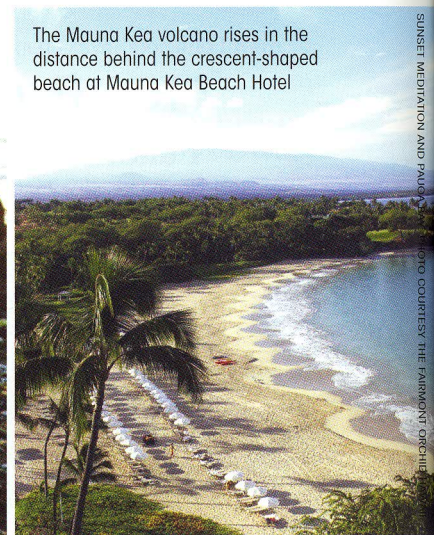


New Year, *Best You:* *Find Yourself on the Big Island*



Sunset meditation at The Fairmont Orchid Hawaii



The Mauna Kea volcano rises in the distance behind the crescent-shaped beach at Mauna Kea Beach Hotel

Feeling stressed after the holidays? Here's my Rx: "Take a week on the Kohala Coast and come home with a smile on your face."

Why the Kohala Coast? Because this stretch along the west coast of the Big Island is both sophisticated and serene and is home to seven of the state's best resorts.

My Ten-Point Plan for Your Recuperation:

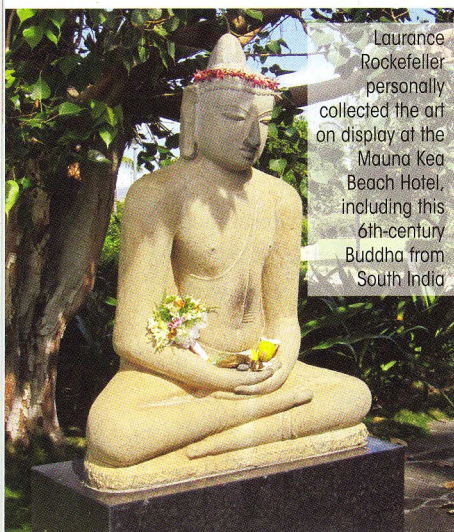
1. Make yourself at home. Each of the resorts has its own personality, so

take the time to make a good match. My husband Richard and I recently stayed at The Fairmont Orchid on the Gold Floor in the North Tower and loved being able to walk down the hall and enjoy breakfast, afternoon tea, and cocktail canapés in a living room setting. Throughout the resort, the staff goes out of their way to be helpful. On this trip we also stayed at the Mauna Kea, where the impeccable Mid-Century Modern architecture and extensive art collection around the hotel absolutely stole my heart. Open since 1965, the Mauna Kea's country club ambience attracts modern day "captains of industry" and their families.

2. Log off. Need I say more? Screen time isn't serene time.

3. Savor the surroundings. If you aren't texting and watching your Twitter feed, you'll have time to stop and smell the flowers (especially the plumeria). Also, let the gentle trade winds carry away your to-do list. Lie in a hammock and think about absolutely nothing. Find a comfy place for watching the sunset — solo or duo.

4. Appreciate the people. Think about how good-natured Hawaiians are — and good-looking, too. Listen to their music. These kind, friendly,



Laurance Rockefeller personally collected the art on display at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, including this 6th-century Buddha from South India



Pauoa Bay at The Fairmont Orchid Hawaii is a great spot for SUP and snorkeling

happy people are the antithesis of holiday shoppers.

5. Enjoy spa treats. Traditional Hawaiian *lomilomi* practitioners use their palms, forearms, fingers, knuckles, and elbows to knead even the most uptight body into something approximating bread dough. This is — hands down — my all-time favorite form of massage. I enjoyed the one at the Mauna Lani Spa, but it was surpassed by the Ali'i (royalty) Experience at the Spa Without Walls at the Fairmont. In a private outdoor pavilion with a waterfall for music and flower blossoms scenting the air, my therapist gave a great *lomilomi* and then applied a compress of specially blended Hawaiian herbs. After this, she slowly poured warm coconut oil over my hair and scalp, and did a relaxing scalp, neck, shoulder, hand, and foot massage with essences of sandalwood, frankincense, and myrrh. (If Watsu massage is your favorite, you'll love the large pool at the Mauna Lani, where there is also an outdoor Vichy Shower treatment room.)

6. Plan your time. January and February are good months to be on the Big Island because humpback whales have their babies here and stay to nurse them. It's often possible to see moms giving how-to-breath and

tail slap lessons from Kohala Coast hotels (especially the Four Seasons).

7. Play a round. Kohala Coast golf courses are some of the best in the state (although golf isn't really a stress buster). You might be better off snorkeling, which is somewhat hypnotic. We like the bay in front of The Beach Club at the Mauna Lani.

8. Eat well. Because the islands are cultural crossroads, restaurant menus offer a range from sushi to beef to pasta. Richard and I enjoyed dinner at Brown's at The Fairmont Orchid. The beautiful outdoor setting overlooking a calm lagoon was the perfect antidote to a full day of air travel. We also had an excellent meal at Mauna Kea's beachside Hau Tree.

9. Touch the culture of the coast. When Hawaii became a state in 1959, the new governor asked Laurance Rockefeller (Nelson's brother) to build a luxury resort. The wealthy conservationist flew over the Big Island and chose a site along a crescent shaped beach that provided



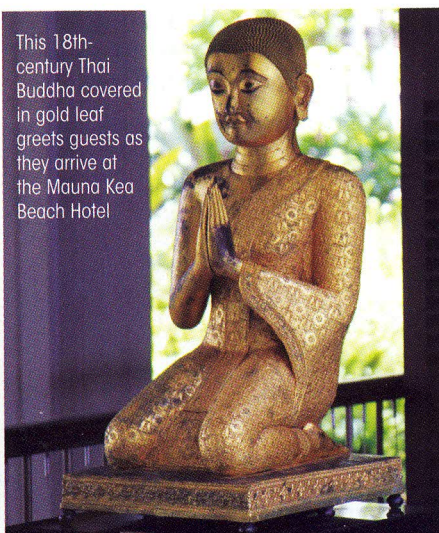
The waters around the Kohala Coast are rich in sea life and good snorkeling opportunities

a distant view of the dormant Mauna Kea volcano. The stunning Mauna Kea Hotel, influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, remains pleasantly free of glitz and gimmicks. Instead, it boasts a museum-quality collection of art and artifacts purchased by Rockefeller — best viewed on the weekly, guided tour. (www.timelessmaunakea.com)

10. Capture the view. At the Mauna Kea, I sat on our balcony every morning and memorized the color of the ocean, the curve of the beach, and the way the waves formed a scalloped pattern on the sand as they broke. Then I photographed the scene and captioned the image "my digital tranquilizer." ELIZABETH HANSEN



Kohala Coast sunsets, like this one, are often spectacular



This 18th-century Thai Buddha covered in gold leaf greets guests as they arrive at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel