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## King Kamehameha Kona Beach Resort Review - Historic Hotel Gets a Makeover

By Anne Z Cooke

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Classic Hawaiian Sunset on the Kona Coast

Spring came early to the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel this year, bringing with it two outsized and astonishing waves. The first was the tsunami created by the recent earthquake in Japan. Propelled eastward across the Pacific Ocean, it rolled up and onto the Big Island's Kona Coast, damaging a number of beach resorts, including the King Kam Kona Beach Hotel, a mid-priced property in the town of Kailua-Kona. The second "wave," a more welcome surprise, was the Travel Age West announcement that the hotel is an "Editors Pick" nominee for the 2011 WAVE award given annually for "Best New Resort or Major Renovation." TravelAge West, the travel agent magazine, cited the hotel's spectacular \$35 million renovation, a two-year-long project completed in 2010.



Dream time at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel

As for the tsunami, the King Kam was fortunate to escape without serious damage. None of the 452 guest rooms were hit and cleanup and repair began almost immediately. Guests continued to arrive,

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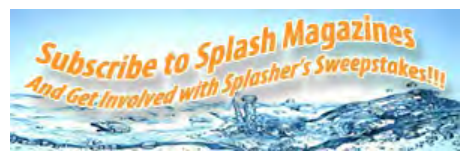
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- 12:00 AM | <a href="http://www.answerunited.com/"><b>Small Business Answering Services</b></a> <br/>
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- 8:00 PM | DREAMS IN VARIATION
- 8:00 PM | ONE FLEW OVER THE

though flooding damaged the hotel's lobby lounges, the restaurant and the Island Beach Lu'au venue. Sand and debris were scattered inside the hotel and the carpets and furniture were ruined. But by the end of March, the Lu'au site had reopened for its usual evening shows, the swimming pool and Billfish Bar were nearly finished and new carpeting and lobby furniture had been ordered.



Hula dancers show their mastery of Tahitian dance

By May 1, the hotel was back in business and taking summer reservations. Though much of Kamakahonu Beach was swept away, the Kona Boys Hut, a local sports outfitter, stayed open for guests throughout, offering outrigger canoe rides, stand-up paddle-surfing (the "new" jargon is SUP), snorkeling and kayaking on Kailua Bay. Giving nature a head-start, the hotel trucked in new sand and rebuilt the beach.



Standup Paddle boarding is Hawaii's hottest new sport

As for the WAVE award, winners are determined by TravelAge West magazine and online readers, and will be announced June 2 at the WAVE Awards Gala Dinner in Beverly Hills, California. "We're honored to be recognized by the editors of TravelAge West and excited to be in the running for a Best of the Best WAVE Award," said Deanna Isbister, director of sales at the hotel. The property has also earned another recent accolade, this time for the new infinity pool. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, it is one of "Hawaii's Best Pools," a rare compliment considering that hotel swimming pools are a Hawaiian hallmark.



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Kailua Bay from the King Kam Kona Beach Hotel

The pool deck also sports a natural-looking lava rock whirlpool tub, oriented to provide superb views of the shoreline, where King Kamehameha I lived during his final years. King Kamehameha, who united the Hawaiian Kingdom in late 1790s, also built the Ahu'ena Heiau, a temple dedicated to peace, nearby. Now a National Historic Landmark, the heiau is one of many pre-European Hawaiian sites in Kailua Village.



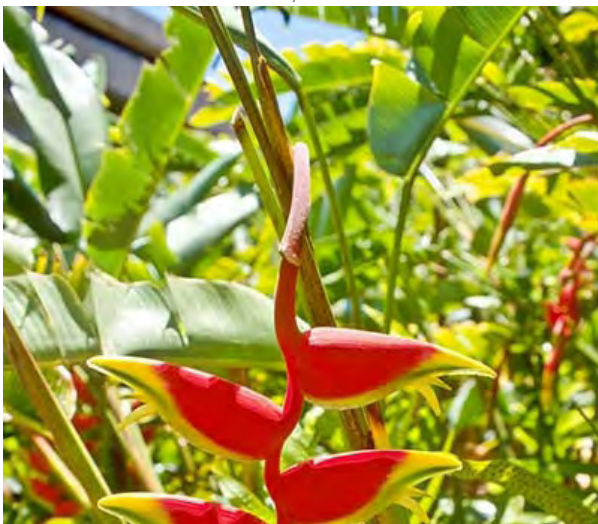
honu (green turtles) nap on the Kona Coast's warm sands

What else will the hotel's "family" -- its repeat visitors -- find on their next visit? The rooms are small but inviting, with distinctly Hawaiian colors; and the retail shops are relocated into a new space. If you're an admirer of Hawaiiana, stop in to view the exhibit of 40 signed and numbered limited-edition giclees (high-quality ink jet prints) by the legendary, late artist-historian Herb Kawainui Kane. The exhibit is the largest collection of his work in any Hawaiian hotel, and complements the original Kane mural in the lobby.

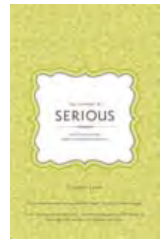


Sand and sun on a summer afternoon

Double rooms for two in early July start at \$138.75 per night. Wifi is free. The King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel, a member of the Pacifica Hotel Group, is at 75-5660 Palani Rd., Kailua-Kona, HI 96740. For more, visit [www.konabeachhotel.com](http://www.konabeachhotel.com), or find it on Facebook.



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