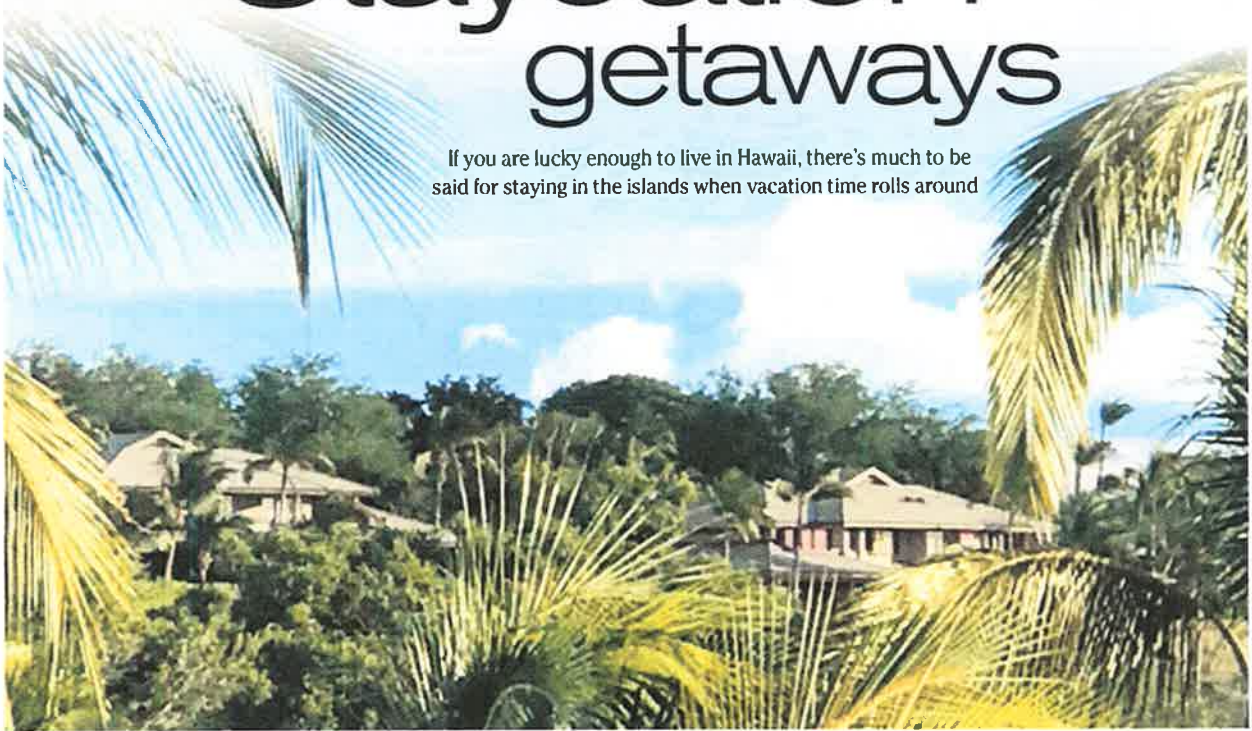


# travel



# Staycation getaways

If you are lucky enough to live in Hawaii, there's much to be said for staying in the islands when vacation time rolls around



Photos and story by Julie L. Kessler  
Special to the Star-Advertiser

### Courses and courts

For serious golf and tennis aficionados, few places compare with Mauna Kea Beach Hotel on Hawaii Island's Kohala Coast.

The course, designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., rests atop old lava fields. It offers stunning visuals at every hole. Impeccably maintained, the challenging 18-hole course features 99 bunkers and was named one of America's 100 greatest public golf courses by Golf Digest.

As an avid player, I was bowled over by the Seaside Tennis Club — 11 ocean edge courts on an ancient lava field — without doubt, the most beautiful place I've played. No surprise that Tennis ResortsOnline 2016 ranks it No. 1 in the world for setting. I joined longtime tennis pro Craig Pautler for an excellent half-hour tune-up, then he let me crash the regular "Lovely Lava Ladies" Friday workout.

Pautler corralled me for another game later that day. So, in an act of pure

self-preservation, I headed to Mandara Spa for a lomilomi massage.

The resort also has a well-equipped fitness center with a host of classes: yoga, spinning, body sculpting and aqua fit. Which is a good thing, because the Copper Bar's artisanal cocktails, like Mauna Kea Mule — made with Pau Vodka and homemade ginger beer — chased with ahi poke tacos and Nutella-graced malasadas, make "dlet" a four-letter word.

At Manta, the resort's AAA Four Diamond-award restaurant, chef Rio McCell's Kauai shrimp in Ko Chi Jun mango vinaigrette on soba was outstanding. A few feet beyond the water's edge were several enormous manta rays enjoying their own meal of the Pacific's plentiful plankton.

With activities for every taste, a few days at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel is a perfect staycation, as confirmed by its many repeat guests.

### IF YOU GO ...

#### Mauna Kea Beach Hotel

>> **Where:** 62-100 Mauna Kea Beach Drive, Kohala Coast  
>> **Information:** 882-7222, MaunaKeaBeachHotel.com



**Top photo: Snow-topped Mauna Kea, seen in the distance, is where locals go to cart snow to sea level, much to the delight of the keiki. At left, golfers must shoot over the water to the green on hole 3 at Mauna Kea's golf course, 272 yards from the original tee. Above, the sun shimmers behind the Uncruise's Safari Explorer near the Kona Coast. Uncruise offers seven-day, all-inclusive trips from the Big Island to Molokai and back.**

### Snorkelers and seafarers

For those with sea legs and an adventurous spirit, a week with Uncruise, aboard its 145-foot, 36-passenger Safari Explorer, is a good call. This 97-ton expedition ship sails from Hawaii Island's Kawaihae to Molokai's Kaunakakai, stopping at nature spots and ports on Maui and Lanai for a host of naturalist and cultural activities.

While the bartender can make neon drinks with swirly umbrellas, this is not the typical cruise crowd.

Instead, guests are active, and they partake in snorkeling, kayaking, paddleboarding, outrigger canoeing and skiing. During the week I sailed, 25 passengers were aboard: Americans, Canadians and Australians. 40 to 70 years old and willing to try

everything.

The ship had a library stocked with Hawaii history books, DVDs for in-room TVs, and a lounge piano that was played impromptu by able passengers. On the sun deck were an elliptical, rower and some free weights. Staterooms were small but comfortable and had plenty of storage space.

Getting dressed up meant donning clean boardshorts and finding your slippers. Uncruise's staff, including naturalists on board and locals at various destinations, were knowledgeable and soon felt like extended family intent on sharing their aloha for the islands.

Mornings usually started at 7 with yoga on the sun deck. Depending on the

Please see STAY, D4

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African Safari . . . . . Aug 9	Autumn in Hokkaido & Tohoku . . Oct 10	Aurora Borealis Adventure . . . . Feb 27	Grand European Adventure . . . Jun 6 & Sep 5	Australia & New Zealand . . . . . Oct 4
Yellowstone & Mt. Rushmore . . Sep 3	Burgundy & Provence (Avalon) . . Oct 23	Honshu Shikoku Cherry Blossom . . Mar 25	Summer in Japan . . . . . Jun 6	Autumn in Hokkaido . . . . . Oct 9
Grand European Adventure . . . Sep 6	Kyushu & Okinawa . . . . . Nov 9	Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Ole! . . . Apr 14	Alaska Cruise Tour (Holland) . . . . Jun 29	Pattagonia Adventure . . . . . Nov 3
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## ROYAL ADVENTURE TRAVEL 2018

# STAY

Continued from D1

swells, some normally easy poses were challenging and often not pretty, but a great way to start the day and limber up in the fresh air.

Food on board was very good, with fish sustainably sourced and beef locally procured. Talented chef Mark Young often made gastronomic plays on local dishes, such as serving curry-faced venison loco moco, snow crab seaweed salad, baked walu with black rice, seared ahi salad Nicoise, lamb lollipops and Vietnamese chicken sandwiches. At breakfast there were daily specials of Portuguese sausage or Spam scrambles but also broche French toast and macadamia nut pancakes. There were always made-to-order substitutes available if preferred.

On night two we were treated to a manta ray lecture by Ian Roussopoulos, a witty, University of California at Santa Cruz-trained marine biologist with Kona Dive Co. The talk was followed by a guided night snorkel trip alongside the massive animals, which can live 70 to 90 years.

To snorkel Kealahou Bay we took a zippy, 300-horsepower Zodiac with Hawaii skipper Preston Luta, whose X-ray vision found humpback whales and bottlenose dolphins long before anyone else. Snorkeling this healthy reserve we saw many eels and turtles.

Several breathtaking sites: the blowhole, lava tubelaced grotto and enormous lava formations resembling Pele lying on her side perfected the day.

Following a stroll in Kona, I returned by skiff to a real treat. Danny Akaka Jr. and his lovely wife, Anna, were regaling passengers with ancient Hawaiian stories, beautiful ukulele music and heartfelt hula. During dinner we spoke of our various travels and their time spent aboard the voyaging canoe Hokule'a.

Crossing the usually rough Alenuihaha Channel to Maui was smooth, and we anchored close to the crescent-shaped islet Molokini. We paddled kayaks to Maui's south coast along Makena's Little Beach, where those who shouldn't still sunbathe au naturel. Ending at Makena's Big Beach, we took kayaks back to the Explorer, then jumped overboard to cool off.

Though mid-December there were already plenty of



PHOTOS COURTESY JULIE L. KESSLER

**The author gets a big, wet kiss from Lihō, a male bottlenose dolphin weighing 320 pounds, at Dolphin Quest, a great experience for young and young at heart at the Kahala Hotel.**

whales breaching and lobbing their flukes along Auau Channel. One juvenile swam back and forth just under the bow more than a dozen times before disappearing.

Heading toward West Maui, Mala Wharf provided great snorkeling amid several turtles and a couple of white-tip sharks. Paddleboarding kept me busy until time for another great lunch. Taking a skiff into Lahaina town gave me the chance to meet old friends at Frida's Mexican Beach House for margaritas. That evening an informative slide presentation on the Hokule'a's globe-crossing voyage was shown.

Crossing to Lanai, we arrived at Lanai City with its tiny but well-curated Culture

& Heritage Center, which preserves its history as a pineapple plantation town. We then drove down to Hulopoe Beach conservation area, where spinner dolphins showed off before we trekked up to Puuope (Sweetheart Rock), where legend has it a young princess drowned in high surf, prompting her distraught suitor to jump from the 80-foot rock to his demise.

On Molokai we drove to Halawa Valley, the oldest Hawaiian settlement. There, kumu Pilipo Solatoro — the last person born in Halawa and who can trace his family back 50 generations — shared his remarkable experiences surviving the 1946 tsunami.

The last afternoon we headed to Kalaupapa Peninsula. With only six Hansen's disease patients remaining, the area one day will revert to parkland. With that, a difficult chapter of Molokai and Hawaii's history will close, while the memory of its many residents, including Saints Damien and Marianne, will live on for generations to come.

Enjoying a traditional paina at Molokai Museum with Auntie Noe Kellikipi making some wonderful luau dishes was a perfect ending to a lovely week.

**The Gathering Place**  
There are certainly several sparkly new diamonds on Oahu; however, Kahala Hotel & Resort has the exalted trifecta of history, location and panache that can't be replicated.

Opened in 1964 by Hilton to great fanfare, it changed hands three times and is now owned by ResortTrust Hawaii, which wants to preserve its unique stature among locals and tourists alike. Just off the lobby is a photo history wall with snapshots of celebrity guests: Hilo Hattie, Danny Kalketini, Don Rickles, Elizabeth Taylor, Vicky Lawrence

## IF YOU GO ...

### Kahala Hotel and Resort

>> Where: 500 Kahala Ave.  
>> Information: 739-8888, KahalaResort.com

## IF YOU GO ...

**Uncruise**  
Seven-day, all-inclusive sailing  
>> When: November-April  
>> Information: 862-8881 or Uncruise.com



Danny Akaka Jr. serenades Uncruise guests on board while his wife, Anna, performs hula for guests.

Several manta rays enjoy their dinner of Pacific plankton right in front of Mauna Kea Beach Hotel's AAA Four Diamond restaurant, aptly named Manta.

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