

# Finding Serenity at Four Seasons Resort Maui

BY KAREN VILLALPANDO

**A**loha is both hello and goodbye in Hawaii; saying it when you arrive puts a smile on your face and a spring in your step. Saying aloha when you depart leaves you feeling a little melancholy, especially if you're not sure when you will be returning.

We departed the Four Seasons Resort Maui about a month ago and I had that melancholy feeling. Now, the Four Seasons Maui just gave me 9 million reasons to say "Aloha" again. The resort just announced the opening of their Serenity pool, and I can hardly wait to experience "serenity" Four Seasons style!

The \$9 million project was nearly completed when we visited, and we were treated to a tour of the new facility, as they put on the finishing touches. This is the third pool at the resort, located on the new 4,100-square-foot Serenity Pool Terrace. The elevated location provides panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, the island of Lanai, and the Maui mountains. Among the features at the 21-years-or-older escape are six luxury cabanas featuring flat screen TVs, wireless Internet access, ceiling fans and mini refrigerators. The cabanas can be completely closed off for the ultimate privacy. An underwater music system enhances the salt-water swimming experience, and a swim-up bar features specialty cocktails and poolside cuisine.

"Our resort is well-known for being able to host families. But now we have a new dimension that allows us to host couples who are looking for peace and quiet. Our Serenity pool provides that," said Mark Simon, director of marketing for Four Seasons Maui.

In addition, four bubble loungers, two Jacuzzis and massages at your chaise lounge are available. What's a bubble lounge? A small pool about 5' x 7' with six inches of water that constantly bubbles, providing relief from the heat without fully plunging in the pool. Sounds fabulous, doesn't it?

There are, of course, an abundance of other amenities at the Four Seasons Resort Maui that we took full advantage of on our vacation.

I'll begin with the Lokelani Suite, where we spent three wonderful days and nights. Situated on the third floor, the Lokelani suite is an ideal accommodation for a large or extended family, or three couples traveling together. With nearly 3,000 square feet of living space, the Lokelani Suite has a master bedroom with a king bed, and two other bedrooms with either a king or two queen beds in each. There are five bathrooms, including a master bath with a deep soaking Jacuzzi tub and a marble two-person shower. The soaking tub is positioned so you can have an ocean view while being pampered by the whirlpool jets!

The rooms connect via the lanais, with teak steamer chairs at each sliding door, and two chaise lounges and an umbrella on the expansive, private lawn. An elliptical machine and treadmill are available for your personal use on the lanai's private workout area, as well as an outdoor dining table, where we enjoyed breakfast.

The décor is modern chic Hawaiian, creating a comforting, unhurried environment, all of which added to our relaxation. This is the best part of vacationing at the Four Seasons, you're in a rush to



photo courtesy of Four Seasons Resort Maui

DUO, the fine dining, steak and seafood restaurant at the Four Seasons Resort Maui, grills prime and Kobe beef as well as fresh island catches in a romantic poolside atmosphere.



photo courtesy of Four Seasons Resort Maui

The new Serenity pool at the Four Seasons Resort Maui offers couples a quiet space to relax and rejuvenate. The infinity edge, salt-water pool, provides spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and West Maui Mountains.

do nothing, and where to lounge next seems to be the next decision of the day. The Lokelani suite offers so many options for relaxing. The suite also features an indoor dining table and bar, a living room, and a multimedia room, complete with flat screen TV and Wii – the popular Nintendo video game. An additional dining and living room separate the two other bedrooms, and each room has a private bath, as well as a guest bath with shower. The ample living space will comfortably accommodate at least eight people. The complimentary services and amenities included when booking the suite are many: floral arrangements, limousine and luggage van transfers to and from the airport, car rental (Town Car or seven passenger mini-van) for the duration of your stay, specialty leis, fruit and fine champagne upon arrival, complimentary breakfast daily at DUO for all guests in the suite, one 50-minute massage for each adult, and food and beverage amenities daily. If you are interested in reserving the Lokelani Suite, contact the resort. It's the ultimate "family room"!

As much as we enjoyed living in our suite, the pool areas and beach are just steps away, where the cabana boys and girls are at your service. The Wailea Beach team is quick to set up chaise lounges and umbrellas or cabanas. You can occupy your beach chair all day –

without incurring a charge. That's a signature of the Four Seasons Maui Resort: these amenities are included with your room, whether you are staying in a standard room or a suite. If it's the fountain pool atmosphere you prefer, the same policy applies – you are welcome to stay all day. If however, you leave your spot for longer than an hour, your lounge may be given to another guest. This is also a

great policy – giving all guests an opportunity to enjoy a poolside chair. With the Fountain pool, the Waterfall pool and now the Serenity pool, the seating options are plentiful! One of my favorite complimentary services has to be the spritz of Evian water to cool you off. The chilled fruit and popsicles are nice too. If it's a beverage you prefer, try the piña colodas and delicious fruit smoothies. Just sign it to your room.

Speaking of treats, the dining choices at the Four Seasons Maui are impeccable. Spago, DUO and Ferraro's are three of the best restaurants on Maui, all located at one resort. At Wolfgang Puck's Spago Maui, the chef continues to create innovative preparations on his signature dishes, under the direction of Chef Cameron Lewark. For example, the spicy ahi poke in sesame-miso cones combines a Hawaiian favorite with an LA twist: the tuna is gently packed in the sweet and spicy cones, and served on a wooden cone holder. I gobbled up the three cones before anyone had time to ask for a taste. The whole Hawaiian moi (known as the king's fish) steamed Hong Kong style was a light yet highly flavorful entrée with shades of "Chinois", Puck's Santa Monica restaurant. The lamb chops weren't just reminiscent of the Santa Monica eatery, but were actually called Chinois lamb chops with Hunan Eggplant and Chili-Mint Vinaigrette. Puck has been a master of fusion cuisine since the 1980s and continues with great success at the Spago Maui.

DUO is a two-year-old steak and seafood restaurant by night, and bountiful breakfast buffet each morning. Homemade granola, omelettes prepared your way, smoked salmon, a Japanese bento box breakfast, breads, pastries, fresh Hawaiian fruit and a special juice or smoothie of the day are just a few examples of what's offered each morning. These comfort foods give way to haute cuisine by night, where DUO transforms into a romantic, poolside venue with twinkling candles and starlit skies. Prime cuts of steak including Japanese Kobe beef highlights the "turf" side, while the freshest local island fish and seafood provide the "surf" portion of the menu. The DUO chopped salad with Point Reyes blue cheese, endive, arugula, pineapple and spicy pecans is a must-have. We remembered this salad from two years ago, and we're delighted it is still a featured item. Both the steak and fish selections are a la carte, where you choose the preparation and the sauces you prefer. The veal chop is 14 oz., and delicious with the Béarnaise and Marsala porcini sauce. All of the fish selections are incredible, like the black pepper and coriander crusted ahi, the island snapper and the ono. Our favorite sauces for the fish entrees were the citrus-ginger butter and the Thai red coconut curry. For sides, we ordered the chive potato puree with goat cheese and creamed spinach. There's not a wrong choice on the menu – everything is skillfully prepared and downright delectable. Be sure to save room for dessert, whether it is the homemade ice

creams, the chocolate soufflé or the ice wine gelatin with lychee.

Service at the entire resort is exemplary. The hotel personnel are genuinely happy to help with any request, a trait I entirely appreciate.

It was at the spa where I found this

of my face, shoulders, head, arms and legs. Gemstones were placed in my hands and on my chest. Then, with an aromatic cushion over my eyes, I felt a warm stream of oil drip across my forehead. My head was tilted back and the warm oil traveled onto my scalp. This continuous flow of oil lasted for nearly five minutes, after which it was

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to be especially true. I was scheduled for a facial, but was feeling apprehensive after having a reaction to some products a few years ago at another spa. The women reassured me that all of the products were very safe, hypoallergenic and it was a very special treatment I was to receive. Their soothing encouragement led me to an outdoor hale where I was met by a very soft-spoken woman who began by massaging my face and applying cooling creams to my face. This was not just your average facial. Refreshing cool creams gave way to warm towels and continued massaging

gently massaged into my hair. It was the most relaxing experience of my life. I was in a quasi state of sleep, yet fully aware of what I was experiencing. The gemstones react with the oil, called shirodhara, resulting in a calming of the central nervous system. After the treatment, as I walked back to the main spa from my outdoor hale, I noticed the grounds and walkways were all wet. Only a few people were sitting by the pool. I finally asked, "Did it rain?" One guest replied "Oh yes, it poured for about 30 minutes." Even in the outdoor hale, I had no idea a shower had occurred. When I



photo by Michael Villalpando

The living room of the Lokelani suite was beautifully appointed and provided the perfect view of the Hawaiian sunset each night.

## Tee Up in Paradise at Wailea Golf Club

BY MICHAEL VILLALPANDO

**T**he balmy climate and breathtaking scenery at Wailea Golf Club make it an ideal destination for playing a round or two. After golfing at two of the three lush courses at the club, I wasn't surprised to learn that 70 percent of the golfers are repeat guests. I'm one of those repeat customers and will be again on my next trip to Maui.

There are 54 holes spread across the three courses, all of which offer panoramic views of the island's leeward coast. Those seeking a few practice swings before hitting the green can head to the 12-acre training facility to become acquainted with every club in your bag.

My favorite time of day to play is late in the afternoon. This is when the "Address-the-ball-way-too-long, line-up-every-putt-from-three-sides" golfers are usually taking a nap or relaxing at cocktail hour. Don't get me wrong, I love the game, but to me, it's still a game. I like to take time to soak in the scenery, scents and sounds of a course, taking lots of mental images

and filing them into my cranial computer. With this in mind, I opted to hit the Gold Course first, the

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most challenging of Wailea's offerings.

The terrain here is rugged and varied, leaving golfers with no dull moments and plenty of opportunities to strategize and build skills. If you're a long hitter, you'll feel right at home here, but thinking through each shot is a key to success. Created by architect Robert Trent Jones II, this top-notch course won accolades from Golf Magazine and Golf Digest when it opened in 1994. With four to six tee boxes on

every hole, a variety of players can get into the game at the Gold, as long as they're willing to work. You'll notice several lava hazards around the course. They are like "mini calderas", nice to look at but don't go in after errant shots – with loose rocks, steep angles and sharp edges, you'll come out looking like you lost a fight with Wolverine!

Wailea Emerald was next up for me, and I found it to be a more scenic course with a gorgeous double green shared by holes 10 and 17. Double greens are hard to find in Hawaii, and this one borders a scenic lake. Bring your camera if you decide to hit the Emerald Course. But don't get too distracted by the tropical blossoms that are abundant in this course. You don't want to forget the fact that you're golfing on a Zagat-rated course that's been called "extraordinary". It's a par 72 with few forced carries, so you get to relax into your game, rather than put your nose to the golfing grindstone.

My time constraints did not allow me to play the Blue Course,



photo courtesy of a friendly Four Seasons guest

Michael, Emily, Rebecca and Karen Villalpando, while on a sunset stroll to dinner at DUO, pause in the grand staircase for the "postcard" picture.

arrived back at the Lokelani suite, my daughters and husband all said I was glowing, and asked if I had a margarita or something. I said no, just the most incredible spa treatment you can imagine. Be sure and ask for it by name, "Gemstone dhara". It was our last night in Maui and we dressed for dinner, as we had every night. Michael and I went to the lobby bar to hear the Hawaiian music and watch the hula dancers. We enjoyed one last moji to while waiting for our daughters to join us. I felt very proud when my girls walked in and heads turned. They are beautiful girls on the inside and out. As we strolled to Ferraro's for dinner, I felt really lucky to have had such a wonderful vacation in one of the most beautiful places on earth.

Sitting down to dinner and ordering like kings for our final meal, we dined on lobster, veal cheek, and Colorado lamb at the authentic Italian cucina rustica restaurant. Its oceanfront location and



photo courtesy of Four Seasons Resort Maui

A private lawn is one of the many features of the Lokelani suite.

but this gives me one more reason to come back for more. With elevation changes and strategically placed hazards all over this course, it has been a great hosting spot for the LPGA Women's Kemper Open and the Asahi-Kyosen Gold Tournament.

As I mentioned earlier, take pictures, but remember grandpa's slide shows? Kids, grandkids and buddies all love a well-told story.

Guaranteed! After your game, check out the pro shop, where top, name-brand gear from Lily Pulitzer, Burberry, Izod and Lacoste lines the racks.

If you stay at Wailea Resort, you'll get preferred green fees, and a guaranteed luxurious experience.

Call (808)875-7450 or visit www.waileagolf.com. Say "Aloha" to some of the best golf you'll ever play.



photo by Rob Brown

A view of Hole #18 on the Gold Course, where golfers can expect to find a challenging round, with unbelievable views.