

MAUI NO KA 'OI – MAUI IS THE BEST

By Cori Brett, *Special to the AWGA*

I was so fascinated watching the white spotted puffer fish chase the little square butterfly fish that I barely noticed the eerie sound at first. Gradually it intensified, radiating throughout the underwater world until I realized it was the song of whales. Although I couldn't see the whales from where I was snorkeling, I felt their presence.

January through March, humpback whales undertake their annual migration from frigid northern waters. Their antics delight winter visitors along the west coast of Maui, the second largest island in the Hawaiian chain. It's amazing to see the whales breaching. The giant creature flips itself entirely out of the water to twist in midair then lands on its side with a loud splash. This is a show stopper when you're playing at one of Wailea Resort's seaside golf courses.



Wailea Resort dominates the fun scene on the southwest side of Maui. It's a bustling 1,500-acre residential resort community with three world-class golf courses and six resort hotels plus vacation rentals. The long stretch of white sandy beaches is all but deserted in the early morning and yours may be the only footprints in the sand. Occasionally I've come across a quietly meditative yoga class on the beach and joined in the poses.

Wailea Golf Club's three outstanding layouts – the Gold, Emerald, and Blue – offer an array of golfing choices, all with excellent conditioning and panoramic ocean views. Wailea Emerald won *Golf for Women Magazine's* Top Fairways Award seven times, and I can see why. It's a fun, beautiful course with carpet-like fairways and colorful tropical foliage. Relatively few forced

carries and generous fairways make for a relaxed round. One unusual feature is a double green shared by holes #10 and #17, bordering a picturesque lake.



Wailea Gold Course #15. Photo credit: Erica Chan

The rugged Wailea Gold course hosted the Champions Skins Game for seven years and is considered the most difficult of the three. It favors longer hitters and follows the terrain's natural undulations with elevation changes. Lava rock outcroppings and preserved ancient lava rock walls can be seen throughout the course, built by early Hawaiians and believed to be centuries old.



Wailea Emerald Course double green #10 & #17. Photo by Erica Chan.

Wailea's Old Blue Course is the original Wailea course, winding through the resort with a lush beauty that is still a good test of golf. Its fairways meander across the lower foothills of Mt. Haleakala, a 10,000-foot dormant volcano that dominates the skyline. Watching the sun rise from the summit of Haleakala is a surreal experience, but biking down the mountain from the summit to sea level will really wake you up.

Wailea's three courses share stunning views of the ocean and offshore islands like Molokini. It's the perfect place to explore the underwater depths, on a snorkeling or scuba-diving trip. Molokini is a tiny, crescent-shaped islet that contains more than 250 species of fish.

The most direct route to Molokini is from the Kai Kanani catamaran located on the beach at Makena Beach & Golf Resort near Wailea. The revamped resort combines the former Maui Prince Hotel and Makena's two acclaimed golf courses, which run along the coastline. Makena is an excellent addition to a Wailea golf trip. The scenic South Course is expected to re-open in 2010.

Of all Wailea's wonderful lodging options, my favorite place to stay is the Wailea Beach Marriott Resort & Spa. One of Wailea's early resorts, it was originally the Maui Intercontinental and retains the spacious grounds of a more leisurely time. Guest rooms are spread out in low-rise buildings along a grassy bluff so close that you can hear the waves break against the rocks. Mature plumeria trees suffuse the night air with fragrance. Maui No Ka 'O'i.

Check out www.wailearesortassociation.com for details.

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