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By *Bekah Wright*

A visit to the island of Maui is no mere beach vacation. It's an unforgettable experience with Hawaii's incredible culture, landscape, activities, food and activities all coming together for the perfect getaway. Add a stay at Kapalua Resort to the mix and the result is an extra dose aloha.

MAUI

As difficult as it may be to tear away from seaside accommodations with their prime snorkeling and fantastic beaches, taking in the island attractions is a must. Here are just a few that should top family itineraries.

Known as the "House of the Sun," it's only fitting to schedule a visit to the summit of Haleakala volcano for sunrise or sunset to truly revel in its wow factor. Prior to departing, pack something warm to wear while at the summit and phone 1-808-572-4400 to check for possible road closures. Allot a good amount of time for the trip as well, as there's much to see and do in Haleakala National Park from hiking and horseback riding to stargazing.

Stop on the way up at the Visitors Center for little ones to get info about participating in the Junior Ranger program during their visit to the 30,183-acre park. Parents can pick up maps for some of the 38 miles of public hiking trails here, too, with their sights set of discovering some of the unique aspects of the park like cinder cones and cloud forests. The ultimate destination, though, is the summit located at 10,023 feet. Standing amongst the clouds above the Manhattan-sized crater is nothing short of dazzling.

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Haleakala is located in an area known as of Upcountry Maui. There are myriad farms in the area offering tours and great eats. A few to try include the Ali`i Kula Lavender Farm for an informative tour, tea (the scones are divine), cooking demonstrations and wreath making. Nearby is the Surfing Goat Dairy where, among other things, visitors can feed and milk the goats. Better yet – cheese tastings. Further down the road is the Tedeschi Winery at ‘Ulupalakua Ranch. This is a great place to pair a bottle of wine with cheese from the Surfing Goat Dairy and have a picnic under the shade of century-old trees.

Produce purchases in hand; make plans for other picnics while on Maui. A great picnic pairing is a driving tour of the 52-mile Road to Hana aka Route 360. Family members prone to motion sickness may want to forego this twisty trek that takes two and a half hours one way. The rewards, though, are vast with Pacific panoramas and landscape lush with waterfalls, bamboo forests and verdant gardens. The small community of Hana is a treat unto itself; though plan to arrive early before the town’s few establishments close for the day. One to catch is the Hana Cultural Center and Museum with its authentic Hawaiian living complex and gardens.

Other noteworthy sites for visiting – Maui Ocean Center, the local aquarium where kids can get hands-on with several exhibits and Iao Valley State Park for rambling around the grounds. A town that stays open late is historic Lahaina. The harbor is the jumping off point for many ocean outings. It also has a great boardwalk for strolling while enjoying ice cream cones. Fun, too, is the town’s massive banyan tree, the roots of which are a big hit with toddlers. And then, there’s Kapalua...

KAPALUA RESORT

According to Hawaiian lore, Kapalua is the spot where heaven meets earth. Stay for a while and what may sound like a myth becomes reality. Located on the western tip of Maui, Kapalua was once a pineapple plantation overlooking the Pacific. Pineapple still abounds in the area and tours of acreage where Maui Gold pineapple is grown are available to visitors. Mostly, though, the land welcomes guests with the promise of outstanding beauty that makes the heart sing and activities that will cement memories of a lifetime.

A portion of the idyllic, 23,000-acre property is devoted to two, 18-hole championship golf courses with ocean views – The Bay and The Plantation. Guests looking to hone their skills can sign up for lessons at the Kapalua Golf Academy. This includes young students, too. Further helping little ones to embrace the sport are junior tees on the front nine holes of The Bay Course, where youth can play nine holes for free (when accompanied by a paying adult) each day starting at 2:30 p.m..

Kids can also get into tennis action with lessons through Peter Burwash International at the Kapalua Tennis Garden. As for parents, they’ll want to reserve time on the ten plexipave courts paired in tiered clusters; four lighted for night play.



Families can come together to explore the resort’s 100 miles of trails with ocean and mountain panoramas. Take in views of the coast and its magnetic draw is inescapable. Luckily, there are numerous beaches at the resort that are ideal for all ages. Fronting the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua is D.T. Fleming Beach where snorkeling, kayaking and boogie boarding can be done. Nearby, too, are Honolua Bay, Oneloa Beach and Mokule’ia Bay.

A great way to get in touch with both the surrounding sea and mountains is through Jean-Michel Cousteau’s Ambassadors of the Environment (AOTE) program (see sidebar). The local landscape serves as a living laboratory for naturalists and cultural advisors who lead activities ages five and up in activities from underwater digital photography while snorkeling in a Green Sea Turtle habitat to learning how to navigate the sea by the stars. Of course, kids will have their own favorite activities. Among them – dissecting owl poop.

Those ready for more communing with nature can embark upon one of Kapalua Adventures’ outings. Providing thrills-a-minute is the company’s zipline tour, available for participants 10 years or older, weighing between 60 lbs. and 250 lbs. The tour commences from a mountain outpost within Pu’u Kukui Preserve. Here, guests harness into parallel ziplines, traversing a two-mile span about the West Maui Mountains with views of Hawai’i’s eight outlying islands. More adrenalin pumping can be had at the six-station climbing tower and high ropes challenge course. Not to be left out is a two-seater “swing” that goes aloft between two 60-foot telephone poles and above the valley. Backyard swing set experiences will never be the same.

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