



# GO BIG ON HAWAII'S KOHALA COAST



STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BARB SLIGL

**T**he Big Island is, yes, big. In terms of size (the rest of the Hawaiian islands would all fit within its mass) and diversity (it has all but two of the world's climate zones). That range—from

sugar-like beach to snow-topped mountain and churning volcanic crater—is what makes the Big Island a big must. And that range extends to all parts of island living. You can nosh on exquisite farm-to-fork fare at a high-end resort or pick up a still-warm *malasada* served in a paper bag from a hole-in-the-wall bakery. You can succumb to an open-air *lomi lomi* massage at a world-renowned spa or take a spin in a Jeep to a very-off-the-beaten-path green-sand beach. You can watch the sun go down alongside hula dancing seaside or jump off cliffs while locals fish where ancient Hawaiians once did. Star gaze or surf, golf or hike, beach it or crater it...

So, where to start? First, set up base on the Kohala Coast. This once barren, lava-encrusted landscape on the island's west side has been transformed into a resort oasis, making for some sweet and surreal hide-aways tucked amidst the piles of black rock. From here, it's an easy day's outing north, south and east—to lush and quiet North Kohala, the remote cliffs and still-roiling chasms of Kua, vibrant Kona and rainy and rich Hilo and Hamakua Coast. That is, if you can tear yourself away from your west-side idyll... Here are our picks on the Kohala Coast and beyond.

**STAY** If anything, you may have too many choices on this Gold Coast. Carved out of one of the island's past lava flows, this string of resorts on the northwest coast began when Laurance S. Rockefeller spied the perfect

**IF YOU GO** The Kohala Coast is also known as the Gold Coast...for good reason. Think golden weather + luxe properties: [kohalacoastresorts.com](http://kohalacoastresorts.com)

crescent of Kauna'oa Beach from the air and said "Every great beach deserves a great hotel." He went on to build the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel in 1965...and the rest is history. Today the resort retains an exclusive elegance and the beach is listed among the top-10 US beaches by *Condé Nast Traveler*. [maunakeabeachhotel.com](http://maunakeabeachhotel.com)

A short trek along rocky shoreline, past ancient ruins and modern mansions, brings

you to the perhaps-even-more-jaw-dropping Hapuna Beach. The largest white-sand beach on the island, it's home to the Mauna Kea's sister property, the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel. [HapunaBeachPrinceHotel.com](http://HapunaBeachPrinceHotel.com) But here, it's all about the beach, beloved by locals and visitors alike and a primo sunset-viewing spot and morning barefoot-jogging circuit.

On the opposite end of the Kohala Coast, in the south (and only 15 minutes from the city centre and airport of Kona), is the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, where the seaside suites feel more like *hales* (Hawaiian homes) than a hotel. After a recent multi-million-dollar refurb, this resort is all about pampering—from the sushi bar to the spa. The beach is no Hapuna but the seaside pools and King's Pond, stocked with tropical fish and a spotted eagle ray you can snorkel with, more than make up for it. [fourseasons.com/hualalai](http://fourseasons.com/hualalai)

There's an even more homey *hale* vibe at the Lava Lava Beach Club Cottages, which mesh old-school Hawaiiana cool and stylish swank. Each cottage boasts local art, a ukulele (go ahead and strum for the beach club crowd), *punee* (Hawaiian day bed), take-home *pareo* or sarong (thank you very much) and a private, lava-wall-enclosed outdoor shower. You won't want to leave. [lavalava-beachclub.com](http://lavalava-beachclub.com)

**PLAY** Want to hang with a bonafide "beach boy"? Do the Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Paddling Adventure at The Fairmont Orchid. You'll meet champion Hui Holokai Ambassadors (The Fairmont's water experts), who'll teach you the basics of this quintessential Hawaii sport. You'll ply the crystalline waters to in-the-know snorkel spots and maybe learn some local lingo along the way, *brah*. [Fairmont.com/Orchid](http://Fairmont.com/Orchid)

There's also SUP (stand-up paddleboarding), surfing, tennis, golf, biking (you'll be sharing the road with Ironman trainees), snorkelling (unbelievable), diving, windsurfing, kite-surfing (which you can also simply content yourself to watch from your Lava Lava Beach Club perch)...take your pick.

After burning calories (in the most fun way possible), load up again at a *luau*. While some of these celebrations have become

overly commercialized extravaganzas that can verge on cheesy, the traditional luau is still a window on historic Hawaiian culture, and if you've never been to one, the sunset luau at Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort & Spa is as good a place as any—or better with its backdrop of an Anaeho'omalu Bay sunset. [WaikoloaBeachMarriott.com](http://WaikoloaBeachMarriott.com)

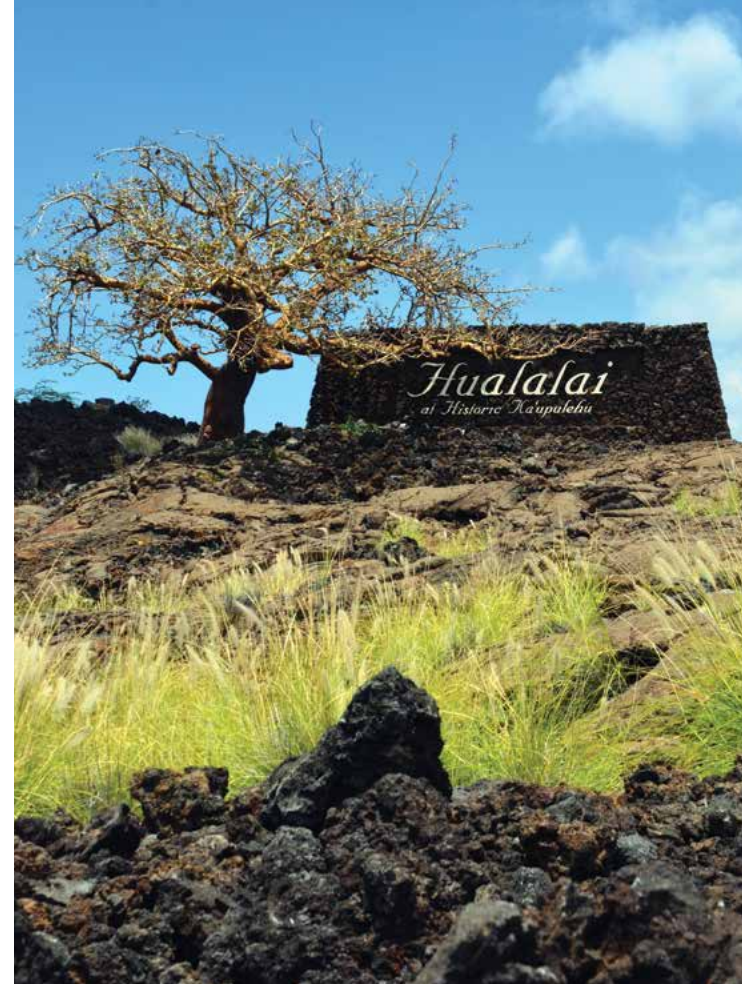
**RELAX** There might be nothing better than simply setting yourself up seaside back at the Four Seasons' central, adult-only pool. You can see the waves crashing onto the beach (and a lollygagging turtle or two), yet you're sand-free on a plush lounge chair under an umbrella awaiting Evian water spritzes and little amuse-bouche style treats. The service is such that you'll be offered sunglasses cleaning... Plan on wiling away an entire day from your poolside-perch.

The same might be said all along the Kohala Coast, but at those Lava Lava Beach Club cottages, the cushy chairs on your private porch are made for sunset viewing while sipping a Mai Tai. It's your own bungalow...on a beach! Anaeho'omalu Bay's sunsets are legendary, and made even more so with the Beach Club's sundown *hula* and live-music show right on the sand. The atmosphere is so cheery, with a humming crowd scattered about the sand (the Beach Club's version of a patio), that the temptation is to get up off your personal porch and join the convivial vibe. Almost...

Of course, to relax is synonymous with a spa. Each resort has its own version of *lomi lomi* and wrap this, zen that. Mix it up by heading to yet another Kohala Coast resort, Hilton Waikoloa Village's Kohala Spa to feel the sea breeze during an outdoor treatment (ahhh!). Then there's the Mauna Lani Spa. A day spa retreat, this gem has been ranked one of the world's best spas by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. Here culture and chic mix with thatched open-air *hales*, natural lava saunas, a meditation pavilion and *watsu* pool. Aloha! [MaunaLani.com](http://MaunaLani.com)

**EXPLORE** The north end of the Kohala Coast is king's country. >> PAGE 24

**PREVIOUS PAGE** Beach lounging at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu, OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The entrance to the Four Seasons, amidst lava rock and an endemic *wiliwili* tree. > Watching sunset at Hapuna Beach, consistently listed as one of the world's best strips of sand. > Seaside pool at the Four Seasons. > One of the Fairmont Orchid's local "beach boys." > Graffiti, Big Island style, using shells and coral along the highway up the Kohala Coast. > Classic cocktail, the Mai Tai at Merriman's, the godfather of farm-to-fork cuisine on the Big Island. > Kauna'oa Beach (aka Mauna Kea Beach), also on the short list of world's best beaches. > Sunset from Anaeho'omalu Bay at the Lava Lava Beach Club. > Outdoor shower at a Lava Lava Beach Club cottage. > Fresh local flowers at the Mauna Lani Spa.





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## MORE BIG ISLAND BLISS

**1 UPCOUNTRY CHIC** Overlooking the west-coast sprawl of Kona, in the thick of the legendary Kona Coffee Belt, is a bit of unexpected paradise. Holualoa Inn is set on the slopes of Mount Hualalai, part coffee estate and part luxe B&B / boutique resort. You could spend all day just soaking up the high-above-it-all jungle vibe, meandering through tropical gardens redolent with torch ginger, papaya, avocado, macadamia-nut trees (crack 'em and eat fresh on site!) **5** and some 5,100 coffee trees. There are 30 lush acres here, including pasture land... so poolside you might hear a moo or two. Inside, the inn is a Polynesian retreat full of gorgeous artifacts and treasures (it was once a private estate), and just past the driveway is historic Holualoa Village's shops, galleries and farm-to-fork eateries. [holualoainn.com](http://holualoainn.com)

**2 VOLCANIC WONDER** What might be the most mind-bending thing about the Big Island is the fact that it is literally churning. At the southern tip of the island is a fireworks show courtesy of Pele, the Hawaiian Goddess of Fire, at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Surreal. Where else can you walk across a crusted-over lava lake? Get eruption updates and trail info at [nps.gov/havo](http://nps.gov/havo).

**3 MALASADAS** On the northeastern end of the island, stop in the cute town of Honoka'a (once a thriving sugar plantation) for this local classic and sweet treat. As they say at Tex Drive In, "ono Kine grindz" (good local grub). [texdriveinhawaii.com](http://texdriveinhawaii.com)

**4 KONA BREWING** After a day of surf and sun, it's time for some suds at Kona Brewing Co. Try the nutty, almost-toffee-like winter seasonal Koko Brown, brewed with toasted coconut. Or go for a beer flight (along with some fish tacos), to taste the wide range of island-inspired concoctions, from Big Wave Golden Ale to Pipeline Porter. [konabrewingco.com](http://konabrewingco.com)

**6 EXTREME GREEN** Ever seen a green sand beach? The Big Island has one of the world's two. Half the discovery is the trek beyond South Point (the southernmost part of the US) along moonscape-like coast (hike or brave with a 4WD Jeep) to the remote remains of this ancient cinder cone. [greensandbeachhawaii.com](http://greensandbeachhawaii.com)

**7 RANCH IT** Go north to *paniolo*—that's Hawaiian for cowboy—paradise at Puakea Ranch in North Kohala. It's also an equestrian's dream. See page 5. [puakearanch.com](http://puakearanch.com)

The Big Island is Hawaii's most diverse with all but two of the world's climate zones. Discover more at [gohawaii.com/big-island](http://gohawaii.com/big-island).

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## From Bed to Bench and Back

### Topics Include:

**Keynote Address - K. Michael Welch, M.B., Ch.B**

**Role of Glia in Pain** - Linda Watkins, Ph.D

**Role of Glia in Headache** - Andrew Charles, MD

**Stroke and Migraine** - Gretchen Tietjen, MD

**Hallucinogens and Marijuana for Headache** -

Brian McGeeney, MD, MPH

**How to Select Migraine Preventives** - Judy Lane, MD

**Highlights from *Headache and Cephalalgia*** -

John Rothrock, MD

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## travel the world

>> PAGE 20 Stand below Pu'ukohola Heiau and make like legendary King Kamehameha. This temple is a reminder of Hawaii's rich Polynesian past, and that tie seems even stronger knowing that Kamehameha was born just north of this sacred spot. Come early morning and you might spot sharks still swimming over an ancient submerged temple that was dedicated to the shark gods. [nps.gov/puhe](http://nps.gov/puhe)

Kamehameha the Great looms large all along the Kohala Coast and beyond. Mamalahoa Trail or the King's Highway (part of the Alu Kahakai National Historic Trail) cuts right through lava rock and manicured resort- and golfscapes past scores of petroglyphs (see below). [nps.gov/alka](http://nps.gov/alka)

From just about anywhere on the Kohala Coast you'll catch glimpses of the twin volcanoes of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa looming in the distance. Don't be a stranger. Arrange a guided hike with Hawaii Forest & Trail to venture closer, or skirt Mauna Kea and go north on the Kohala Waterfalls Adventure to see a different Hawaiian countryside (think old sugar plantations, taro terraces, waterfalls, pools, wet-and-wild valleys) and the charming town of Hawi. [Hawaii-Forest.com](http://Hawaii-Forest.com) Or head south to a still-churning volcano (see page 22).



## SAVOUR

The Big Island is becoming known for big-name cuisine. Merriman's Market Café has the renowned locally sourced fare of famed Chef Peter Merriman, one of the founders of Hawaii regional cuisine. It also has a tasty take on the Mai Tai. When in Hawaii... [merrimans-hawaii.com](http://merrimans-hawaii.com) And then there's 'ULU Ocean Grill at the Four Seasons, the Kohala Coast's go-to eatery. Order *makai*, from the ocean, for local seafood like the Kona White Abalone with coconut and kaffir lime. The goal is "R.S.A.—Regional, Seasonal and Artisanal" cuisine from more than 160 farmers and fishermen on the Big Island; 75% of the menu features local, sustainable dining. [uluoceangrill.com](http://uluoceangrill.com) Of course, you can't beat a fish taco in Hawaii. On the Kohala Coast, the unassuming Kohala Burger and Taco won't disappoint. [kohalaburgerandtaco.com](http://kohalaburgerandtaco.com)

Whether the goal is to stay, play, relax, explore or savour, your choice is *big*—Big Island big. ●



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