

# Family-Friendly Maui

When I'm planning a family vacation my mood swings from happy anticipation to mild anxiety. On one hand, I can hardly wait for all of us to be together. On the other, I wonder if I've picked the right place.

This was definitely the case last July, when I steered our party of

five to Kapalua, Maui. The decision was based on access to great snorkeling and on the time of year. I was told that Kapalua is near a beautiful reef and has a constant moderating breeze. However, I worried that this corner of West Maui might not be kid-friendly — and our group included (actually “starred” would be more accurate) Ms. Q, age four, along with her parents, and grandparents.

My concern grew when I learned that the Kapalua Resort community offers two championship golf courses, a world-class golf academy, ten tennis courts, a deluxe spa and fitness center, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and several upmarket restaurants — but no kiddie pools, no sand toys, only one casual café, and very few family-size vacation rentals.

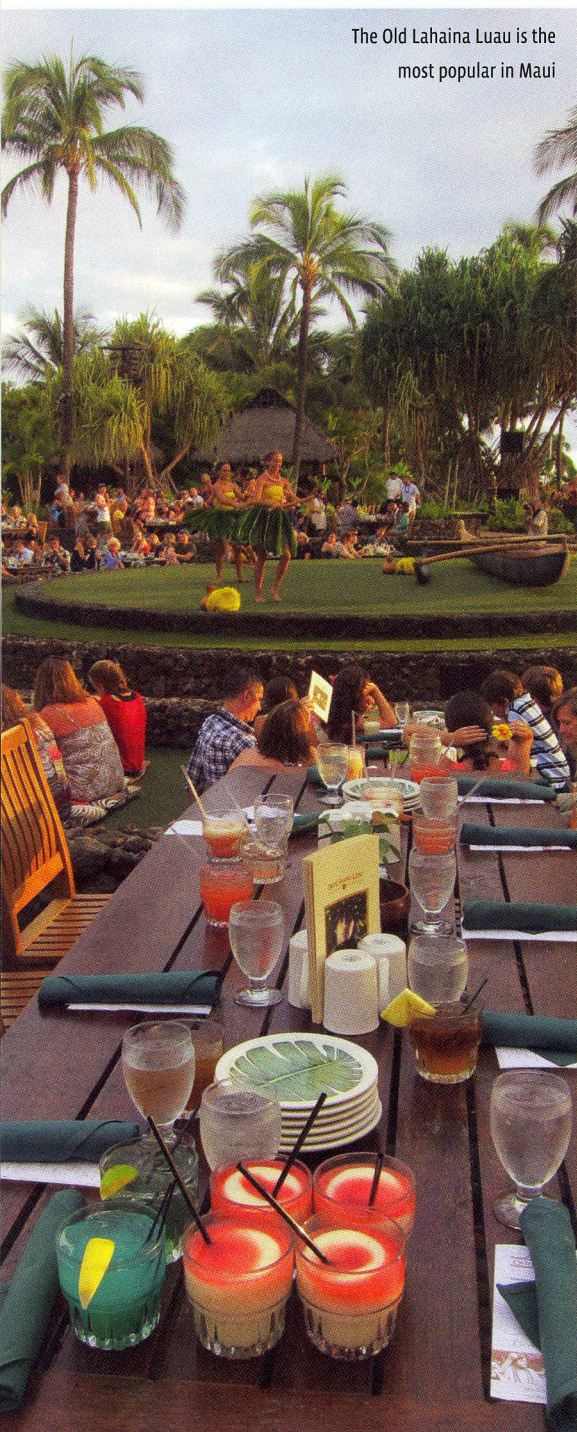
In the end, wooed by images of sea turtles and colorful coral, I

booked the largest of the available Kapalua Villas (The Ridge Villas #2023). When we arrived I was relieved to find that it was very spacious and provided a glorious 180-degree view of the ocean and the island of Molokai. In addition, the furnishings were attractive — but not so luxurious that I worried about spills and Play-Doh mishaps. With three bedrooms, three bathrooms, laundry facilities, and dining tables inside and on the deck, we all felt quite at home.

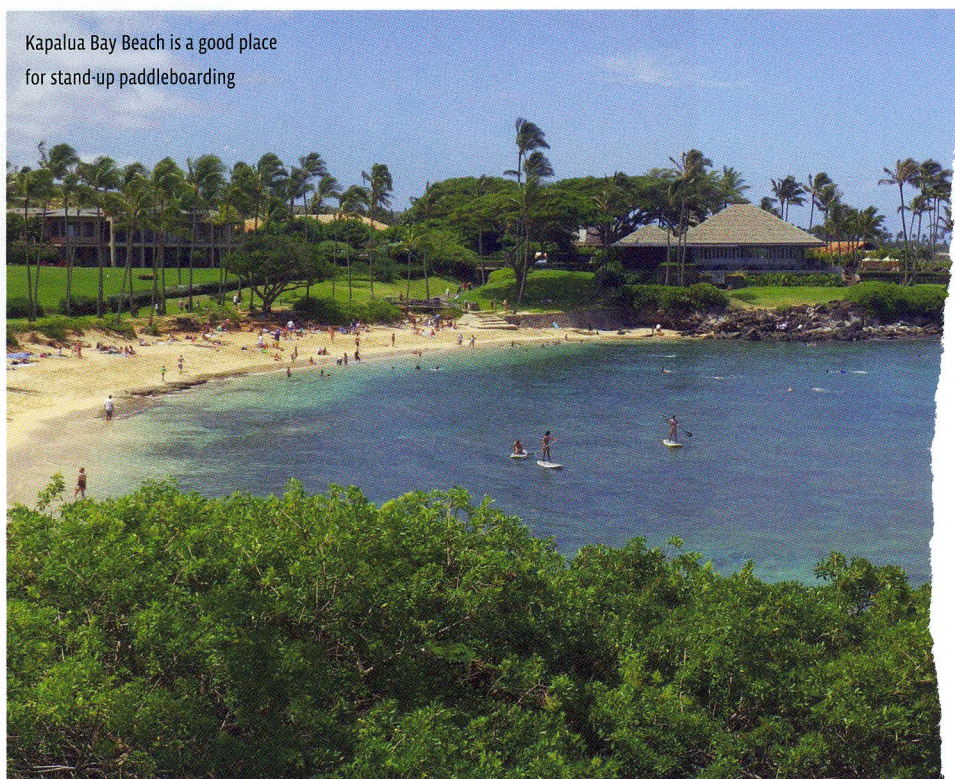
The two pools within a very short distance of our villa were fine for a quick dip and swim lessons for the Q, but in Maui, beaches always steal the show. In our case, nearby Kapalua Bay Beach, which *Condé Nast Traveler* says is one of the best in the world, got all the attention. Because we had booked our villa through Outrigger, we had free use of beach chairs and towels. ([www.kapaluvillas.com](http://www.kapaluvillas.com))

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAMS/HANSEN STOCK PHOTOS

The Old Lahaina Luau is the most popular in Maui



Kapalua Bay Beach is a good place for stand-up paddleboarding







Lei making is a complimentary activity at The Ritz-Carlton Kapalua

Our first day at Kapalua Bay, I literally bumped into a huge *honu* as my daughter and I were making our way back to the beach after a long snorkel. I was able to hover over the big fella for

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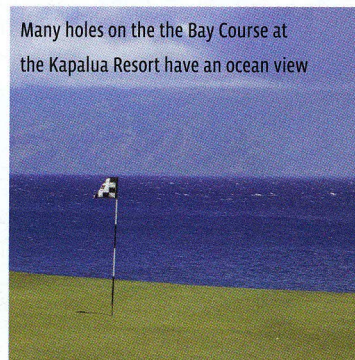
quite some time because the wave action was minimal and the water was comfortably warm.

Kapalua Bay is one of three beaches at the resort, and, while my husband and son-in-law enjoyed their body surfing sorties to Oneloa Beach, and D.T. Fleming Beach was pretty to look at, Kapalua quickly became our sandy home-away-from-home. We swam, snorkeled, built castles, read, picnicked, napped,

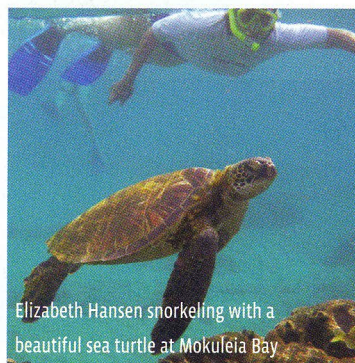
were silent observers at several weddings, talked about renting a stand-up paddleboard, and watched the sun set behind Molokai. It was — in short — heavenly.

We also spent an afternoon a few miles north of Kapalua in the marine life conservation area comprised of Mokuleia Bay and Honolua Bay. There are no services at this beautiful beach, which is accessed via a long steep stairway, but the snorkeling was even better than Kapalua. The water was exceptionally clear and we saw large schools of fish, one shy octopus, and a young sea turtle whose patterned bronze shell was a work of art.

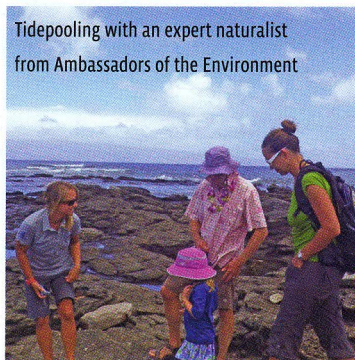
While Ms. Q didn't snorkel, she had fun at Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment program at the Ritz-Carlton, which features an environmental and cultural education center. Activities for children and families range from underwater photography to hiking on a lava flow. At story >>



Many holes on the the Bay Course at the Kapalua Resort have an ocean view



Elizabeth Hansen snorkeling with a beautiful sea turtle at Mokuleia Bay



Tidepooling with an expert naturalist from Ambassadors of the Environment



<< time, staff member Emmy read a book about a *paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboy). Another day, we all enjoyed tidepooling with Libby, an expert naturalist. Just the adults watched the sobering film *Then There Were None*, an authentic look at Hawaiian culture. Later, Ms. Q, her mother, and I learned how to make leis from heaps of beautiful orchids.

([www.ritzcarlton.com/kapalua](http://www.ritzcarlton.com/kapalua))

Back in our villa, I stood on the deck and watched golfers in the distance playing the waterfront holes on the Bay Course and surfers riding waves at Oneloa Bay. Nearby, plumeria trees and hibiscus bushes swayed in the breeze of family-friendly Maui.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



Making Hawaiian music at The Old Lahaina Luau



The Ritz-Carlton offers a series of ocean-view pools

## WEST MAUI DINING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Kahului Costco was our first stop after arriving on the island. Here, we loaded a cart with local fish, fresh fruit, and other things we all enjoy. These ingredients, in the hands of our talented son-in-law, became my favorite Maui meals — served *al fresco* on the deck.

I also really enjoyed lunch at Aloha Mixed Plate on the waterfront in Lahaina. My Asian chicken salad came with housemade noodles and marinated grilled chicken. This classic Hawaiian plate-lunch cafe specializes in traditional food such as kalua pork, lomi salmon, poi, and the ever-popular “two scoop rice.”



Next door, and under the same ownership, Old Lahaina Luau puts on the island's most popular hula show and traditional feast seven nights a week. Reservations are required well in advance. ([www.oldlahainaluau.com](http://www.oldlahainaluau.com))

Some of the restaurants within the Kapalua Resort (Merriman's, Pineapple Grill, and Plantation House) looked lovely, but not particularly kid-friendly. However, we did enjoy a delicious lunch at The Beach House at the Ritz-Carlton and we took home a pizza dinner from the café inside the resort's Honolua Store. In nearby Napili, Baan Thai Restaurant was a great find, and the very affordable Mama's Ribs 'n Rotisserie was a big hit.