





Photos: Courtesy of Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection

## DESTINATIONS



# MAUNA LANI

Kohala Coast, Hawaii

BY RENEE BRINCKS

As morning sunlight sparkles off the Pacific along the island of Hawaii (also known as the Big Island), a group of Mauna Lani resort guests crosses the waves in an eight-person, double-hull canoe. Two guides call out directions that keep people paddling in unison. Then, they pause and invite the rowers to splash into the sea.

The guides, who are members of the resort's Kainalu Ocean Sports team, answer questions about the island's history, culture and geography. They point out five peaks visible from Mauna Lani—the property's name means “mountain reaching heaven”—and share how lava flows have shaped the landscape. Once guests climb back into the canoe and prepare to return to shore, crew members lead a traditional chant. They also note the importance of presence and personal connections in a world filled with work challenges, political differences and technological distractions.

“Each of us in this canoe, we have very different lives. We have very different “kuleana,” or responsibilities. But one thing that ties us all together is the sun. If that sun didn't rise today, none of this happens for us. So, we show up. We appreciate it. We show gratitude,” says one guide. “You don't have to be in Hawaii doing a ceremony in a canoe to have a moment like this. The same sun rises for you, for everything and everyone, no matter where you're at.”

The sunrise canoe paddle is part of a robust cultural menu at Mauna Lani, a luxury property by Auberge Resorts Collection. The hotel reopened in 2020, after a full makeover; and now welcomes travelers in 333 rooms, suites and residential-style accommodations located on 32 waterfront acres.

Neutral tones and natural textiles give rooms here a serene look and feel. Large lanais overlook the ocean, mountains and ancient Kalāhuipua'a fishponds that surround the main Mauna Lani building. Once reserved for island



**The Surf Shack (above) is an all-day cafe serving casual fare on an open-air patio. CanoeHouse (below) offers indoor-outdoor fine dining with striking sunset views.**



royalty, the ponds are one stop on complimentary walking tours that put the site's rich heritage in context. Some are led by Daniel "Kaniela" Kahikina Akaka, Jr., better known as Uncle Danny, resident historian and cultural ambassador at Mauna Lani. He's organized monthly music and storytelling events at the property for nearly three decades.

He's part of a living culture team that also hosts experiences like lei making classes and talk

story sessions. Guests can chat with local weavers and feather artists during monthly artisan gatherings, or view Hawaiian artifacts, art and books at the "Hale 'I'ike" (House of Knowledge) cultural center in the bright, breezy hotel lobby.

Like its cultural programs, Mauna Lani's culinary offerings showcase a distinct sense of place. Ingredients from local producers like Hawaii Island Goat Dairy and Kekela Farms star

on menus across five resort dining venues. Executive Chef Rhoda Magbitang came to CanoeHouse, the signature restaurant, after working for Michelin-caliber talents like José Andrés and Josiah Citrin. Her team puts a Japanese-inspired spin on seafood, steak and vegetarian dishes, all served in an indoor-outdoor space with grand sunset views.

Sea air dances through HāLani, a more low-key dining spot that introduced a new coastal Mediterranean menu in early 2025. Favorites include wood-fired pizzas, kebabs and colorful salads, along with wine, Hawaii-brewed beers, zero-proof drinks and creative cocktails like a dragon fruit margarita with black lava salt. Nearby, Hā Bar serves beverages and small plates around the bar and on a terrace that was updated this summer. The Surf Shack dishes up snacks, salads and sandwiches throughout the day. This casual shoreline gathering point also hosts seasonal pop-ups by the likes of Ototo, a James Beard-winning sake bar and Japanese eatery based in Los Angeles.

At CanoeHouse, Chef Rhoda Magbitang and her culinary team celebrate land and sea with Japanese-inspired dishes incorporating ingredients from area farms.





**The resort unveiled new ocean-view clamshell daybeds and family cabana furniture this summer. Watersports and whale-watching outings meet nearby at the Beach Club, and signature morning canoe trips depart from the scenic shore.**

The Mauna Lani Market is a grab-and-go cafe with coffee, fresh smoothies, sandwiches, picnic supplies and gifts by regional artists and makers. Other retail highlights include Milo, which carries resort apparel and hosts special events by local designers, and the only Hawaii location of Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop. The lifestyle shop located near the spa stocks beachwear, jewelry and beauty products.

Mauna Lani's Auberge Spa offers a Goop Glow Facial that uses vitamin C, hyaluronic acid and peptides to smooth and brighten skin. The spa's body

among available massage enhancements, and guests can arrange for in-room spa services upon request. The adjacent fitness center has indoor and outdoor workout areas and weight-training equipment, and it's open 24 hours a day.

Complimentary sunrise yoga classes take place along the ocean's edge, on the Milo Tree

lounge next to three resort pools, including the keiki pool that's just for kids.

Just up the road, the property's wellness center and tennis club holds tennis clinics, pickleball tournaments, and classes ranging from circuit training to water aerobics to Pilates, barre and spin. Rugged lava rock winds through two post-

card-pretty, 18-hole Mauna Lani golf courses. Players of all ages can also take a quick swing through the 9-hole Wikipiki course, designed to be completed in about an hour.

Walking paths follow the beach in both directions, and

trails between the wellness center and the waterfront weave through Kalāhuipua'a Historical Park. Hawaiians lived here for 800 years before ships arrived from the Western world. Today, displays explain how the park's lava

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scrubs incorporate Hawaii-grown lavender, geranium and herbs, and treatments like the popular Lomi Lomi Massage also use an herbal oil blend to target tension and encourage relaxation. After-sun and hot stone add-ons are

Lawn. Nearby, the Beach Club is the check-in spot for paddling, snorkeling, surfing, fishing and whale watching adventures. Beach cabana and shaded clamshell rentals come with waterfront views and special amenities. Guests can also

tubes once served as homes. The archaeological sites feel far removed from the modern resort just around the bend.

With this easy park access and the resort's cultural talks, canoe trips, outdoor activities and sheer coastal beauty, Mauna Lani guests gain insight into the island's wide appeal.

"You can go anywhere that has a beach and a great view, but the way our team does tours and experiences really sets us apart," says Jessica Benioni Rios, Mauna Lani marketing manager. "Even if you don't step foot off the property, you will see and experience what Hawaii is all about."

For more information, call 808/885-6622 or visit [www.aubergeresorts.com/maunalani](http://www.aubergeresorts.com/maunalani).



**Mauna Lani rooms and suites have balconies overlooking mountains, gardens and the Pacific Ocean. A golf course frames five spacious resort residences that also include private pool and spa access plus assistance from a dedicated guest experience team.**