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# Making most of Maui deals, as family travel rebounds

By Felicity Long

**A**s parents, we make dozens of expensive sacrifices for our children, from orthodontia to college tuition. But give up an in-room massage I had booked for myself to my teen daughter at the Wailea Beach Villas in Maui? That was a tough one, but, with a martyred sigh, that is exactly what I did on day two of a weeklong trip to Maui with my 15-year-old fellow Hawaii enthusiast.

It was a small price to pay, considering that with the economy in dire straits, such a trip would be a luxury for many families. But as it turns out, we weren't alone in placing value on family connections and shared experiences.

"The [family] travel appetite is returning," said Kyle McCarthy, editor of Family Travel Forum, which provides information and consulting services to travelers and the industry.

"We have seen a 10% increase since March in the number of travelers researching family vacations," she said. "With the remarkable discounts available in the luxury sector, we anticipate some upscale families will trade up in their choice of domestic or international resort."

Findings from the latest Travel-horizons survey bolster that view, reporting that travelers are beginning to perceive travel as more affordable. The survey was co-authored by the U.S. Travel Association and Ypartnership, a marketing firm that tracks travel trends.

"This is the first increase we have observed in the index since January 2008, which indicates that the discounts travel providers and destinations are offering are working to attract more travelers, even in this down economy," said Peter Yesawich, chairman and CEO of Ypartnership.

As to where Hawaii stands so far this year, the results of the 2009 Travel Trends Survey by Travel Leaders places Maui at No.

3 on the list of Top 10 U.S. bookings for 2009, with Honolulu at No. 4. (Las Vegas leads the rankings, followed by Orlando.)

Cautious optimism notwithstanding, travelers at all price points, none more so than family and multigenerational groups, are looking for deals. After all, family travel is by definition group travel, with typically just one or two people picking up the tab.

Resorts have gotten the message loud and clear. The Wailea Beach Villas, which caters to repeat family and multigenerational groups, has rolled out a number of specials in 2009, including Escape Rates that trim prices from 42% to 62% in exchange for a reduction in housekeeping and other services and more restrictions. Prices after the discount start at \$495 for a one-bedroom penthouse and \$695 for a two-bedroom penthouse.

## Beach villa bliss

So what will a family get for its money at Wailea Beach Villas? For one thing, plenty of space. I know I'm not alone in preferring to trim a few days from a vacation rather than be crammed into a small space with kids and grandma.

The property features 98 penthouses and villas, ranging from two to three bedrooms measuring 1,900 to 3,100 square feet. That space is virtually doubled by enormous lanais; some even boast private plunge pools.

Granite and stainless-steel

kitchens with high-tech gadgets; a spacious living room with a huge, flat-screen TV; three bathrooms; and generous walk-in closets were some of the features that defined our three-bedroom suite.

What the property does not have is a drop-off children's program, although family-friendly activities, such as surfing and guided canoeing, are available.

There is no on-site restaurant, but clients probably won't notice thanks to the eateries across the street at the Shops at Wailea.

The other dining option — a privately prepared, in-suite meal by a local chef — was arranged on our last night by the concierge. The chef and her assistant were in our kitchen when we arrived back from an afternoon at the beach. Both kept up a steady commentary on local cuisine as they prepared our meal of macadamia-encrusted mahi mahi and a desert of star fruit and pineapple. Best of all, we dined on the lanai, set up with a full-size dining table and a Viking grill.

Wailea Beach Villas has a Travel Agent Free Night Promotion, through which agents who book at least 35 villa or penthouse nights can stay one free night for every seven booked. See [www.drhmaui.com/travel-agents.php](http://www.drhmaui.com/travel-agents.php).

## The other half

We spent the second part of our Maui stay at the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua, situated on the 23,000-acre Kapalua Resort on the island's west coast.

The property appeals to family members of all ages because of its mix of high-end amenities, such as a newly renovated spa, and outdoor activities.

We spent a few happy hours zip-lining at the Kapalua Adventures Mountain Outpost and Adventure Center, an on-site facility with a ropes course, a giant swing and custom harness-seats for zip-liners that provide more comfort for participants without taking away any of the thrills.

We put in the requisite time at the property's pools and at the beach, but the real draw, often the case in mother-daughter bonding experiences, was the spa.

The spa offers a whole menu of adult treatments, including a first-rate hot stone lomilomi massage as well as salon treatments for my daughter.

The final treat of the visit was a two-hour tour from the Maui Pineapple Co., which owns the Kapalua Resort. Guides transport guests to the adjacent plantation to see how the fruit is grown, followed by tastings and a pineapple as a souvenir.



A family-friendly Resort Re- ilies because of the complimen-  
connect Package starts at \$495 per tary meal and snack presentations  
night, per room and adds daily and computer setup. The special  
breakfast for two and a resort is good through June 30.  
credit. Rooms on the Club Level See [www.waileabeachvillas.com](http://www.waileabeachvillas.com)  
floor are especially suited for fam- and [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).



PHOTO BY CHARLES FLECK

**The 2009 Travel Trends Survey by Travel Leaders placed Maui at No. 3 on the list of Top 10 U.S. bookings for this year. Above, snorkelers trail a sea turtle off the coast of Maui.**