



Kauai Marriott Resort

KAUAI MARRIOTT RESORT

AN HIBISCUS-SHAPED POOL with fountains, one of Kauai's best beaches and beautifully landscaped grounds await at the Kauai Marriott Resort. Built in 1995, before the "no taller than a coconut tree" rule came into effect, the 356-room Marriott is big and sprawling. But its design is so eye-catching and lavish – with pink marble columns, koi ponds and courtyards with tropical flowers and parakeets – that no one minds. You feel like you're in Hawaii too. On display in the oversize lobby are a gorgeous polished koa surfboard and giant outrigger canoe, made between 1860 and 1890, that belonged to Prince Kuhio.

A US\$50 million renovation enhanced the hotel in 2010. Each of the spacious rooms are fresh and spiffy and feature a 42-inch flat-screen TV, "Revive" king-size bed and linens, lanai, fridge (to cool your drinks) and a modern couch and cushions in bright orange and purple colors. Bathrooms have black granite counters and Kohler sink, but you have to do a little hula to close the door to the separate shower/tub room (a bit of a tight squeeze).

Snuggled up to Kalapaki Beach (with calm swimming waters), the Marriott is conveniently located just five minutes from the airport; guest services include a complimentary airport shuttle. Its central location makes island sightseeing easy – an hour's drive north is lush Hanalei and spectacular Waimea Canyon (for hiking) is an hour southwest.

For golfers, two adjacent Jack Nicklaus designed golf courses include teeing off in paradise along a half-mile stretch of oceanfront greens. And young kids love the shallow new children's pool with waterslide.

— GEORGE AND JANICE MUCALOV

KOA KEA HOTEL & RESORT

LOVERS, HONEYMOONERS AND COUPLES seeking a serene escape on Kauai's pretty Poipu Beach need look no further than this boutique hotel. Koa Kea caters to adults. And it's very good in the dreamy department – TripAdvisor recently voted it the "most romantic hotel in the United States" in the 2012 travelers' choice awards. With only 121 rooms in three low-key buildings, a big plus is its intimacy. Forget your sunglasses? No problem. It's easy to walk back to your room from the lava rock decorated pool or oceanfront lawn. And great snorkeling, swimming and surfing are mere steps away on either side of the hotel. Service is personal too – there's no need to sign for towels as the beach shack attendant remembers who you are.

Koa Kea offers many luxury touches: free WiFi, iPod docking stations, marble showers with dual showerheads, L'Occitane bath products and in-room Nespresso machines. Book a deluxe oceanfront room, and you'll also revel in the upgraded creamy décor that features an inset mother-of-pearl wall behind the king headboard. And you'll be so close to the ocean that crashing waves will lull you to sleep each night.

Its Red Salt restaurant is one of the top places to dine on the island. With creamy travertine floors and granite tables adorned with a single red nasturtium in a vase, it has a spare though elegant feel. But the focus is really on the food – fresh seafood and local organic produce. Try the seared ahi with edamame-cilantro risotto or the pan-seared ono with King crab hash. For breakfast, you won't find better buttermilk pancakes anywhere in the state (delish with macadamia nuts and coconut syrup).

— GEORGE AND JANICE MUCALOV



Koa Kea Hotel & Resort