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MAUNA LANI RESORT

PHOTO: © NICOLE FRANZEN



View from the 4625 sq. ft. Francis H. I'i Brown Suite overlooking the resort's Great Lawn.

Paradise Found

Auberge Resort's deeply spiritual Mauna Lani, blends sustainability with luxurious activities

by Fredric Hamber

HERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MAUNA LANI RESORT THAT INSPIRES DEVOTED AFFECTION. Shortly before it reopened from pandemic closure, General Manager Sanjiv Hulugalle was contacted by a regular guest with a most irregular request: a ten-day buyout of the 334-room property (a member of the Auberge Resorts Collection) for the sole enjoyment of his family of six. An additional stipulation was that the resort be fully staffed during their visit with the more than 350 employees whose Hawaiian hospitality his family had come to love over the years.

Opposite page, clockwise from left top: the hotel lobby is a warm and comfortable space; all guest rooms on the property, most with ocean views, have been updated with natural décor; sunset over one of the resort's two 18-hole golf courses; the beachfront CanoeHouse Restaurant serves dinner nightly.

LOBBY & RESTAURANT PHOTOS: © NICOLE FRANZEN



Its location, 32 acres on the Kohala coast of the Big Island with a view of five mountains has been recognized for centuries for its unique spiritual mana. King Kamehameha I frequently stopped here to relax while his retainers tended his canoes. Natural springs beneath black lava rock are the source of ponds that ancient Hawaiians used for aquaculture of fish and the plants the fish feed off.

Although there's plenty of history, shared daily during petroglyph hikes and "talk story" sessions by Danny Akaka, the resort's knowledge keeper, the hotel is also thoroughly up-to-date. A recent \$200M remodel by New York-based



ROOM & GOLF COURSE PHOTOS: © MAUNA LANI, AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION



Meyer Davis showcases open-air yet intimate spaces furnished with hardwoods and natural fabrics. Five private bungalows, each with two bedrooms, three baths and private pool, come with butler service to facilitate arrangements for a custom stay.

Activities are at the core of Auberge Resorts' culture. During a sunrise outrigger canoe paddle, a native guide blows a conch shell and chants to invoke one's ancestors. The sports program is overseen by pro surfer Bullet Obra. Spa treatments incorporate sandalwood from a Kona farm, as well as local honey, vetiver and blue tansy.

At CanoeHouse, the prime dining venue, Chef Matt Raso with his wife Yuka, the restaurant's General Manager, offer the best of sea and farm with Japanese-inspired touches such as the yuzu kosho that flavors grilled Kona kampachi. It's a perfect venue to regard the sunset, ideally with a Lani Tai, a take on the classic Mai Tai. Crafted with house-made macadamia nut orgeat and Kuleana Nanea Aged Rum from sugarcane grown and distilled a few miles up the coast, it's a splendid way to pause and reflect on the richness of a day spent in this special island spot. ☼