

LOVE, HAWAIIAN STYLE

Celebrating your love in paradise **By Heather Boerner**

THE WORD “ALOHA” means far more than the commonly known “hello” and “goodbye.” In the Hawaiian culture it’s a symbol of a people who value unity, patience, kindness, humility and, above all, love.

With such a powerful message, it’s no wonder Hawaii draws so many couples in search of the perfect destination wedding. And after exploring the natural wonders and breathtaking vistas of this archipelago’s eight islands, it’s even easier to see why: From the live volcano, arid deserts and rainforests of the Big Island of Hawaii to Maui’s nightlife, Hawaii offers something for every couple and their wedding guests.

Whichever island you choose, the surrounding splendor plays a crucial role. It’s not unusual to marry with a waterfall as a dramatic backdrop, exchange vows on a boat surrounded by dolphins or get married on the edge of a volcano. “This is a place that’s definitely all about the beauty and ambiance,” says Denise Black, a wedding planner with The Four Seasons Maui at Wailea.

With a location settled on, choices still abound: from a traditional Hawaiian wedding, replete with sand ceremonies and a processional with four men carrying the bride on a dais to the inclusion of Hawaiian-style touches, such as blowing a conch shell and exchanging traditional Hawaiian wedding lei. “We can do the whole Hawaiian processional, but usually the lei is the most popular Hawaiian touch to a destination wedding, because it is so precious,” says Black, explaining that a lei greeter welcomes every guest.

And wedding receptions here aren’t just time-honored lu’aus anymore. More often, couples hold a lu’au for a welcome or rehearsal dinner and create a specialized wedding reception, whether it involves a nine-course tasting menu or hiring a sushi chef for made-to-order rolls.

In short, whether in front of a bamboo arbor with your toes in the sand or a traditional wedding with a broad range of local touches, Hawaii will allow you to have the wedding of your dreams: The options are as varied and as breathtaking as the scenery.

THE BIG ISLAND

If you’re seeking a varied wedding experience, consider the Big Island of Hawaii. This island has 11 climate zones and offers experiences from lounging at a spa by the beach to flying down zip lines



Kona Village Resort

HO'OKAHI MAKAMAKA O KO ALOHA
Our love begins the union of our
life together—Hawaiian proverb



WEDDING PARTY EXCURSIONS IN HAWAII

Hawaiian wedding planners say many couples include excursions in their destination-wedding weekend as a gift to their guests. Consider these popular trips:



GOLF AND GIRL DAYS

At resorts associated with golf courses—or even resorts with golf courses nearby—one of the most popular events is a dual day before the wedding: The bride and her friends pamper themselves at the spa while the groom and his friends hit the links. Request that your wedding planner create a golf tournament that's judged and photographed. It'll make your groom feel not only like the luckiest man alive (he found you, after all), but also like a professional golfer for a day!

HIT THE SURF

The azure Pacific has lured visitors for centuries, so invite your guests to take a dip. The most popular trips include snorkeling and surf lessons. Or, plan a sunset cruise or a seafaring trip to view the islands' majestic coast. Ask your wedding planner or concierge to arrange the journey.

TAKE TO THE SKIES

There's nothing like a bird's-eye view of Hawaii, so treat your guests to a helicopter trip past the live lava flows of The Big Island's Kilauea volcano, the lush tropical valleys of Maui or the eye-popping Waimea Canyon on Kauai.

in a rain forest to visiting the active Kilauea volcano. The posh resorts are often located on the island's northwestern edge, on the coast between Kona and Kohala, where the sand is white, gray and black and the forest is lush. On the northern coast, you'll find Puukohola Heiau, a restored ancient Hawaiian temple that's the largest on all of the islands.

Kona Village Resort

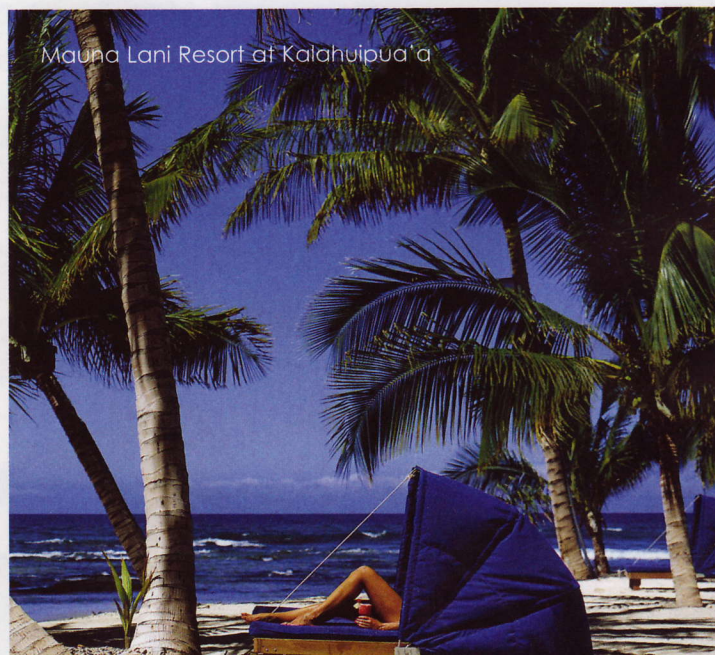
Want to go back in time and forget modern troubles? Slip into Kona Village Resort on Hawaii's Kona-Kohala coast. Eighty-two acres of sandy shoreline is the setting for 125 Hawaiian-style bungalows (called hale)—all free of telephones, televisions, radios and clocks. But there's no need to entirely forgo modern amenities: The resort includes a spa, fitness center and yoga and pilates classes, along with fine dining at a French Polynesian restaurant.

For the whirlpool spas on private lanais (balconies), stay in a royal hale styled with thatched roofs and traditional architectural styles. Or, wedding guests can opt for a hale overlooking tranquil lagoons or one located on the site of an ancient lava flow.

Have a wedding on a resort beach with your choice of white, gray or black sand. Or, consider the South Point Tiki site, with uninterrupted sea views and amazing sunsets. The resort can also plan an exotic-locale wedding, such as a ceremony on Kahuwai Bay, where dolphins are known to frolic. Another option is to take a helicopter to a volcano and exchange vows there. End your ceremony with the release of Monarch butterflies. 808.325.4372, konavillage.com.

Mauna Lani Resort at Kalahuipua'a

This lush resort on the Kohala coast features 3,400 acres of grounds, including two 18-hole golf courses, an outdoor spa and three miles of secluded beach. For guests, organize a sand volleyball tournament, treat everyone to a day on the links or take fish- or turtle-feeding tours.





At this locale, stay in your very own Hawaiian home—one of the resort's 4,000-square-foot bungalows that have two master-bedroom suites, palatial living and dining rooms and a private swimming pool, surrounded by saltwater ponds filled with tropical fish. Wedding guests can opt for a bungalow or a posh suite or guestroom with private lanais and marble bathrooms.

Choose a wedding setting that includes ancient royal fishponds, panoramic ocean views or tropical gardens. Ask for a floral trellis or white lattice archway besotted with fresh flowers to frame your nuptials. 808.885.6622, maunalani.com.

The Fairmont Orchid

This resort features 540 rooms nestled on 32 beachfront acres on the Kohala Coast. Before and after the festivities, relax on the resort's secluded beach, at its pool or among its waterfall gardens. And, enjoy one of the Fairmont Orchid's nine restaurants and lounges, a modern Hawaiian spa and some natural visitors: Every afternoon, wild Hawaiian green sea turtles sunbathe with visitors on the beach.

Set yourself up in the South Tower Presidential Suite, a two-bedroom suite with a panoramic ocean view and heightened Gold Floor-service—which includes private check-in, a private lounge and lanai and complimentary shoe shining. Then, treat wedding guests to a round of golf on the hotel's championship 36-hole course.

Wedding venues range from opulent banquet halls to an outside ceremony with a backdrop of waterfalls, coconut groves or the great





The Grand Hyatt
Kauai Resort and Spa

KAUAI

This Hawaiian island is notable for what it lacks: traffic congestion, high rises (by law, no buildings are taller than the palm trees), rowdy nightlife. But what it has more than makes up for its lack of hustle and bustle: With a rustic, secluded charm, it boasts eclectic surf towns and the lush and jaw-dropping Na Pali Coast, a 15-mile stretch of shore made up of verdant cliffs so steep they are only accessible by ocean.

The Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa

This resort, situated on the island's Keoniloa Bay, features award-winning restaurants, lounges and a tropical spa. But the resort's stars are the view and the snaking lagoons (entertain guests with kayak lessons).

Take advantage of the top-floor presidential suite, with its spa tub, private terrace and unimpeded ocean views. And, host guests in a variety of Grand Club suites and guest rooms, which come with access to a dedicated concierge, an open-air spa and unlimited tennis time.

Plan a spa day for the bridal party and get married beneath a gazebo in gardens next to the ocean. Brides and grooms can partake of traditional Hawaiian sand ceremonies and lei exchanges or they can write their own vows to be read at sunset. 808.742.1234, grandhyattkauai.com.

ResortQuest Waimea Plantation Cottages

More than 50 standalone cottages—many of them restored sugar plantation homes—are set among an idyllic 27-acre coconut grove overlooking a black-sand beach and Waimea Bay beyond. The resort offers a spa and a variety of dining experiences, including in-suite sunset meals and the Waimea Brewing Company, where guests enjoy pub fare and local delicacies.

Wedding guests can stay in cottages with kitchens, while the bride and groom may prefer the Plantation Manager's house, a lavish two-story, five-bedroom oceanfront house complete with dining room, parlor, reading room, oceanfront lanai, whirlpool tub and optional private chef.

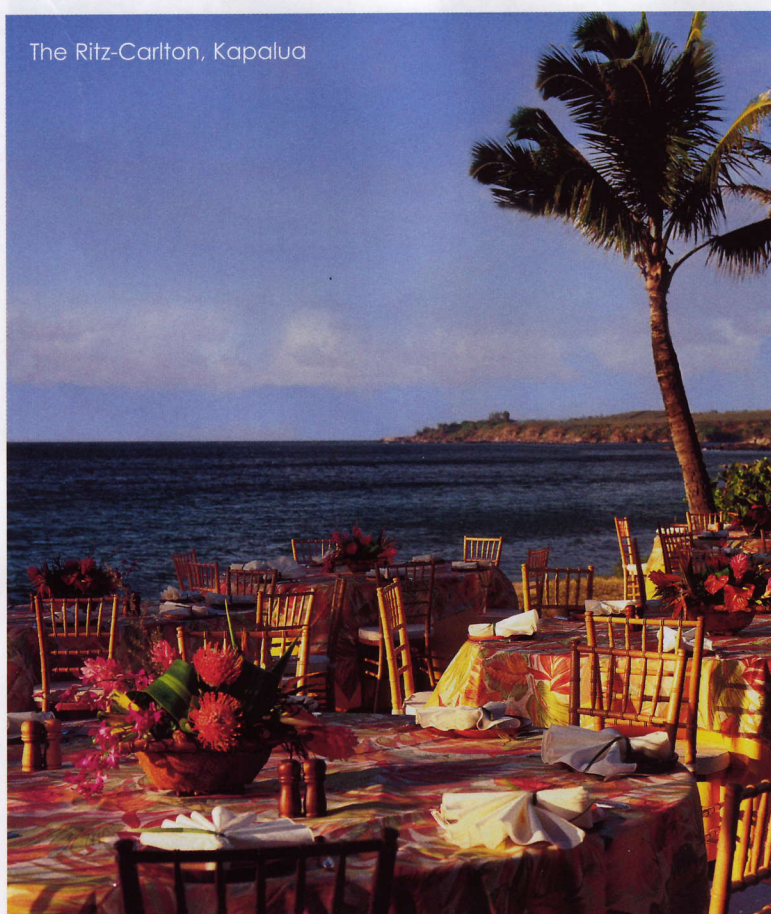
Plan your wedding among the trees, in the garden or on the beach. An 1827 white wedding carriage can transport the bride to the ceremony, followed by an orchid shower for the walk down the aisle. Choose traditional accents like blowing a conch shell or singing the "Hawaiian Wedding Song." While wedding packages are available, many weddings here are custom-designed. 808.338.1625, waimeaplantation.com.

MAUI

This island balances its well-developed and modern shore boasting fine dining and a good nightlife with an unspoiled upcountry where you can hike into its dormant volcano. Also awe-inspiring is the hair-raising, spectacular switchback road to Hana on the island's rugged eastern coastline.

The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua

Nestled among lava peninsulas and lush rainforest, the Ritz-Carlton,



The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua

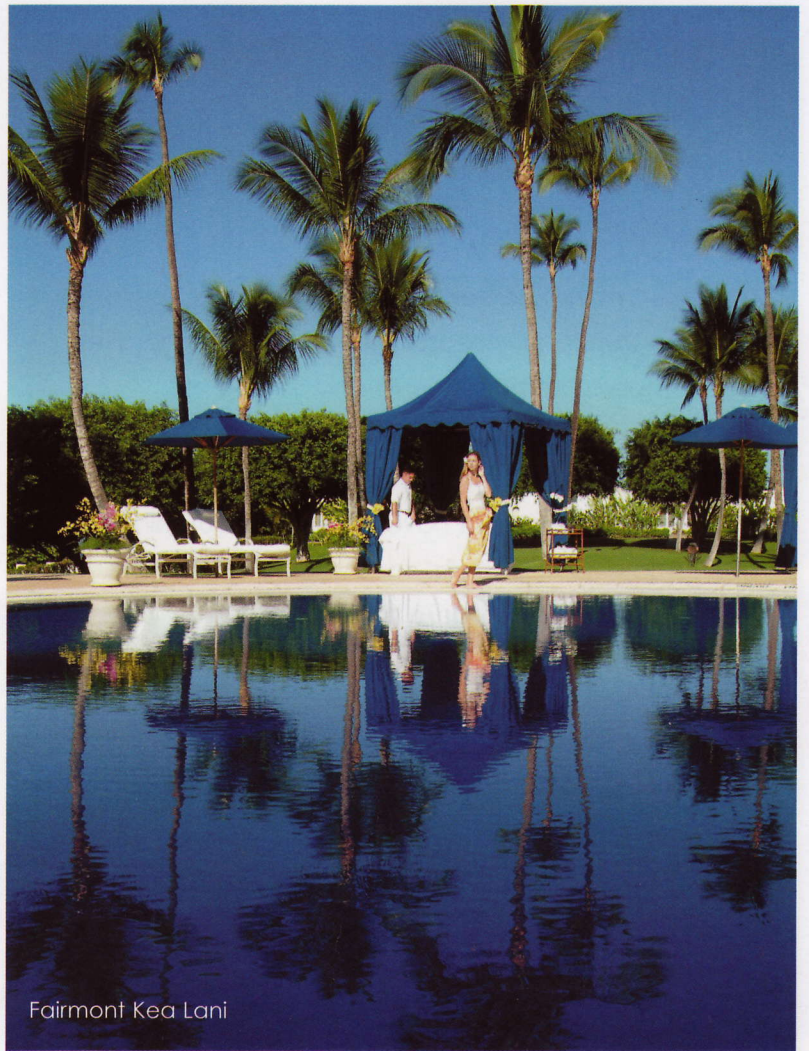
edge. The resort, which recently reopened after a \$130 million renovation, features two golf courses that host PGA competitions and a tri-level swimming pool.

A stay in the exclusive top-floor, 2,550-square-foot Royal Pacific Suite offers panoramic ocean views and a formal dining room, kitchen and whirlpool tub. Wedding guests can stay in the resort's deluxe Club Level, the "hotel within the hotel," which offers exclusive Club concierge service, five complimentary food and drink services a day and upgraded amenities. And, treat guests to lei-making classes or an intimate slack-key guitar concert at the hotel's theater.

Most weddings here are custom-designed by the resort's wedding planners and can range from cozy to extravagant, traditional to surprising. The event can feature everything from bridal party spa days to dream golf experiences for the guests. Marry on the resort's breathtaking Napili Lawn, with its panoramic views of the Honolua Bay or tie the knot in the resort's historic Honolua Chapel, which once served as plantation workers' spiritual center. For smaller ceremonies, wed at the Kapalua Bay golf course's fifth tee, overlooking ragged cliffs and the ocean beyond. 808.669.6200, ritzcarlton.com.

Fairmont Kea Lani

On Maui's southern shores, this 22-acre resort features tropical landscaping, pools, fine- and casual-dining restaurants, a golf course and an award-winning spa. Accommodations include a two-story, three-bedroom villa with a deep-soaking tub, full kitchen, private plunge



QUICK LOOK

A DOSE OF PARADISE

It's no secret that Hawaii has ideal weather. Spring and summer are the drier seasons in Hawaii, with the average temperature between 75 and 85 degrees.

Still, Hawaii boasts numerous microclimates, so it's difficult to claim any absolutes with the weather. But chances are you won't have to worry about rainfall in the summer. In Honolulu, for instance, the average rainfall in June is less than a half-inch.

DESTINATION U.S.

Despite its otherworldly feel, Hawaii is a U.S. state, offering all of the convenience, modernity and technology of home. So, no need to worry about passports or learning a new language!

GETTING AROUND

If you plan on taking advantage of all an island offers, consider renting a car. That way you can explore at leisure. And, island hopping allows you to get an even broader sense of Hawaii. By plane, the islands are served by four inter-island airlines: Hawaiian Airlines, Aloha Airlines, Island Air and Pacific Wings. Or, for a trip between Oahu and Maui, a daily ferry will take you (and that rental car) back and forth from Honolulu to Kahului.

A SPRING BREAK

Hawaii is a popular spring break destination and hotel rooms can be hard to come by during that time. If you're planning a spring wedding, some Hawaiian wedding planners advise that you consider skipping the weeks immediately before, during and after Easter.

DON'T FORGET TO ASK

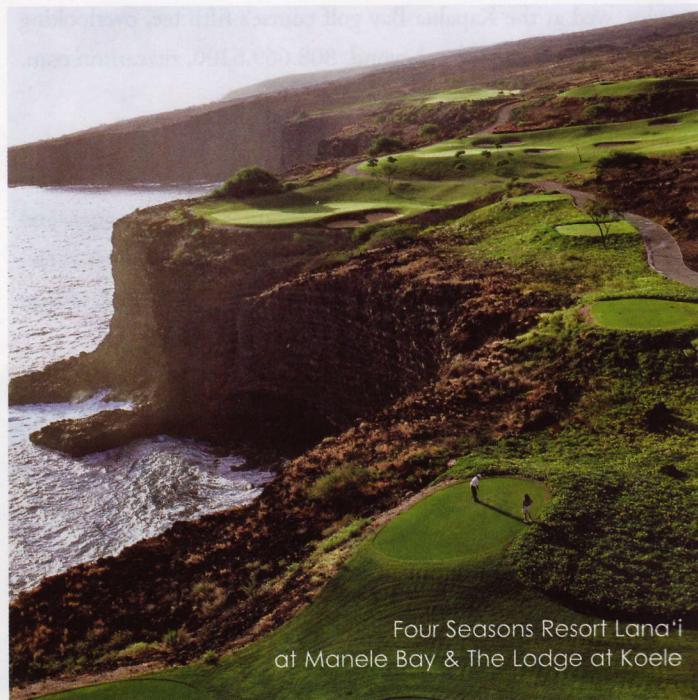
Most Hawaiian resorts feature on-staff wedding planners who can plan your dream wedding, whether from a pre-existing wedding package or designed from scratch with your dreams in mind. They can also make appointments for you to receive your wedding license. You can even get your license at some hotels, so be sure to ask!

pool and spacious courtyards. Guests can enjoy the resort's one- and two-bedroom suites and guest rooms. Be sure to invite guests to the Makena Tennis Club, a resort-style club overlooking the Pacific.

Outdoor ceremony sites include a tropical gazebo surrounded by fountains and a secluded terrace overlooking the ocean. Or, marry indoors where oversized arched windows frame an ocean view. End your ceremony with the release of butterflies. 808.875.4100, fairmont.com/kealani.

LANAI

Once an island of pineapple fields, this tiny (only 13 miles by 18 miles) Hawaiian island is now known for its exclusivity and serenity. With just 3,000 residents, there are only a handful of hotels and resorts on the island. Lanai also offers two golf courses and unique topography such as red lava cliffs, cloud forests and boulder-heavy vistas.



Four Seasons Resort Lana'i
at Manele Bay & The Lodge at Koele

Four Seasons Resort Lana'i at Manele Bay & The Lodge at Koele

Four Seasons runs two opulent hotels on the island. Choose to stay at Manele Bay's three-bedroom Ali'i Suite with a 900-square-foot balcony. Relax with your guests at the Lodge at Koele's pool or take your visitors to Shipwreck Beach to collect shells and peer upon the World War II "Liberty Ship," stranded on a coral reef since the 1940s.

Celebrate your wedding at The Lodge at Koele under a gazebo while serenaded by a fountain. Or choose a wedding at the resort's reflecting pond or on a great lawn presided over by banyan trees. At Manele Bay, marry atop a Hawaiian cliff at the Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course. Or, marry on the resort's oceanfront Plumeria Lawn. End your tranquil ceremony with a thrill—a resort-arranged fireworks display. 808.565.2000 (Manele Bay), 808.565.4000 (The Lodge at Koele) fourseasons.com/lanai