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## Montana

THE RESORT AT PAWS UP

**QATAR** Sharq Village & Spa

**HAWAII** Four Seasons Resort Hualālai at Historic Ka'ūpūlehu

St. Regis Princeville Ritz-Carlton Kapalua Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea

**SO. CALIFORNIA** Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara Grand Del Mar

HAWAII

# FOUR SEASONS RESORT HUALĀLAI AT HISTORIC KA'ŪPŪLEHU

*We're on board!*





**F**OUR SEASONS Resort Hualālai at Historic Ka'ūpūlehu is without a doubt the most decorated and recognized luxury property on any of the Hawaiian Islands. No tour of the state's top resorts would have been complete without checking in here. Though we often disagree with the other authorities out there, this particular story is a confirmation of almost everything you've read or heard about this fantastic place.

Arriving at Kona International Airport, we picked up our rental car, hopped in, and were turning right to the resort gate after just a 15-minute drive along the seemingly post-apocalyptic lava rock-lined road. We continued up to the hotel driveway and were met within seconds by a team of smiling gentlemen who accepted our vehicle and luggage without question. With a stroke of the pen and a swig of the resort's own non-alcoholic welcome elixir, we were being acclimated with our room in even less time than the journey from the airport.

Though, of course, this region has its limits, we are quite confident naming these 243 rooms and suites as the most sophisticatedly designed of any of the resorts we have encountered in Hawaii. All rooms are a respectable 635 square feet, and differ only by view type (Ocean Golf, Ocean-View, Partial Ocean-View, and Ocean-front) and their location on the first or second floor. Rooms on the second floor are considered "prime," and are therefore priced \$100-\$200 more per night, for sake of a better view. Rooms on the first floor feature an outdoor shower that is not available upstairs, though it's safe

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to assume they are also less private since any other guest can easily wander into the space surrounding the lanai. Suites and Villas range from 1,050 to 5,518 square feet. For a more low-key stay, we much prefer the Ocean View Deluxe Suites adjacent to King's Pond which are amply spacious and ideally inset for privacy. In the way of top suites, consider the Kailani with its oceanfront whirlpool, the Kou for the most beachfront location, or the Hawaii Lou Presidential Villa for the biggest and grandest serviced home on the Big Island.

The resort offers two main dining options, Beach Tree and Pahu i'a. Beach Tree's name might be enough of a giveaway. It's the resort's ideal little spot for cocktails and casual island fare at lunch, dinner, and the time between. Pahu i'a is the prop-





erty's finer option of the two, so be sure to wear your best flip-flops. A fabulous breakfast buffet is presented here daily, as well as a mouthwatering menu of modern Hawaiian selections for dinner every night except Saturday. As we write this, memories of the diving table-side poke and ideally prepared abalone have us reeling. On Saturdays, the restaurant plays host to a "Surf, Sand and Stars" buffet with a thorough list of offerings.

There's no shortage of ways to have fun at Four Seasons Hualalai. Though the beaches here can be a bit thin, the resort is quite wide. This allows for a certain amount of sunbathing privacy that we quite enjoyed. Six different swimming areas are on offer, including the adults-only and superiorly-serviced Palm Grove Pool, the lava rock-walled breakwater Ocean Pool, and the 1.8-million gallon King's Pond for snorkeling with over 75 species of tropical fish. The latter two are ideal for those who are a bit ocean squeamish but still want to engage the experience. For those with a bit more bravery, the property's Ocean Ambassadors program can easily arrange any water toy or diving experience you can imagine. Lastly, eight tennis courts, a worthy indoor-outdoor fitness facility, a fabulous outdoor spa, and one of the most interesting golf courses on the planet are also on offer. For off-property beach adventures, a short three-minute drive from the property will land you at Hapuna Beach's crystal blue waters breaking onto a wide tuft of white sand.

It isn't often that the vast majority of travel authorities agree on something, and you know by now that we're not afraid to be the ones who differ from popular opinion. The fact of the matter is that Four Seasons Hualalai is a perfect storm of comfort, service, food, and place. Though it is a perfect storm, it's not necessarily a perfect place. Anyone could find a fault if one was truly sought. But why waste the time searching for problems when this place has been so ideally created for so many things that are much more fun, enjoyable, and relaxing than complaining about things that don't matter? ●●●●

### **Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'ūpūlehu**

Kona, Hawaii

General Manager: Robert Whitfield

[fourseasons.com/hualalai](http://fourseasons.com/hualalai)

## DOs & DON'Ts

**DO** make some time for a swim around King's Pond. This 1.8-million gallon "aquarium" is a unique amenity for any resort, and is the ideal place to introduce young children to the wonders of the ocean.

**DO** plan well in advance for holidays and peak periods. Everyone else does, so it's unlikely you will get in at the last minute.

**DO** venture off property to Hapuna Beach. Though you will certainly miss the cocktail service and Evian mists offered at Hualalai, it's worth missing the amenities for this gorgeous and convenient little outing.

**DON'T** upgrade just because when booking any of the room categories as the tradeoffs are a matter of personal preference. First floor rooms are less expensive but have an outdoor shower, while second floor rooms supposedly offer better views and more privacy.

**DON'T** bother driving into town for dinner. The concierge will warn that you might be disappointed, and you should listen.

**DON'T** miss the spa. These outdoor facilities are the best we experienced at any resort we visited in Hawaii.