

ALOHA FROM MAUI

GETAWAY FROM THE WINTER BLUES AND FIND YOUR PARADISE

Fall has come again and while Canadians from coast to coast are celebrating the clear, crisp days of autumn, it won't be long before we're plotting our escape from the dull, grey days of winter. So picture this...it's just before dawn and the sky above the Au 'aa Channel that runs between Maui, Lana'i and Molokai is tinged with pink as the sun kisses the top of the West Maui Mountains. You're savouring the last sip of a perfectly brewed Royal Kona coffee before heading out to play your first round at one of Ka'anapali's two resort courses. Then, out of the corner of your eye, you spot a spout on the horizon before a majestic humpback whale breaches and dives deep. Aloha...welcome to paradise!

by Jane and Dave Finn

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The Kapalua Plantation Course regularly hosts the PGA TOUR

Ka'anapali Beach



WEST MAUI - KA'ANAPALI, NAPILI AND LAHAINA

It seemed only fitting that our first stop was Ka'anapali where the legend began in 1962 when Robert Trent Jones Sr. built Maui's first course. The following year the Sheraton at Black Rock opened to cater to the likes of Sam Snead and Bing Crosby who simply thought of it as 'home.' Today there are more than fourteen golf courses within striking distance of the Sheraton and an infinite array of accommodations for travelers like us who simply want to enjoy the good life with family and friends on one of the best beaches in Hawaii.



Ka'anapali Kai Course, West Maui

Despite fifty years of growth, the spirit of Ohana (family) remains strong. Nowhere was this more apparent than when we sat down with David Havens, Director of Instruction for the Ka'anapali Kai and Royal courses.

Diplomatically he refrained from mentioning his 'quiet' 66 that certainly humbled this amateur, but as we talked about how the area had grown and how the courses had evolved to enhance the visitor's experience, David was equally passionate about his program that gets used clubs into the hands of under-privileged kids — an investment not only in the future of golf, but in his community.

The next day we headed northeast to Napili. While the drive was only a matter of minutes, the change in weather was dramatic.

You see, the topography of the island, that adds to the beauty and uniqueness of each course, has also created a series of microclimates each with its own set of risks and rewards. Hence the local saying, "if you don't like the weather...wait five minutes or move five miles!"

Today the sky is a kaleidoscope of rainbows and with the tradewinds tapering off, the Hyundai Tournament of Champions is finally underway at the Kapalua Plantation Course where we're just in time catch a bit

of the action before teeing off at her sister course known as The Bay Course.

Kapalua can be loosely translated as 'arms embracing the sea' and as we made our way around this Arnold Palmer design which takes full advantage of five adjacent bays and three white-sand beaches, we soon understood that stunning panoramas would prove to be our biggest hazards.

In particular, I can recall in vivid detail The Bay's signature fifth hole that set the stage for the day's play. It's a spectacular par-3 that straddles the ocean cliffs forcing you to alter your club selection drastically depending on the wind direction. Definitely a property you'd never tire of even if you played it every day.

But no matter how much you love golf, be sure to take a few hours to wander the

seaside streets of Lahaina and explore the history of what was once a whaling capital and now serves as the gateway to the best whale watching in the world. From November to March, the surrounding waters are home to thousands of humpback whales who come here to give birth before returning to Alaska, Russia or Canada to enjoy an endless summer.

SOUTH MAUI

From Lahaina, it's a short hour-and-a-half drive to South Maui to experience Kihei, Wailea and Makena where we found the pace of life a little slower, the winds a little calmer and the resorts more in tune with the natural landscape. The courses here have a more championship feel that beg you to bring out your 'A' game.

Let's start with the Wailea Golf Club owned and operated by GolfBC which serves up a unique set of challenges whether you're playing the original Blue Course, the Emerald Course, voted one of North America's most women-friendly courses by Golf for Women, or the Gold Course.

The Wailea Emerald Course is the most popular at the club. It features shorter par-3s, subtle elevation changes from tee-to-green and sand to challenge the golfer. It was my own personal favourite, perhaps because I started with an opening birdie on the downhill par-4 that seemed to run straight into the Pacific, but the views just kept getting better even if my score didn't. Frankly, the panoramic vistas were too stunning to concentrate on my play!

If you are looking for a little more of a natural experience, make it a point to check out Makena Beach and Golf Resort — the last property you hit

Photo Credit: Jane & Dave Finn



The stunning views at Makena

before the rocky road that leads to the virtually uninhabited La Perouse Bay.

The original Robert Trent Jones II course will open again in Q1 of 2014 and is very much worth a play. Carved out of a kiawe forest and with a more rugged feel, Trent Jones left the natural lava rock exposed in a way that showcases the flow down the side of the mountain towards the sea. The beach and the amenities are equally impressive and on an island where ho'oki pa (hospitality) is the norm, the staff here put the 'zing' in amazing. Since 2010, the new owners have invested more than \$20 million in the property. You can only imagine what this kind of passion and attention to detail can muster up and best of all it's only a par-5 to Wailea and the triple crown of golf courses.

Three more days before it's time to head home, but there's still another part of Maui County we just have to visit — it's off to Lana'i where the locals go "to get away from it all."

LANA'I - FORMERLY THE PINEAPPLE ISLAND

From Lahaina, it's a short forty five minute ferry ride to the smallest of the inhabited islands in this Pacific chain. How laid back is Lana'i? Let's put it this way, there are less than 3,200 full time residents on-island and there are no traffic lights. In fact, if you wanted to stay for a few nights, you only have three choices, luckily, each is as stellar and as different as the two courses we're about to play.

The Challenge at Manele is a Jack Nicklaus design that ranks in the top-50 best public golf courses in America and one of the most visually stunning golf courses you'll ever play. The dramatic elevation changes, volcanic rock outcroppings, perfectly manicured bunkers and magnificent ocean vistas make every hole a standout.



Wailea Emerald Course, South Maui

The first five holes gradually climb a mountain as you seemingly rise higher into the sky. The colour of the water of Hulopo'e Bay changes from a constant blue to shades of teal, aqua and back again. The back nine has less elevation change, but literally hugs the coastline of Huawai Bay where six of the nine greens are perched on ocean cliffs. The Challenge at Manele wasn't only golf at its finest, but a picture perfect day for taking photographs.

The Experience at Koele on the other hand is the polar opposite of The Challenge. Built at a higher elevation in the mountains where the temperature is consistently ten degrees cooler, this is the only tropical course we've seen where they actually planted bent grass greens.

The first nine holes are built on the lower portion of the property where subtle elevation changes and wide fairways lined by tall cork pines, kiawe and jacaranda trees give the course a distinct parkland feel.

The back nine begins to climb sharply from the clubhouse, but it's not until you reach the twelfth hole that the truth is revealed — you're not only playing on an island, but you're almost level with Mt. Haleakala, Maui's largest mountain rising 10,023 feet above sea level across the channel. We'd played many great rounds and the solitude at the top provided us with a few quiet moments to reflect on just how great our vacation had been.

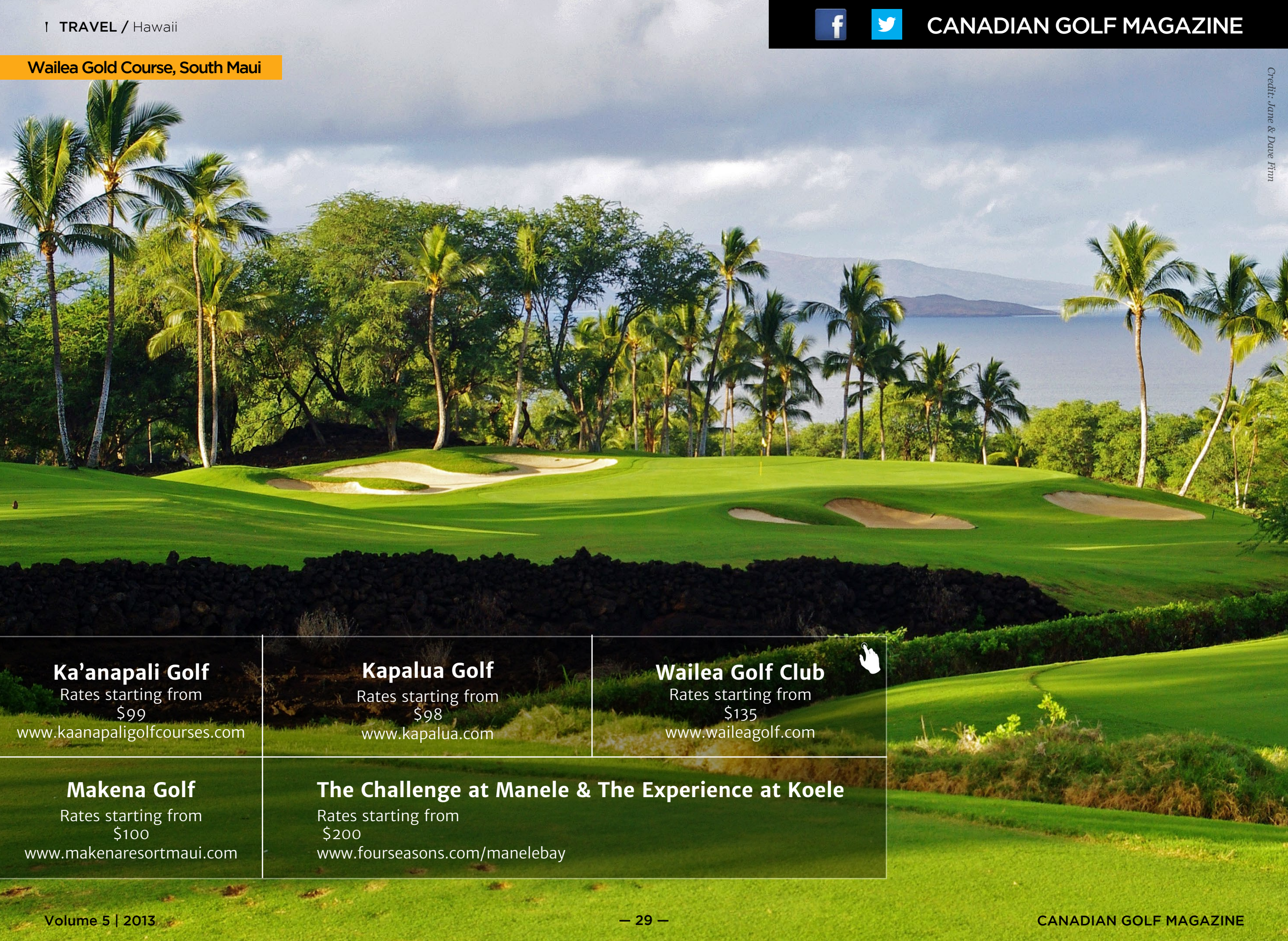
A SPECIAL PLACE

What spoke to us about Hawaii? What makes it such a great golfing destination? The answer would be its people.

Perhaps a good friend of ours sums it up best when she says she named her cottage Maui North because despite the fact that she has traveled the world, she's never felt as at home as she did in Hawaii. Maybe now is your time to visit Maui and make some memories of your own.

Wailea Gold Course, South Maui

Credit: Jane & Dave Finn



Ka'anapali Golf

Rates starting from
\$99

www.kaanapaligolfcourses.com

Kapalua Golf

Rates starting from
\$98

www.kapalua.com

Wailea Golf Club

Rates starting from
\$135

www.waileagolf.com

Makena Golf

Rates starting from
\$100

www.makenaresortmaui.com

The Challenge at Manele & The Experience at Koele

Rates starting from
\$200

www.fourseasons.com/manelebay