

FORE

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Be a golf vagabond

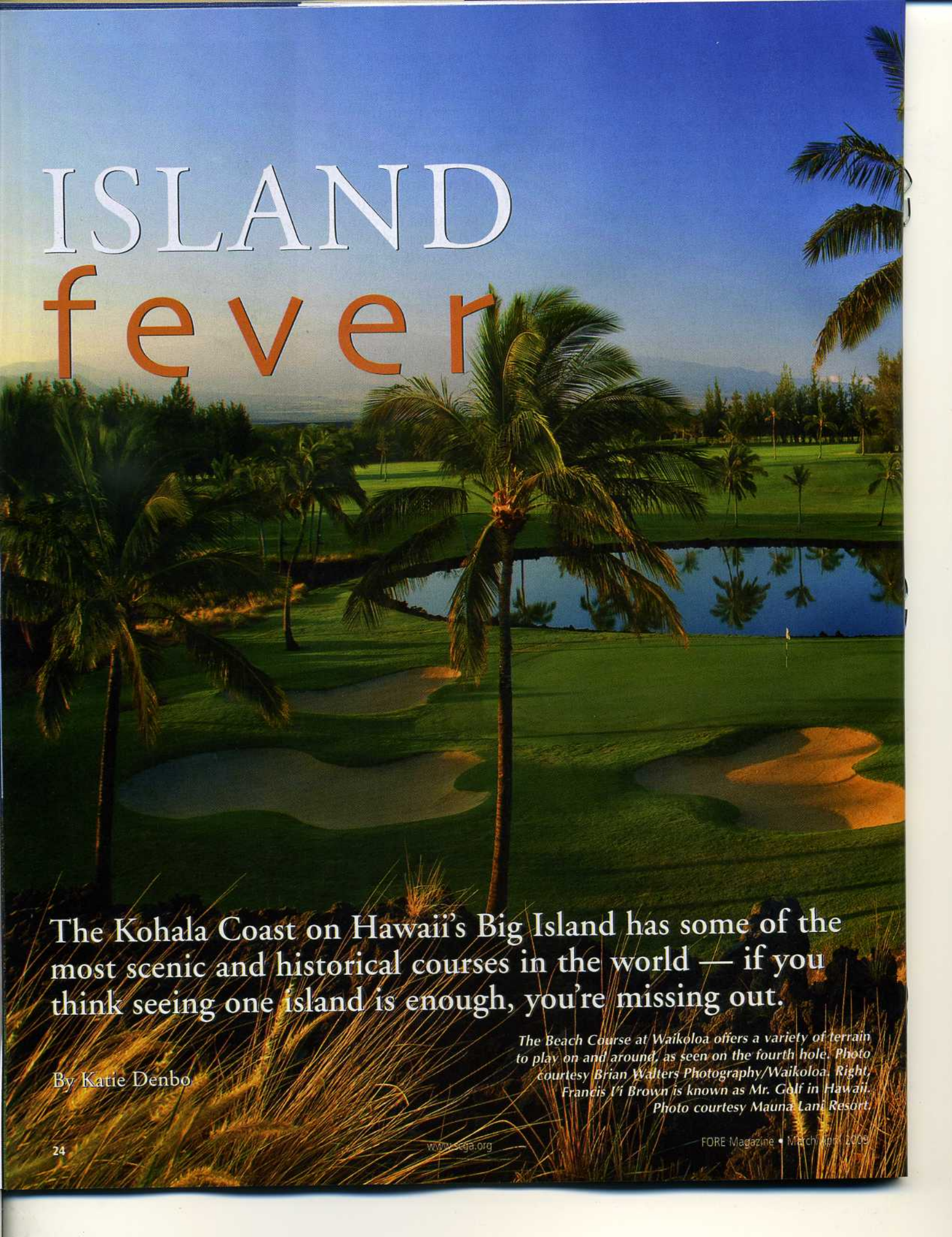
Travel and play from the mountains to the sea



Idaho: Closer than you think

Bill Wright: 50 years after making history

John O'Hurley: From the small screen
and music scene to the green



ISLAND fever

The Kohala Coast on Hawaii's Big Island has some of the most scenic and historical courses in the world — if you think seeing one island is enough, you're missing out.

By Katie Denbo

The Beach Course at Waikoloa offers a variety of terrain to play on and around, as seen on the fourth hole. Photo courtesy Brian Walters Photography/Waikoloa. Right, Francis 'I'i Brown is known as Mr. Golf in Hawaii. Photo courtesy Mauna Lani Resort.

One of the first things visitors may wonder when their plane lands in Kona, on Hawaii's Big Island, is if they are in the right place. Or so say personnel at many area resorts.

With vast fields of black lava rock, yellow grasses and rolling mountains and hillsides, the inland area is a far cry from the traditional lush greenery, palm trees and crashing waves traditionally pictured on the coast. Look closer, however, and the Big Island's offerings extend far; its distinct environments allow for diverse golf experiences and off-course activities available here.

The many places to play kolepa (golf)

In the early 1930s, Francis I'i Brown, a descendent of Hawaiian royalty, purchased an area called Kalahuipuaa for the sum of \$3,200. This area, now **Mauna Lani Resort**, was a retreat for Brown, an accomplished golfer and sailor. He held the course record at the Old Course at St Andrews — a 62 — for many years thanks to long drives he hit with hickory-shafted clubs.

Hawaiians called Brown, the 1930 California Amateur champion, *Mr. Golf*, and when Robin Nelson built the resort's first 18 lava-lined holes in 1981, they fittingly called it the Francis I'i Brown North Course. Ten years later, the Francis I'i Brown South Course followed suit.

The North Course is the more challenging of the two; from 5,307 yards up to 6,913 yards, the North plays longer than the South despite the fact that the courses are roughly the same yardage. Four holes have a tree in the middle of the fairway but all par 3s are enjoyable with elevation changes from tee to green.

The South Course, on the other hand, features more ocean-front holes than any course on the Kohala Coast, and black lava rock lining the course gives a striking contrast to fairways, greens and the Pacific. The South Course hosted the Champions Tour's Skinks Game for a decade. It's likely that those who have seen a photo of Hawaii golf have

seen the course's par-3 15th hole considered to be the most photographed golf hole in the world. Teeing off over the bay separating the tee and green is one of the most thrilling (and visually stunning) moments of the round.

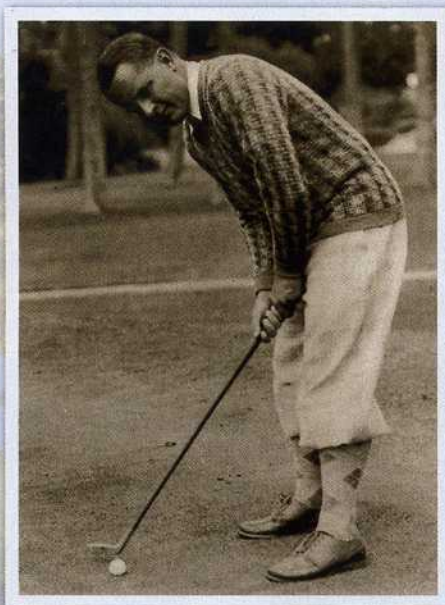
To stay close to the courses, Mauna Lani Resort and the Fairmont Orchid are both set on white-sand beaches, and there is a grocery store and shops between the two hotels. Mauna Lani Resort is known for its green turtle (honu) program; turtles can be seen floating in the calm waters off the beach. Information: maunalani.com.

At historic Ka'upulehu, **Hualalai Resort** is one of the most lavish properties on the Kohala Coast. Play at Hualalai Golf Course is reserved only for guests and homeowners of Four Seasons Hualalai and adjacent Kona Village Resort, but for those who make it to the Jack Nicklaus Signature design, a unique experience is in store.

The 7,100-yard layout is home to the Champions Tour's season-opening Mastercard Championship, having hosted it since opening in 1996. Built on barren lava fields, players are dealing with four elements: grass, sand, lava and ocean, all of which come into play. Starting in green surroundings, the course quickly moves to black lava rock then finishes at the ocean for an all-around experience.

There is a second course at Hualalai, Ke'olu, which was designed by Tom Weiskopf and is reserved for members. Despite this, the course provides for the entire resort thanks to a large pond which doubles as a shrimp farm, harvested for the restaurants on property. Many other seafoods on the menu are found in special ponds scattered throughout Four Seasons Resort; as small fish they start out in one water feature and as they grow, are moved to another.

After a round of golf, have lunch or sunset pupus and a Big Daddy Mai Tai on the lanai at the



Hawaiians called Francis I'i Brown, the 1930 California State Amateur champion, *Mr. Golf* -- he purchased the land that is now Mauna Lani for \$3,200 in 1932.

Residents' Beach House, a casual, oceanfront bar and grill just off the 18th tee box. For the ultimate in romance, have dinner at Pahu'i'a Restaurant at the Four Seasons, open-air dining across the walkway from the sand and tiki-torch lit for island ambiance.

While staying at the Four Seasons, just a few steps from the golf course's clubhouse, snorkel with colorful fish or dip your toes in the saltwater pool at the edge of the resort. Between Four Seasons and Kona Village, a turtle resting area gives an up-close-and-personal look at some of the island's oldest living creatures.

If simplicity is desired, reserve a thatched-roof bungalow at Kona Village (a 5-minute beach walk away). Kona Village is an ancient fishing village complete with a beached fishing boat near the oceanfront pool. Kona Village is ideal for active visitors looking to get away from it all — lodging does not come with telephones, radios or televisions. Numerous water sports and a tennis



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At Four Season Hualalai's Pahu'i'a Restaurant, watch the sunset then dine under the stars and tiki torches on the beachfront lanai.

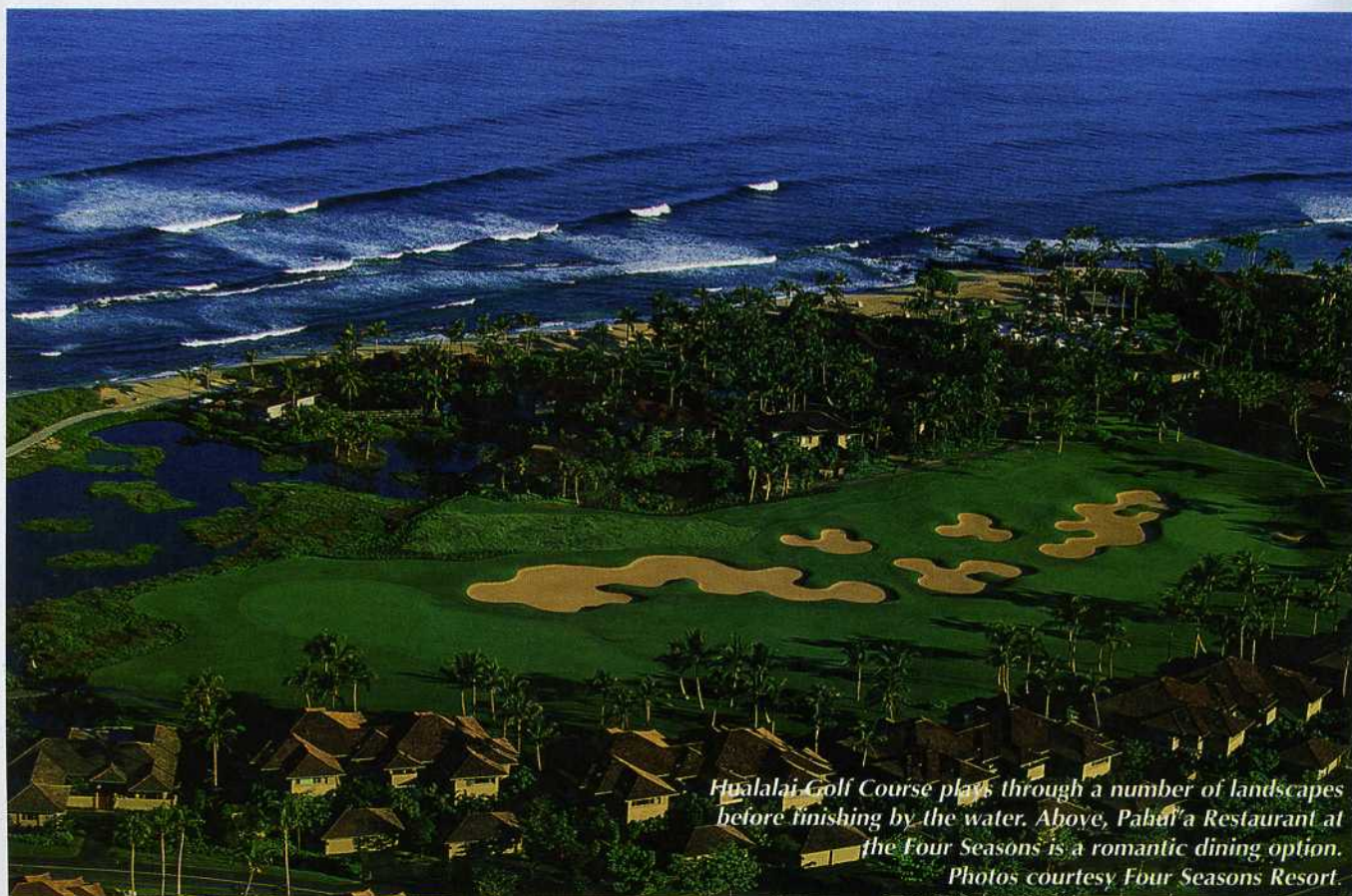
islands as the most spectacular oceanfront par-5 in Hawaii — the 502-yard 12th. It also doubles as a place to spot humpback whales during the season.

facility are available, or a quiet massage in Kona Village's spa is a good way to relax after a hard day of play.

Information: hualalairesort.com.

Waikoloa Beach Resort has just about everything a traveler could look for. Between Hualalai and Mauna Lani, the resort area has two hotels (Hilton Waikoloa Village and Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort & Spa), two shopping centers, and nearly 30 restaurants for all budgets. Two golf courses, the Kings Course and Beach Course, offer a complete Kohala Coast experience.

The differences between Waikoloa's courses are large, a great representation of oceanfront holes and natural grass and lava rock terrain. The Beach Course, designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr., travels through the lava flows of Anaehoomalu Bay and is home to what's known throughout the islands as the most spectacular oceanfront par-5 in Hawaii — the 502-yard 12th. It also doubles as a place to spot humpback whales during the season.



Hualalai Golf Course plays through a number of landscapes before finishing by the water. Above, Pahu'i'a Restaurant at the Four Seasons is a romantic dining option. Photos courtesy Four Seasons Resort.



Dolphin Quest at Waikoloa.
Photo courtesy Dolphin Quest.

Dolphin Quest, located at the Hilton Waikoloa, gives visitors the memorable chance to dance with, feed, splash with, and even kiss its trained dolphins.

The Kings Course, a Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish design, is nearly 400 yards longer than the Beach Course (topping 7,000 yards) and incorporates a Scottish feel with pot bunkers, natural grasses, and wide, undulating fairways. The ball runs in the fairway, leading to sometimes more rewarding shots.

After golf, partake in the experience of a lifetime: swimming with the dolphins at the Hilton Waikoloa. One of three Dolphin Quests in the world is at the Hilton, and an hour group session will teach participants how to make dolphins do tricks, how to feed them, dance with them and even kiss them on the lips, all captured on camera. Information: dolphinquest.org.

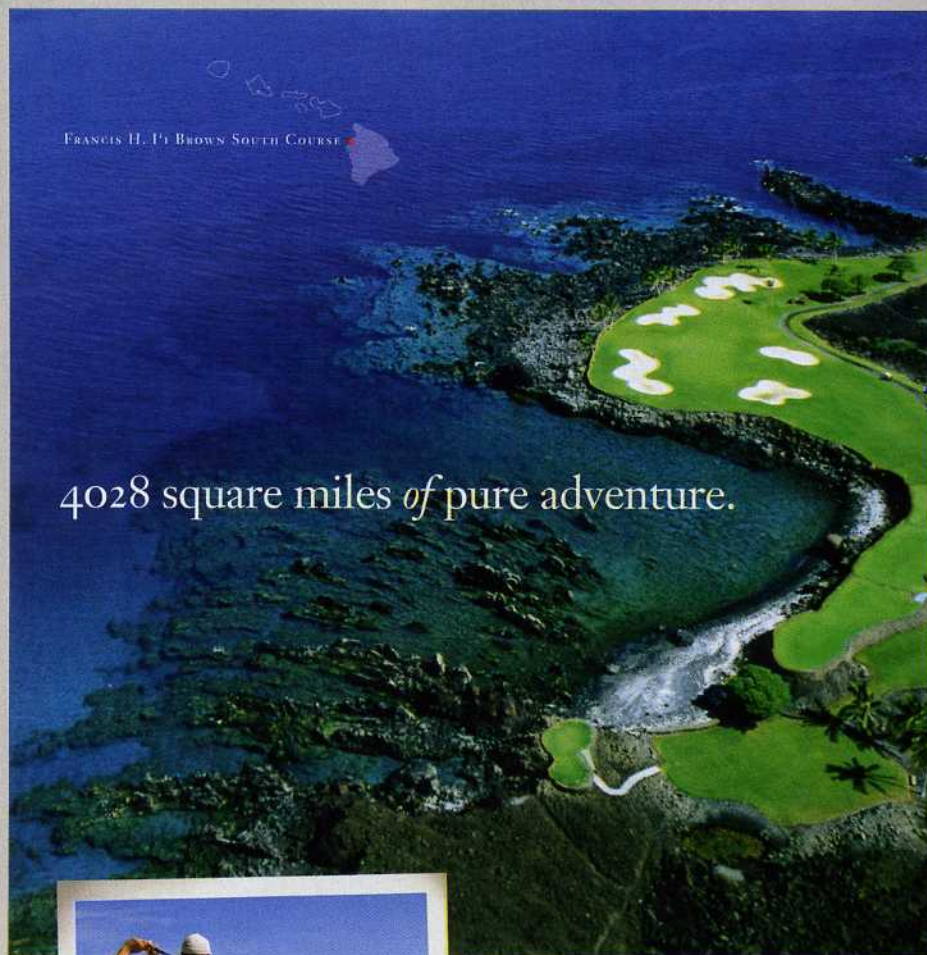
One of the Big Island's most favorite properties, **Mauna Kea**

Resort, has re-opened after a major remodel to both its hotel and golf course. One major difference, though, is the Robert Trent Jones, Sr., course, originally built in 1964, is now semiprivate, only open to members and guests of Mauna Kea Resort and neighboring Hapuna Beach Hotel. Information: maunakearesort.com.

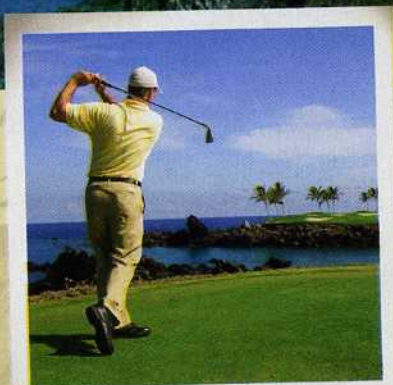
There are several other activities to complete the Kohala Coast experience. The area is home to one of the world's few turtle

cleaning stations, where sea turtles have their shells cleaned by other fish; a glass-bottom boat tour will take you directly over one (try oceansports.com at Waikoloa).

Off the water, visit the inland cowtown of Waimea and ride horses (called *wa a holo honua*, meaning "canoes that travel on land"), home to one of the largest cattle ranches in the world and a community of paniolo, or cowboys. Visit Kahua Ranch; kahuaranch.com.



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