

“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”

February 2012

“KA’ANAPALI, MAUI”



Ka'anapali Kai 16th

With Vae in front keeping cadence and Reese setting the pace, our outrigger canoe skimmed the surface of the waves. We were “lokahi” – a Hawaiian word meaning unity, working together in harmony. Kind of like when all aspects of the golf swing come together to produce a perfect shot. You want to hold on to that moment forever.

We came ashore near Black Rock (Pu'u Keka'a), the sacred landmark at the north end of Ka'anapali Beach. But the long stretch of tempting, white, sandy beach would have to wait. We had a tee time reserved at Ka'anapali Kai.

Ka'anapali Resort's two golf courses serve guests of the five luxury hotels and six beautiful condo resorts that front Ka'anapali Beach, in west Maui. The Kai Course is shorter and more forgiving. I liked it right away, with four sets of tees ranging from 6388 to 4522 yards. It climbs into the foothills of the West Maui Mountains with broad views of the coast and neighbor islands.

Waiting my turn at the fifth tee box, I was admiring the view of Molokai when the blast of a train whistle announced the Sugar Cane Train, just off to the right. It runs between the old whaling town of Lahaina and Ka'anapali, crossing the golf course several times. Quirky! On the back nine, the multi-tiered green on No. 13 defeated me, but I went on to a good finish, barely avoiding the water at No. 18 green. It was a fun round. FYI, in 2008 the course hosted the 12 ladies of “Big Break Ka'anapali.”



Sugar Cane Train

Royal Ka'anapali is the big sister of the two courses, having played host to PGA and LPGA Tour events over its 50-year history. Fairways are wide, but the hilly layout means constant adjusting for uphill or downhill shots. Club selection is more challenging when trade winds come in. Wind picked up mid-afternoon, shaking leaves and coconuts loose from the tall palm trees.

Hole No. 5 is a tough par-4 and the number 1 handicap hole for both men and women. It plays right to the ocean's edge, where we saw the humpback whales that populate Maui's warm waters between December and May. Amazing to see a 40-ton creature lift almost its entire body out of the water, turn and land on its back. Later we took a sunset whale watching cruise with Terilani.

For a short par-3, No. 17 sure packs a punch. Water front and left, and it plays into the wind. Water also runs the length of No. 18. Tournaments have been won and lost on these two holes. Just ask Lee Trevino.



Royal Ka'anapali #12

Pro shop merchandise is great, and the staff goes out of their way to be helpful. I bought my all-time favorite headcover at Ka'anapali – a giant yellow pineapple. Now my bag always stands out in a sea of golf carts. The most exciting news is the grand opening of Roy's Restaurant at the clubhouse. James Beard Award-Winner Roy Yamaguchi brings an international reputation as the creator of Hawaiian Fusion Cuisine. The only other Roy's located at a golf resort is at the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach.

I can't get enough of the delicious fresh seafood in Hawaii - magical names like Opakapaka , Mahi-mahi and Monchong. The sashimi is the best anywhere. Then there's my addiction to Kitch'n Cook'd Maui Potato Chips. The one and only original Maui chips, all others are mere imitations. Made in small batches by a family-owned operation since 1956, they're only available on Maui.

There are so many wonderful choices of places to stay at Ka'anapali. We loved the Sheraton Maui for its location at Black Rock, a large black lava rock formation that juts into the sea. Ocean waves soothed us to sleep, and the whales put on a show for us alone, or so it seemed. Legend says that Hawaiian warriors leapt from historic Black Rock to enter their ancestral spirit land, and only the bravest returned. A nightly torch lighting and cliff diving ceremony recreates the legend.

Interesting aside for AWGA members –our very own Debbie Darling, AWGA representative for Poston Butte, was married atop Black Rock, with the reception at the Sheraton. We agree it's a fabulous place!

Families love the Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Resort Villas. They have 1,021 units spread over two oceanfront buildings, each with full kitchen, washer/dryer and sleeper sofa. A "stay one, dine all" policy allows reciprocity with the Westin Maui, which has a great spa. They even offer workout clothes and shoes. Another smart Westin touch is little lockers near the Beach Activities desk, to hold wallets and room keys. Those plastic room keys were turning up on ocean reefs way too often.

I wanted to try snuba before I left. Think "snorkel" and "scuba." We used a diving mask, regulator, weights and swimfins. But instead of tanks, the air comes through a long hose from tanks on a raft on the surface. I dove down all the way to 30 feet! Afterwards, an authentic lomi-lomi massage soothed muscles tight from excitement as well as exertion.

If only I could stop time and just stay in Ka'anapali. Well, obviously that didn't work. So I consoled myself with a bag of real Maui chips on the flight home and vowed to return soon. www.ka'anapaliresort.com.

*"Escape with Cori" on assignment to exotic and fun golf destinations. First-hand impressions from an experienced golf travel writer and AWGA member. www.coribrett.com
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