

Picture Perfect: Kauai, Island Of Earthly Delights

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APRIL 26, 2017



When Hollywood filmmakers set out to find that perfect tropical setting for their movies, more often than not they land on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Films such as *South Pacific* (1958), Elvis Presley's *Blue Hawaii* (1961), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *The Descendants* (2011) and *Jurassic World* (2015) are among the dozens that have used the lush Kauai landscape to their great filmmaking advantage.

The sharp mountain peaks, gushing waterfalls and broad ocean views also make a remarkable setting for golf courses, and Kauai proclaims several of the best in the Aloha State. At the top of the list is the recently rebranded Jack Nicklaus-designed Ocean Course at Hokuala (formerly known as the Kiele Course at Kauai Lagoons).

Located near the airport in Lihue — where non-stop flights from many West Coast cities land daily — the Ocean Course is exciting from start to finish. The recently renovated front nine is a big hitter's dream with wide fairways and memorable holes, such as the par-3 fifth, where the tee shot must travel over a canyon filled with towering mango trees.

But it's the back nine where the scenery really kicks into high gear. In fact, Hokuala features the longest continuous stretch of oceanfront holes in Hawaii, Nos. 12 through 16, and they are at once extremely scenic and great fun to play.

Holes 14 is a dynamic par-3 that plays from a blufftop tee to a blufftop green, with shots missed left standing a good chance of landing in the Pacific. The hole is ringed by swaying coconut palms, with as-good-as-it-gets ocean and mountain views.

Number 15 is a new hole along the same bluff, playing to a green in the shadow of the under-construction Timbers Kauai Ocean Club & Residences. When the first building is completed later this year, these homes promise to be some of the most coveted real estate on the island.



Then there's No. 16. As fun a hole as you'll ever play, you fire your tee ball toward the crest of a blind fairway that careens downhill to a putting surface next to a picturesque lighthouse. It plays less than 285 from the resort tees, and with the downhill run you stand a chance of getting close. But birdie, par or "other," the picturesque beauty of this hole overlooking Nawiliwili Harbor does truly outweigh your score.

The course heads back to the clubhouse with a narrow driving hole on 17 and finishing on a tough-to-hit island green at 18 that gets less attention than it deserves due to the magnificent ocean stretch that precedes it.

The golf course is managed nowadays by Timbers Resorts, as are Hokualea's shopping areas, and residential units. (A Marriott Vacation Club also occupies the 450-acre oceanfront property.) A new superintendent, supported by new general manager Fran Roach, is bringing this course back to the superior conditioning it deserves after several lean years.

But that's no surprise. Timbers has built a rock-solid reputation over the past 18 years as developer and operator of exceptional boutique hotels, residence clubs and resort communities located in some of the most sought-after destinations in the world, including Aspen, Vail, Napa, Sonoma, Scottsdale and Tuscany. Their entry to the Hawaii market has been long-anticipated by their loyal homeowners and members, many of whom own in multiple markets, and enjoy the benefits of a generous reciprocity program.

Sales are slated to begin in spring, and when completed, Hokualea will include a private residence club, luxury whole ownership residences, custom golf course home sites, a retail shopping village and a boutique hotel featuring a destination spa, multiple dining options and extensive pools. A new practice facility will open this summer, and a golf clubhouse is on the drawing boards for 2018.

If you are looking for 2017's "it" destination, do what Hollywood does ... land on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.