

Kauai, HI



Makai

The Hawaiian island of Kauai is practically the westernmost outpost in the United States, and some might argue the most beautiful. More than ninety five percent of this gemstone of an island remains totally undeveloped. The vast majority of these 552 square miles of tropical paradise is comprised of lush vegetation, brilliant foliage, towering cliffs, seemingly bottomless canyons and ninety miles of coastline. No wonder Kauai's nickname is the Garden Isle.

One might also consider it the Golf Isle. Magnificent championship venues dot the landscape, dazzling golfers with their seaside beauty and inherent challenge. Most visitors travel to Hawaii with honeymoon dreams: Beachside hammocks and humpback whales, hula dancing, helicopter tours and mai-tais in the sand. But it's also a good idea to bring the sticks along.

The best indicator of the richness of golf on Kauai is the fact that the bellwether facility on the island, the Prince Course at Princeville Resort, is closed for extensive renovations, (and perhaps to be converted to a private facility—still undetermined) yet there are several viable alternatives.



via [Makai Golf](#)

For example, the [Princeville Makai Course](#) on the island's north shore used to be three stand-alone nines called the Lakes, Woods and Ocean. After a 2009 renovation by architect Robert Trent Jones Jr., the Lakes and Ocean have been melded into a championship track called Makai, with the Woods separated as a quicker and more family-friendly gambol.



Hole 7 via [Makai Golf](#)

Makai offers many memorable holes, but none better than the seventh, a long par-3 over a gaping chasm, the turquoise Pacific waters churning below. It is one of the most thrilling holes on Kauai.



Poipu Bay via [Kauai Grand Hyatt](#)

For a dozen years [Poipu Bay](#) played host to one of the most exclusive professional golf tournaments in existence, so restrictive it makes the Masters look like an open audition. This seaside beauty sits on 210 manicured acres adjacent to the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa, with its dramatic open-air lobby looking out to the Pacific. Another Robert Trent Jones Jr. creation, set between lush mountains and rugged ocean bluffs, this is one of Hawaii's most colorful, not to mention enduring, golf venues.



Poipu Bay via [Kauai Grand Hyatt](#)

So is its roster of champions. Once-and-future Hall-of-Famers named Norman, Crenshaw, Els, Lehman, Mickleson , Furyk and Woods have all tasted victory at Poipu Bay. For a dozen years, from 1994 through 2006, the course played host to the annual PGA Grand Slam of Golf, open only to the winners of that season's four Major championships. Visiting golfers don't vie for the trophy, the accolades or the cash. But

playing the cliff-side crescendo next to the sea near round's end, and walking off the par-5 eighteenth at Poipu Bay is a winning experience regardless.



via [Pukea Golf](#)

[Pukea](#) doesn't have the jaw-dropping scenery of other Kauai courses, particularly on the opening nine, which have a few holes near roadways and retail establishments. But this course, adjacent to the actual Jurassic Park movie set at the foot of Mount Ha'upu, has many natural streams and ravines which are lovely and provide challenging design features. The inward nine is more remote, with a series of tough par 4s, varying length par 3s and some slam-bang par 5s, the split-fairway eleventh, in particular. Designed by the late Robin Nelson, this was initially a ten-hole abbreviation thanks to Hurricane Iniki, which halted course development in mid-stream and wreaked havoc on the local economy, forcing the golf course to change hands before completion. But the completed layout debuted in 2003 and it is better for the delay. This is largely due because Nelson used the knowledge he gained from playing the existing ten holes dozens of times before the final eight holes were completed. He learned more about the prevailing winds and other course idiosyncrasies to tweak his original design and integrate this information into a more strategic whole.

It should come as no surprise that fresh fish is a restaurant staple on Kauai. Try [Makai Sushi](#) for their famed 'Gorilla Bowl,' and don't be taken aback by the fact the eatery is located within a supermarket. For a more traditional dining experience, [JO2 Natural Cuisine](#) garners

raves for elegance and artistry, despite the fact it's location is in a nondescript strip mall. Finally, **Porky's** is a super-popular food truck that gets enthusiastic reviews for sandwiches and hot dogs, and just as appealing, change back from your \$10 bill.