

Kapalua, Maui: Adventurers Guide

by Roger Sauer, PassPorter Guest Contributor

With airfares getting higher and higher and the economy slowing down, a trip to Maui in the Hawaiian Islands might seem a little unrealistic. But dreams are dreams and some dreams are worth waiting for.

Long rated one of the world's best islands by Conde Nast Traveler magazine, Maui remains one of the best vacation spots in the United States. Due to its small size but unique shape and geography, Maui has many different facets and some areas seem very unlike others, from the more urban Kahului and Wailuku, to far remote Hana with its rain forest in the east, to the barren moonscape of Haleakala, to Kapalua with its quiet elegance and view of the neighboring island of Molokai in the distance. Where is Kapalua? Imagine Maui as an hourglass tilted to the left about 45 degrees, with its top half slightly smaller than its bottom half. Kapalua is toward the top of the upper half of the glass. The larger, lower section is dominated by Haleakala volcano and its Upcountry region, with the town of Hana on its bottom shore. Kahului and its airport are at the narrow space between the two halves. (Maui was originally two islands until volcanic activity from Haleakala joined the two.) Situated in an area that was once pineapple fields and rocky coastline, Kapalua is a community and resort built around the three world-class courses of the Kapalua Golf Club. Most of the development is on the ocean side of the highway. Some expensive homes and the Plantation course (home of the PGA season opener, the Mercedes Classic) are on the mountain side of the highway on the outskirts of town.

A short distance past the Plantation course we turn right onto Office Road. A small shopping area featuring Guest Services for the Kapalua Resort and the Honeloa Store, which has been in operation since the early 1900s when it served the pineapple crews and few residents of the area. A bit farther down Office Road on the right is the Ritz-Carlton Resort, and straight ahead are the Kapalua Resort's Bay Villas, Ridge Villas, and Golf Villas. Most of the resort's rental units are in these villas, though some homes are available as well.

One reason the tourist crowd prefers Kaanapali Beach five miles to the south is that most of Kapalua Resort's villas are not right on the beach. The trade-off is in Kapalua's having about one-tenth the crowd of Kaanapali. However, there are several beach access paths, including one to a public beach on Kapalua Bay, an easy stroll from most units. Snorkeling in Kapalua Bay is exquisite, with schools of fish including the striking Moorish Idols and occasional honu green sea turtles. An

activity station offering kayaks and other gear (a remnant of the former Kapalua Bay Hotel) can service your equipment needs.

While the hotel pools at the busier Kaanapali hotels are generally filled to the brim with tourists during most of the year (high season lasts all year with Christmas being even higher!), staying at Kapalua Resort's villas allows a guest to use one or more of the many smaller pools around the resort. Many times my wife and I were the only persons by a pool for most of the day. And each pool area has a covered patio, some with barbecues and other kitchen amenities. Each guest's room key allows entrance to each gated pool area. There are many units in each building and all buildings have been situated on the slopes overlooking the bay to allow ocean views. There are one, two, and three bedroom units, all with lanais (patios). Only the Golf Villas are air conditioned, but the steady breeze generally makes cooling unnecessary. All units have full kitchens and many have sleeper sofas, so even a one bedroom unit can sleep four.

While these facilities were built in the 1970s and 1980s, they are kept in great condition. Even the smaller one bedroom villas are selling at about \$1 million when they are put on the market. (Keep that checkbook ready!)

There are a few restaurants in Kapalua. The Plantation Restaurant in its namesake course clubhouse features great Asian fusion cuisine with panoramic views of the golf course, ocean, and Molokai. Sansei is one of a local chain of seafood restaurants. Sansei is noted for its early hour (4 to 6 PM) dinner specials. There are upscale restaurants in the Ritz Carlton Hotel, and the Honeloa Store has a snack bar and a la carte items.

Because Kapalua is on the far northwest coast of Maui's smaller half, day trips to places like Haleakala National Park and Hana on the far eastern shore require the better part of a day. Whale watching is a big attraction from November through March. On our last trip we took a snorkeling cruise to Molokini and saw dozens of whales jumping, slapping their fins, and cavorting on our way back to Maalea, our port. Later in the evening from our lanai we could hear whales slapping their fins and flukes in the dark waters between Maui and Molokai.

If you want the busy crowds of Kaanapali and enjoy having access to a concierge and full hotel amenities, the Villas are not for you. But if you want a little privacy, a leisurely walk to the beach, or luxuriating in a near-private pool, Kapalua may be your cup of tea. What's our choice? My wife and I own two time share units in Kaanapali; we rent both out and prefer to stay in Kapalua.

.....

Some money saving tips:

* Kapalua has its own airport but flights from the mainland are routed through Honolulu. Airfares are generally \$100 additional to fly to Kapalua rather than Kahului.

* Car rental is a necessity, though there are shuttles from Kahului Airport (OGG) to Kapalua. The trip from Kahului takes about 45 minutes, although the traffic through Lahaina can cause long waits.

* Most of the rental units in Kapalua are privately-owned condos, with the exception of the Ritz-Carlton that has partially become a "fractional ownership" property. The Kapalua Bay Hotel featured in some earlier tour books has been torn down and is being replaced by high end fractional ownership condos.

* Condos can be rented through Kapalua Resort, which manages the privately owned units, though there are third party agencies such as Sullivan Properties (www.MauiResorts.com) and Vacation Rentals By Owner (<http://www.vrbo.com>) where prices are generally lower, with one bedroom units as low as \$150 per night and two bedroom units as low as \$225 per night. There is one season in Maui, with Christmas holidays featuring higher rental rates.

* Staying for a while? Just outside the Kahului Airport is a Costco warehouse. Load up the groceries!

About The Author: Natives of Oregon, Donna and Roger Sauer are retired from the banking industry and school administration respectively. Since retiring they have traveled to Europe for Disneyland Paris, to China and Tibet, and most recently, Japan. They have been members of Disney Vacation Club since 1993 and have traveled to Florida once or twice a year since joining. They have three children and five grandchildren. Their next trip to the World will be in December.

Article last updated: 5/22/2008

View the latest version online at: <http://www.passporter.com/articles/kapalua-maui.html>

Copyright by Roger Sauer. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>

.....