

JANUARY 2011

# GENTRY

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AMAZING WOMEN



## *amazing* WOMEN

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GENTRY

Victoria Yeager Sawyer

## Hualalai Spa at the Four Seasons

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—CATHERINE KR HUNTER

PHOTO: DOU KUBBE

Waiea Garden at the Four Seasons



# THAT *aloha* SPIRIT

*Some of the Hawaiian Islands' most intriguing getaway spots.*

TEXT BY GLEN PUTMAN, CATHERINE HUNTER, AND STEFANIE L. BEASLEY

## Drumbeats from Hawai'i's Big Island | *by Glen Putman*

**O**n my first visit to Hawai'i, on our descent into Hilo, the United Airlines pilot steered the sleek DC-8 in and out of fluffy white clouds and then through a magnificent rainbow before landing on the Big Island. Aloha, and what a welcome!

I know now that first magical visit was a good omen, a precursor of many more visits to come. Since that first flight in 1972, I've returned to the Big Island (Hawai'i) more times than I can remember, but certainly the total runs into scores. I would say that measured by outbound air flights, the Big Island is the destination I have visited **most** frequently.

The Big Island is the youngest island and the state namesake in the lovely chain first called the Sandwich Islands by Captain James Cook in 1778. Captain Cook lost his life in a battle in Kealahou Bay, just south of Kailua-Kona. My welcome was more cordial.

Yes, I fell in love with the place the first time I saw the raw beauty and natural magnificence of the land and sea, molded spectacularly by wind, rain, and fire. From active volcanoes spilling hot lava into the sea, to pristine beaches; from cool

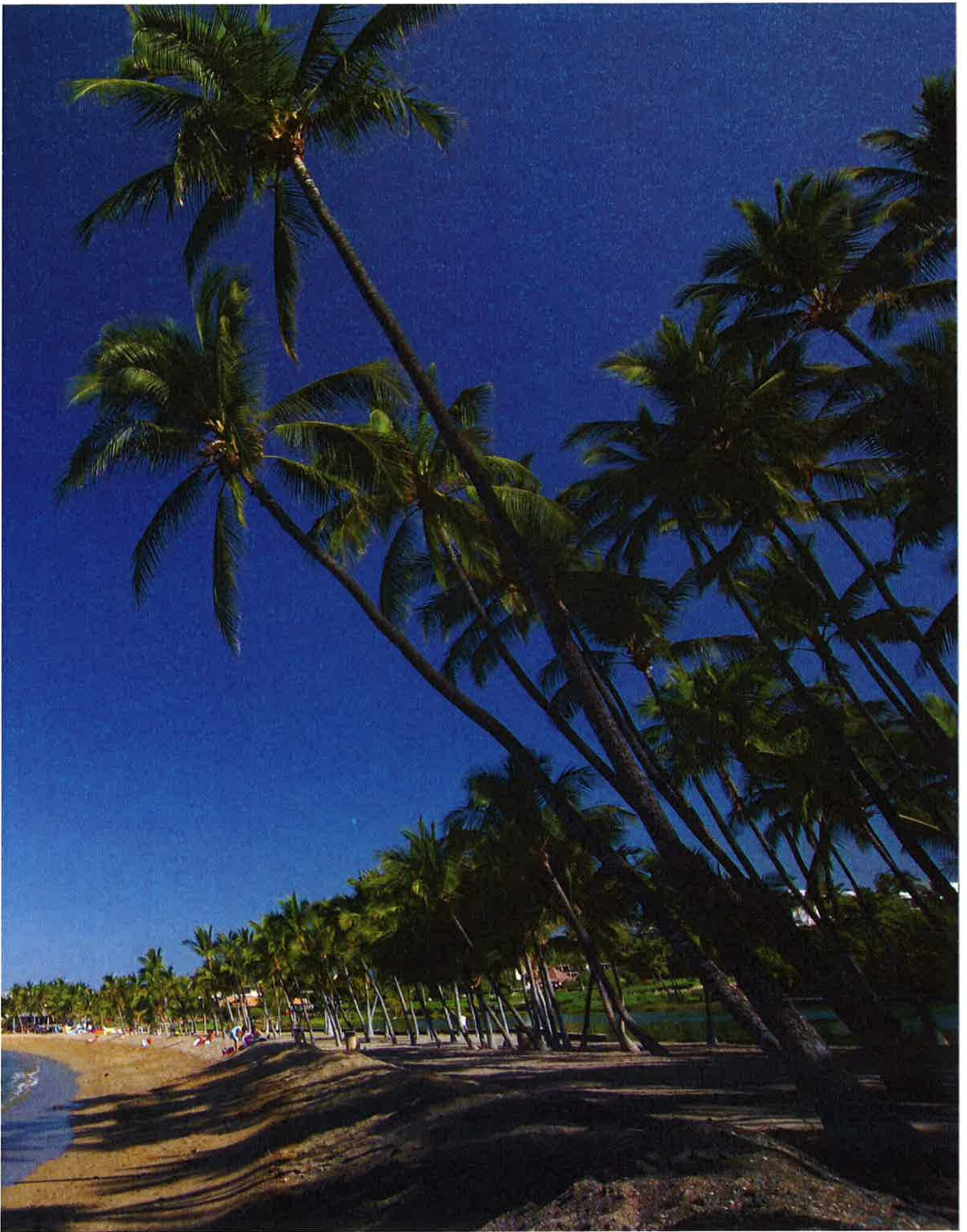
upland forests to high-country range land; from spent black lava fields to snowcapped mountains, the Big Island is a dramatic living canvas of nature's power and diversity. The interplay of these elements makes the Big Island seem somehow remote and unharnessed. To me, this sense of seclusion is an asset.

Hawai'i's Big Island enjoyed a big boost to tourism last year after being named one of Frommer's "Top 10 Destinations for 2010." According to Frommer, "This exotic island offers adventure, relaxation, and an experience of Old Hawai'i."

And I never tire of the experience, whether it's skipping over the red hot lava fields just off the Chain of Craters Road, or riding horseback outside up-country Waimea, or savoring the views from the Pololu Valley overlook, just southeast of the North Kohala coast and the village of Kapa'au. One morning about 30 years ago my young son and I even skied down the crunchy corn snow atop the 13,796-foot Mauna Kea volcano. It was breathtaking . . . in more ways than one! That afternoon we warmed up on Hapuna Beach.

Of course championship golf is featured at Mauna Kea, Mauna Lani, Four Seasons Hualalai, and Hapuna. Or, you can just kick back on the beach, toes up in the sand.







## Big Island Lodging

### *Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows*

In 2010, this resort was tabbed as one of the Top 10 Luxury Hotels in the U.S. by Tripadvisor. In addition, Mauna Lani won Travel Weekly's 2010 top award in the Eco-Friendly category. The award recognizes Mauna Lani's commitment to the responsible stewardship of the land. Mauna Lani's innovative approach to green power has earned it the distinction of generating the most solar electric power of any resort in the world. Plus, you can dine in the wonderful Canoe House restaurant, which, in addition to the regular menu, features wine dinners with the likes of Nickel & Nickel winery, with their wonderful cabernet sauvignon being poured. For the ultimate in luxury and privacy, the bungalows are secluded but just within a minute's walk of the hotel. Each bungalow features a gated driveway and private access to the beach, and 4,000 square feet of living space, including two bedrooms, three baths, a private swimming pool and whirlpool spa. [www.maunalani.com](http://www.maunalani.com)

### *Mauna Kea Beach Hotel*

"Every great beach deserves a great hotel." This was said by Laurance S. Rockefeller, who founded The Mauna Kea Beach Hotel in 1965.

The "new" Mauna Kea Beach Hotel is a luxury Hawaiian resort in a class by itself. A recent redesign of the guest rooms artfully melded three guest rooms into two in the main building (think very spacious), and created new floor plans with vast, glamorous baths, many of which offer a sunny ocean view right from the tub!

Mr. Rockefeller knew the great beach at Kauna'oa also deserved spectacular golf and exceptional dining to accompany the most exclusive and expensive resort of its day. Four decades later, following a \$150 million repair and renovation, The Mauna Kea once again stands as a landmark of luxury on the Kohala Coast . . . the Grand Dame of Big Island luxury. And now it's a bargain. A special promotion offering discounted rates with breakfast included starts at \$355 per night and runs through December 22, 2011. Sister property Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel starts at \$220 per night. [www.princeresortshawaii.com/mauna-kea-beach-hotel](http://www.princeresortshawaii.com/mauna-kea-beach-hotel)

### *Kona Village*

From the wooden porch of our hale at Kona Village, the sun hovers over the horizon for what seems like an eon. An offshore breeze rustles the palm fronds. A bumblebee the size of a quarter is still hard at work, buzzing and bumping off the lush foliage alongside our oceanfront bungalow that is no more than 15 steps from the tiny cove of water. The sea laps up on the rocky beach in one of the most gloriously beautiful spots on earth. For kicking back and relaxing, nothing beats Kona Village, which is beloved as much for what it doesn't have as for what it does have. There are no phones, no clocks, and no television sets in the guest rooms. You'll find finer gourmet food and more lush accommodations elsewhere, but I challenge you to find a more laid back spirit than at this peaceful resort of thatched roof cottages scattered amongst lush tropical gardens, historic fish ponds, and hugging the serene beach of Kahuwai Bay. During the summer, ➔



## UPCOMING EVENTS ON THE BIG ISLAND

For Lava Lovers. At press time, molten lava continues to cascade into the sea on the Puna coast. **Lava Ocean Adventures** offers ocean top seating on the 34-foot Lava Kai, with sunrise and sunset departures. Private fishing tours also available. [www.lavaocean.com](http://www.lavaocean.com)

**Mitsubishi PGA Champions Golf Tour** (January 16 – 23). Now in its 13th year, this annual PGA event at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai is the first match of the year on the senior tour. It features 36 top golfers 50 years or older who have won Champions Tour or other PGA majors. [www.hualalairesort.com](http://www.hualalairesort.com)

**Lavaman Triathlon** (Sunday, April 3). The 13th Annual Lavaman Triathlon and Sports Festival is a celebration of sports and fitness. This 10k-run, 40k-bike, and 1.5k-swim is open to individuals and relay teams of all ages and abilities. [www.lavamantriathlon.com](http://www.lavamantriathlon.com)

**Ka'u Coffee Festival** (Saturday, May 14 – Sunday, May 15) This festival celebrates the bean in Hawai'i Island's beautiful Ka'u district. Activities include best coffee tasting, recipe contest, music, farm tours, coffee demos, and auction. [www.kaucoffeefestival.com](http://www.kaucoffeefestival.com)

**King Kamehameha Day Celebration** (Friday, June 10). The festivities at the northern tip of the Big Island honor the legendary Hawaiian king in his North Kohala birthplace. The festival features a parade, lei draping on the King's statue, hula, food, and music in Kapa'au and Hawi. [www.kamehamehadaycelebration.org](http://www.kamehamehadaycelebration.org)

**Turtle Independence Day** (Monday, July 4). This event educates people about endangered Hawaiian green sea turtles. Visitors watch as the young turtles (honu), which have grown up in the ponds at the Mauna Lani Resort, are freed and released back into the ocean. [www.maunalani.com](http://www.maunalani.com)

—GLEN PUTMAN

PHOTO: JOHN F. ANSELLE

happy young children can raise the noise level, but choose the winter months and this can be your Season of Quiet Content. [www.konavillage.com](http://www.konavillage.com)

### ***Hawai'i Island Retreat***

First, this small, remote country inn is not for everyone, but it is quiet. It's not luxury or resort-y. But guests looking for tranquility can find deep connection with the land and the creatures that share it. A friendly staff will guide visits to the eco-retreat's goat herd, luscious fruit picked and eaten off the tree, harvesting vegetables from the organic gardens, and traversing 50 acres of serene and historically rich North Kohala landscape. A package plan is designed for the individual traveler looking to retreat from the demands of daily life to find reconnection with self, nature, and spirit. [www.hawaiiislandretreat.com](http://www.hawaiiislandretreat.com)

### ***Things to see and do on the Big Island***

• Count the whales. The National Marine Sanctuary allows volunteers to help count the season's population of humpbacks off

the Big Island. The count will be conducted the last Saturday of January, February, and March 2011, from 21 sites around the Big Island. [www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov](http://www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov)

• Since 1971, Fair Wind Big Island Ocean Guides has offered snorkel and scuba cruises. Or, you can book a BBQ or sightseeing cruise. [www.fair-wind.com](http://www.fair-wind.com)

• Home on the Range. Paniolo Adventures is the premier open-range horseback riding operation on Hawaii. Rides on the 11,000-acre working cattle ranch provide awesome views from the rain forest to the ocean. [www.panioloadventures.com](http://www.panioloadventures.com)

• Hawai'i Forest & Trail offers one of the best ways to explore the rich natural and cultural history of the Islands. A variety of hikes and excursions feature Hawaii's diverse flora and fauna, astronomy and history. [www.hawaii-forest.com](http://www.hawaii-forest.com)

• Big Island Eco Adventures will soon present an advanced course with nine ziplines, waterfalls, a suspension bridge, and runs averaging 2,000 feet long and 350 feet deep in North Kohala. [www.bigislandecoventures.com](http://www.bigislandecoventures.com)

• For more information, visit <http://gohawaii.com/big-island> ■



Infinity pool at the Hawai'i Island Retreat

PHOTO: JIM WATKINS

## *Luxury, Romance, and Relaxation on the* **KONA COAST**

by Catherine KR Hunter

**T**he Big Island of Hawaii is retro chic. I don't say that just because it's 800,000 years old, actually making it the youngest of its companions. The Big Island has maintained that original laid-back feeling so readily associated with Hawaiian destinations. The largest of the Hawaiian Islands, and home to numerous astounding natural landmarks, a dedicated adventurous traveler would have a lot of ground to cover. It is for this reason that late on a Monday evening, after hours of trekking volcanoes, glimpsing a lava flow, scaling waterfalls, befriending donkeys, and exuberantly body surfing ocean waves, two wayward travelers, salty, sticky, and dirt smudged, materialized in the open air lobby of the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu.

We were greeted by the resort staff with the same welcoming graciousness, warmth, and respect as guests arriving perfectly dressed and coiffed. I came to learn over the next three days that that's part of the magic of the Four Seasons. Their expertly trained team has your comfort as their mandate and they do everything possible to ensure that you enjoy your stay fully.

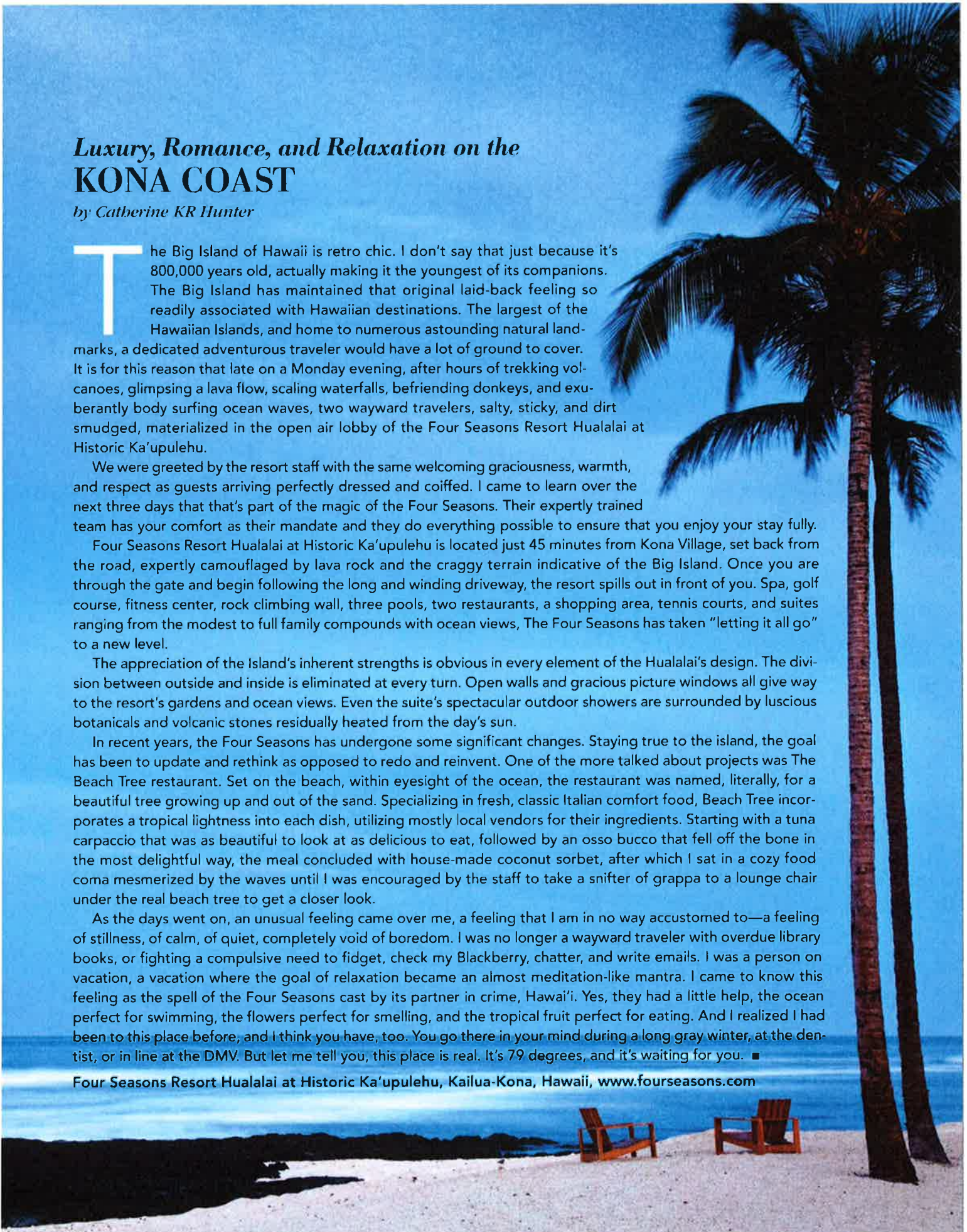
Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu is located just 45 minutes from Kona Village, set back from the road, expertly camouflaged by lava rock and the craggy terrain indicative of the Big Island. Once you are through the gate and begin following the long and winding driveway, the resort spills out in front of you. Spa, golf course, fitness center, rock climbing wall, three pools, two restaurants, a shopping area, tennis courts, and suites ranging from the modest to full family compounds with ocean views, The Four Seasons has taken "letting it all go" to a new level.

The appreciation of the Island's inherent strengths is obvious in every element of the Hualalai's design. The division between outside and inside is eliminated at every turn. Open walls and gracious picture windows all give way to the resort's gardens and ocean views. Even the suite's spectacular outdoor showers are surrounded by luscious botanicals and volcanic stones residually heated from the day's sun.

In recent years, the Four Seasons has undergone some significant changes. Staying true to the island, the goal has been to update and rethink as opposed to redo and reinvent. One of the more talked about projects was The Beach Tree restaurant. Set on the beach, within eyesight of the ocean, the restaurant was named, literally, for a beautiful tree growing up and out of the sand. Specializing in fresh, classic Italian comfort food, Beach Tree incorporates a tropical lightness into each dish, utilizing mostly local vendors for their ingredients. Starting with a tuna carpaccio that was as beautiful to look at as delicious to eat, followed by an osso bucco that fell off the bone in the most delightful way, the meal concluded with house-made coconut sorbet, after which I sat in a cozy food coma mesmerized by the waves until I was encouraged by the staff to take a snifter of grappa to a lounge chair under the real beach tree to get a closer look.

As the days went on, an unusual feeling came over me, a feeling that I am in no way accustomed to—a feeling of stillness, of calm, of quiet, completely void of boredom. I was no longer a wayward traveler with overdue library books, or fighting a compulsive need to fidget, check my Blackberry, chatter, and write emails. I was a person on vacation, a vacation where the goal of relaxation became an almost meditation-like mantra. I came to know this feeling as the spell of the Four Seasons cast by its partner in crime, Hawai'i. Yes, they had a little help, the ocean perfect for swimming, the flowers perfect for smelling, and the tropical fruit perfect for eating. And I realized I had been to this place before, and I think you have, too. You go there in your mind during a long gray winter, at the dentist, or in line at the DMV. But let me tell you, this place is real. It's 79 degrees, and it's waiting for you. ■

Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com)



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PHOTO: DOU KIDDEE

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