

# 2010 FIRST RESORTS

THE BEST IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LUXURY TRAVEL.

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Each year, *Lexus* searches the planet to find the most distinctive eco-luxe resorts – an endeavour more joyful than arduous, to be sure. And every year, though we celebrate a different set of unique and lovely escapes, we always come back to the same core principles: sense of place, discretion and stewardship. Values that these exemplary resorts roundly demonstrate by honouring their respective natural and cultural settings – and the private space of their discerning guests.

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## A FINE PAIR

## KONA VILLAGE & MAUNA KEA BEACH RESORT BIG ISLAND, HAWAII

HAWAII, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS 'the Big Island', looms large not only in size, but environmentally. Vast swaths of Hawaii are not inhabited at all – and thanks to the Kilauea's perpetually flowing lava in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the island, the largest in the US, keeps growing. Boasting white, black, and even green sand beaches; waterfalls that drop over 600 metres; alpine, temperate, and rain forests; and two peaks – Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa – that top almost 4,000 metres, Hawaii is a place of stunning ecological diversity, a test tube of the earth's bounty and beauty that plays host to such rare species as the Pacific green sea turtle, which can tip the scales at 180 kilograms.

In 1965, two distinctive resorts opened on the island, each with its own eco-luxe credentials. Kona Village and Mauna Kea Beach Resort, both located on the island's sunny west coast, were ahead of their time, waiting for the world's environmentalism to catch up to them. They continue to stand as two of the most graceful resorts in the world.

The 33-hectare Kona Village offers perhaps the most authentic high-end resort experience in the state. Accommodations consist of 125 freestanding houses, or *hale*, which are scattered on the beach, on ocean-front lava formations, or around ancient fish ponds. The property is truly transporting, as the *hale* have been designed in an array of Polynesian styles, with room numbers denoting the location and the style of the *hale*. For example, LS8 stands for Lava Samoa #8. The roomy, unpretentious *hale* boast ample *lanai* (balconies), hammocks, and, in some cases, outdoor Jacuzzis.

The services and public facilities are outstanding: there are ocean-front *hale* for massages, three tennis courts, two beachfront swimming pools, and a range of water sports, including paddle boarding, kayaking, and snorkelling the fertile

reefs right off the resort's salt-and-pepper cove. Guests are encouraged to sign up for the meal plan, which includes a lunch buffet featuring unlimited sashimi.

The thatched roofs that top Kona Village's buildings are fashioned from the fronds of the 2,000 on-property coconut palms; banished from the quiet, private *hale* are televisions, telephones, and air conditioning; and painted coconuts serve as Do Not Disturb signs. Kona Village produces a well-regarded *luau*, but usually the evening's entertainment consists of stargazing, which suits its guests just fine ([www.konavillage.com](http://www.konavillage.com)).

ABOUT 30 KILOMETRES UP THE KOHALA Coast, along a pristine, crescent-shaped beach, lies the 258-room Mauna Kea Beach Resort. Laurance Rockefeller, scion of the legendary financier and philanthropic family, was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's great conservationists and a father of eco-tourism.

Rockefeller discovered the future site for Mauna Kea Beach Resort while flying over it. He surveyed the site, and once he swam in Kaunaoa Bay and saw Mauna Kea in the distance, he decided to buy the property and name it after the mountain.

A recent US\$150 million (A\$161.5m approx) renovation took two years to complete. The Mandara Spa was added, the ocean-front Reese Jones-designed golf course was re-sculpted, and rooms were redesigned and expanded to allow guests ocean views from the now ultra-luxurious showers and soaking tubs.

Yet Rockefeller's touch remains. The resort's public spaces are open air, containing virtually no walls, and the resort holds priceless art from the late hotelier's collection, none of it behind glass, because Rockefeller wanted people to have access to art in their everyday lives. This paradisiacal resort itself ensures that this would be the case for all who visit ([www.maunakearesort.com](http://www.maunakearesort.com)). DL @



## LEXUS VALUE PICK

### INN AT KULANIAPIA FALLS

Just over six kilometres outside of Hilo on the Big Island's east coast, guests will be delighted by this stylish and immaculate inn that boasts affordable rates and a magical location. The two buildings that house eight guestrooms, plus the Pagoda House, a three-level, single-family hideaway, share a secret: all

are a stone's throw from what surely must be one of the world's most spectacular private waterfalls and swimming holes. Made-to-order hot breakfasts seal the deal ([www.waterfall.net](http://www.waterfall.net)). DL