor an island experience akin to none.



If island time is so slow, then why do Hawaiian vacations go by so fast? From the welcoming locals and lush landscapes to the world-class accommodations and activities, the unique vibe of Kauai makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly why a departure from the island is so hard. The butlers at The St. Regis Princeville Resort may have something to do with it.

Waking up each morning to a French press is the ultimate feel-good luxury—especially when your butler brings it to you in bed. Luckily, butlers are a standard amenity of the junior suites at the St. Regis. In fact, the St. Regis's butlers can fulfill a menu of requests, like mending a broken golf club. Unfortunately, they can't fix your golf game. Which is just fine, as there are a bevy of golf outlets on the island to suit any desire.

Located near the town of Hanalei on the North Shore, Princeville is home to the recently renovated Makai Course and the Prince Course, which will complete a revamping late this fall. Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s eye for art and passion for design meld seamlessly into the contours of the Makai Course. From bunkering patterns that mimic ocean waves on No. 14 to mirror images of the natural topography on the par-3 third hole, the Makai exhales a true sense-of-place experience.

Across the property, the links-style Prince Course and its 60,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse are receiving a royal makeover. Ranked as the best course in Hawaii by industry publications, the Prince harnesses an almost romantic ambience amid a true test of golf. Jones Jr.'s design places existing features, like a waterfall or natural lagoon, at center stage, excluding sand traps and course accouterments on particular holes. The Prince's challenging layout has gained a reputation among Hollywood's finest who have been known to frequent its fairways.

Perhaps the most well-known course on the island is Poipu Bay, which was home to the PGA Grand Slam of Golf from 1994 to 2006. It's easy to see why the PGA selected the site for the event, what with more than 7,100 yards, incredibly diverse tropical vegetation and an enamoring back nine that takes you out onto Pacific bluffs and back. The craggy cliffs and picturesque ocean views can also be enjoyed via a walking trail that borders Poipu. A semblance of spirituality takes golfers unexpectedly at points throughout the round. The remains of Hawaiian worship sites called heiau and ancient stone walls remind players of the land's sacred purpose before becoming an emerald holy land for golfers from around the globe.

For utmost convenience, golfers playing Poipu can retreat to the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort situated adjacent to the course. In addition to Polynesian décor, the resort has primo amenities for post-round pampering. Rejuvenate a golfer's back with a Lomi Lomi massage from the Anara Spa, take a swirl in the saltwater swimming lagoon then head to Tidepools, the resort's award-winning restaurant, for a delectable meal in a sultry, sea-inspired ambience. Top off an exceptional evening with a nightcap at Stevenson's Library, a bookcase-lined bar and lounge fully equipped with pool tables and live music.



For some serious recreation, another South Shore hot spot holds the ticket. Located on Kalapaki Beach, the Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club boasts beachfront access, numerous dining options and the largest single-level pool in all of Hawaii. The resort's 356 rooms have varying view options and all accommodations were recently renovated to reflect a modern Polynesian flair.

Just a few steps outside the hotel's doors sits the Kauai Lagoons Golf Club, a stand-out facility with three distinct nine-hole layouts designed by Jack Nicklaus. In early spring, the club introduced the newly renovated Kiele Moana Nine, a stretch of play where several breathtaking holes compete to be the trademark of the site's Pacific-hugging location.

Of particular note is the Marriott's close proximity to the center of Lihue, shopping districts and the airport. Though plane noise isn't an issue, commercial jets seen flying in the distance serve as a reminder to enjoy the island pace before that fast-approaching departure time.

TO LEARN MORE:

The Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa

808.742.1234, www.kauai.hyatt.com.

Kauai Lagoons Golf Club

800.634.6400, www.kauailagoonsgolf.com.

Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club on Kalapaki Beach

808.245.5050, www.marriott.com.

Makai Golf Club at Princeville

808.826.1912, www.makaigolf.com.

Poipu Bay Golf Course

808.742.8711, www.poipubaygolf.com.

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Princeville Prince Golf Course

800.826.1105, www.princeville.com.

The St. Regis Princeville Resort

808.826.9644, www.stregisprinceville.com.