



An afternoon at the adults-only infinity-pool at Four Seasons Resort Maui is a wonderful way to end a day of sightseeing.

Paradise and parenting a good fit in magical Maui

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Birdsong gently lifts me from my dreamlike state. Slowly awakening, I hear the soothing sounds of lapping waves and swaying palms drift into the thatched spa hale (a traditional Hawaiian hut). Our oceanfront couples massage has transported me into another realm of relaxation. An afternoon at the adults-only infinity-pool will complete the day. It's a flawless finish to our time in paradise.

Staying at the Four Seasons Resort Maui feels like honeymooning in a tropical wonderland — an unexpected feeling as we're on a family vacation. However, I've barely seen our daughter since arriving here. Kids for All Seasons captured her heart immediately, and now, when given the choice, she picks the complimentary keiki club over us. Every single time.

While we laze around reading on the beach and snorkelling in Wailea's clear warm water, our kiddo fills her day with swimming, crafting and endless play. Evening camps are also offered (an additional cost), which allowed my husband and I to share a romantic meal at the oceanside Italian restaurant Ferrero's. Four Seasons even incorporates children's programming into its Brazilian-inspired Market Night, which is available to off-property guests as well.

This brilliant concept afforded our family a leisurely two-hour dinner, at which our little socialite happily bopped between the table and supervised kids zone. It might have been our longest and most effortless family restaurant meal to date.

As frequent travellers, excellent hotel amenities are a must, and our trips are often planned around a destination's selection of family-friendly properties. Maui is a top choice. We began our holiday at the Napili Kai Beach Resort, located on a protected, crescent-shaped bay on the northern tip of the island's west coast. Although the laid-back, all-suite hotel has no resort fees and includes complimentary amenities like Wi-Fi, parking, outdoor barbecues, morning coffee and a weekly mai tai party, the beach is its biggest draw. We spent most of our time building castles in the soft, brown sugar-like sand and snorkelling in the calm, shallow water. If your kids are strong swimmers, walk about five minutes north of Napili, to the hugely popular snorkelling site Kapalua Bay. It's a busier beach, with a deeper and rockier drop off, but the bay is a hot spot for turtles and colourful fish.

As our five-year-old wasn't able to participate in the Napili Kai's seasonal Keiki Club (ages six and up), we registered her for Ambassadors of the Environment at the nearby Ritz-Carlton Kapalua. It's an excellent program offering unique environmental and cultural based activities for adults, families and children, including whale watching, snorkelling excursions and a supervised kid's camp. The morn-

ing Life at the Edge of the Sea was such a success that we booked an evening Creatures of the Night session as well. While our child explored the beach by starlight and learned about nocturnal wildlife, we enjoyed a spectacular sunset and decadent farm-to-fork dinner at the Ritz-Carlton's Banyan Tree restaurant.

After relaxing away the days in sleepy Napili Bay, we moved south to the Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Villas, an amenity-rich, all-suite resort near historic Lahaina. While there, we focused on Hawaiian culture. The on-site Pu'uhonua Cultural Centre offers a host of complimentary classes and events, including the basics of Hawaiian language, a keiki hula show and the cultural story time: Na Wahi Pana. My favourite is the traditional, fresh flower lei-making class, using delicate orchids (additional cost). Westin's Spa Helani also incorporates traditional Hawaiian practices into its treatments. After dropping our daughter at Kid's Club, we indulged in the couple's Nanea Ritual; an aromatherapy massage with heated lava rocks designed to clear away negative energy and create a state of blissful relaxation.

Another excellent experience is the early morning ocean paddle with family-owned and operated Ali'I Maui Outrigger. Over the course of 1.5 hours, we explored the Ka'anapali coastline searching for honu (sea turtles) and learning about island history, the outrigger tradition and Hawaii's diverse marine life. Our daughter's top cultural pick, however, is the Waialele Polynesian Luau at The Westin Maui. This two-hour event opens with a comedic Fijian chief, who has the audience in stitches well before dinner. Beautiful traditional costumes, fire-knife dancers, a sprawling Hawaiian buffet and free-flowing mai tais complete the evening extravaganza.

After watching the luau's host crack a fresh coconut using only a wooden spear, our daughter was determined to drink from one. In fact, it's her obsession that prompted a scenic drive to Twin Falls in the O'olawa Valley — one of the most popular stops on the Road to Hana. The first set of falls is just a five-minute stroll from the busy parking lot. It's an easy walk with young kids, who will love to play hide-and-seek in the towering bamboo groves. While many visitors wear a bathing suit to swim in the cool freshwater pools, the descent down is a bit too challenging for a five-year-old. Instead, we enjoyed a post-hike treat of Maui sugarcane and a fresh coconut from the Waialele Farm stand. Another must-see spot in north Maui is historic Pa'ia for its art galleries and boutiques.

Maui's vibrant sunsets are even more impressive on the west side of the island. Locals and visitors flock to the beach nightly to secure a front-row seat. It's an evening tradition we welcomed throughout our trip. The most memorable was enjoyed

from Humuhumunukunuaipua'a (Humu) at the Grand Wailea. Floating on a picturesque, saltwater lagoon, the open-air, Polynesian, thatched-roof restaurant serves award-winning island cuisine. The food is outstanding and we always share our dishes family style, even though kids under five eat for free when ordering from the keiki menu. It's one of the most beautiful settings on all of Maui, and our preferred place for sunsets and stargazing.

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Sunset from the Humu Restaurant at the Grand Wailea.

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