

THE CALL OF MAUI'S GREAT OUTDOORS

An exciting world of water and land adventures
awaits members at Makena. BY KYLE ELLISON



A bright start to a day at Makena begins with a sunrise paddle off Maluaka Beach, where the waters are a favorite haunt of green sea turtles (left).



The temperature on Maui was 80 degrees in December, but Travis Chamberlain, Discovery Land Company sales associate at Makena Golf & Beach Club, had chills down his spine. ➤



Clockwise from above: Makena's new outrigger canoe heads into the ocean after its ceremonial blessing; another canoe, the *'Imiloa*, sits in front of the Kilohana Clubhouse; Outdoor Pursuits manager Ashley Baxter watches spinner dolphins at rest; the golf course's 7th hole includes West Maui views.

"I was paddling with some of our members," he says, "and we saw some whales spouting off in the distance, just playing and slapping their tails."

Considering that 10,000 humpback whales choose to spend their winter in Maui, the scene itself was normal—and expected—when paddling there at that time of year. On this particular morning paddle just off the coast, as rays of sunlight from above Haleakalā Crater infused the ocean with sparkles, and the cobalt water appeared as calm as a sheet of glass, what gave Chamberlain pause wasn't watching the 50-foot-long whales, but wondering

where they might end up, now that they'd disappeared from view. "I could sense they were right around us," says Chamberlain, "though you couldn't actually see where they were. When I eventually saw the shadows beneath us, all I could say was, 'Don't move.'"

Humpback whales actually pose minimal danger to paddlers. Their throats, after all, are the size of grapefruits, and they feed on krill and tiny fish. However, while the giant mammals are protected by laws that keep boats and paddlers from coming within 100 yards, the whales will often shrug off those rules and swim by to check you out, so that their fins, eyes, and massive tails are visible right below you.

The encounter, Chamberlain remembers, was one of those moments of Hawaiian magic so common for island residents, when the mental minutiae of our daily lives

can be jettisoned faster than water spraying from the blowhole of a humpback whale. At times like that, there's only you, the sea, and the whale, momentarily frozen in time and in transcendental bliss.

It's a feeling that Ashley Baxter experiences every time she goes into the ocean, whether she's stand-up paddleboarding off Maluaka Beach or swimming with pods of dolphins. As the Outdoor Pursuits manager at Makena, her job is essentially "director of fun." Her aim is to help members achieve a state of active, aquatic nirvana.

And with the wealth of outdoor activities along Makena's tropical shoreline, finding ways to achieve that state is as easy as strolling outside. At the rocky outcropping of Makena Landing (better known as "Turtle Town") members and guests can join Baxter in a guided snorkel past hidden underwater caves—many of which are



home to enormous Hawaiian green sea turtles called *honu*. Gazing down through turquoise waters that seem never to go below 74 degrees, you might spot a couple of eagle rays cruising slowly over the sand or a playful *he'e* (octopus) darting quickly above the reef. In the other direction you might see a sea turtle swim slowly to the surface, gulping a mouthful of pristine island air before cruising back down to its cave.

On the soft white sands of Maluaka Beach, you can grab a stand-up paddleboard from the oceanfront Outdoor Pursuits *hale* and glide across the ocean's surface. If it's a Sunday morning, you could paddle past Keawala'i Church, where the sound of hymns in Hawaiian has been wafting through the rustling palms since 1832. Or on an early Friday morning, you might join Baxter or Chamberlain on an outrigger canoe paddle, a great workout for your back and core muscles and a way to learn the traditional Hawaiian values of the sport.

One of those values is *laulima*, or "many hands make light work." That concept of working together is needed for canoe trips to Molokini Crater—an islet surrounded by Hawaii's clearest waters, three miles off the coast. The visibility here is almost always 100 feet or greater, and more than 200 different species of fish inhabit the colorful reef. And although paddling to Molokini is an adventure reserved for strong, experienced paddlers, the trip represents a goal for rookie paddlers to strive for.

The entire Makena area beckons to outdoor adventurers. Just beyond the 1,800 acres of the Discovery community, hikers can test themselves on trails steeped in local history and culture. It was just a few miles away from the community that, in 1786, the French explorer Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse, became the first Westerner to set foot on Maui at a bay named Keone'oi'o. Today the place is best known as La Perouse Bay, and the rocky Hoapili Trail—originally a walking path used by Hawaiian nobility to visit coastal villages—follows the bay's southern shore. The remnants of those long-ago settlements are still visible on the side of the lava-rock trail. This lunar terrain is unlike any other trail on Maui. As your boots crunch gently over jet-black lava rock, you can watch dolphins splash offshore in a turquoise

ocean that shimmers in the morning sun.

In summer, when gale-force winds in the South Pacific send ocean swells toward this coast, waves as high as 15 feet come crashing ashore at Laps—a surf break where many of the island's best athletes come for left-handed barrels. This is not a spot for beginners to learn to ride their first waves, but it's one of the best places on Maui to watch elite, pro-level surfing. As the island's top watermen show off their skills, you have a front-row view.

Avid hikers will also appreciate the trail that begins at Oneuli Beach and rises steeply to the top of Pu'u Ola'i, a 360-foot cinder cone that offers a panoramic view of Maui, Molokai, and beyond.

If all the vigorous water sports and coastal hikes leave you wanting something easier, there's always time for a relaxing morning swim. In the future there will be a world-class spa at Makena, part of beachside plans that include a fitness center, children's center, and a lap pool designed by Olympic champion Michael Phelps.

One unusual aspect of this Discovery community is that it stretches from *makai* to *mauka*—from the sea up the mountain slope—and outdoor activities extend in both directions as well. Inland there's the challenging 18-hole golf course that's been upgraded and allowed to mature. After nearly two and a half years, the bunkers have been completely reshaped to complement the surrounding topography, the landscape has been rejuvenated, and the course is now open once again.

At the practice facility—where lounge chairs, music, and an outdoor bar create what is surely the island's most comfortable driving range—Darren Flanagan, Makena's director of agronomy, says the grass on the course has been completely switched from Bermuda to *paspalum*—a genus that's much more salt tolerant and better suited for island play. Indeed, bright green grass now extends to the base of dry, stacked lava-rock walls, while bursts of orange, pink, and red bougainvillea infuse the course with vivid color.

Flanagan says, "We want the drive between the holes to be as nice as the holes themselves." Considering that every hole has a sweeping ocean view, that's a lofty goal. But the team has pulled it off and has shaped a course that can rival any of the best on Maui.



It's those panoramas, says design architect Mark de Reus, that make the Discovery property so rewarding. "One of the unique aspects of Makena," he says, "is its location on the southwestern side of the island, where you get views of four different islands."

Having previously worked at Kuki'o, Discovery's community on Hawaii's Big Island, de Reus now heads a team tasked with "completely transforming" the residential offerings at Makena. After all, in that spectacular landscape, what could be more enticing than to wake up, look out at the ocean, and see a stretch of sugary sand that's only missing your footprints?

It's a vision that resonates with de Reus, who recognizes that part of Maui's allure are the many ways to connect with nature on the island.

"Maui offers such an active lifestyle," he

Discovery's Travis Chamberlain glides past Maluaka Beach as he returns from an early morning stand-up paddleboard excursion. Hikers explore a waterside trail, one of many near Makena (below).





A literal and figurative high point on the Makena course, the par-4 11th hole (above) takes in a view of Pu'u Ola'i.

On the par-5 14th hole (below), trade winds typically help keep your drive long and straight.

says, “and the fact that there are so many options to live that lifestyle makes it an outstanding place.”

Yes, he is excited about creating a

community with an aesthetic “diversity of style,” where the architecture blends with what’s already in Makena, but he also relishes the chance to integrate the scenery and an abundance of outdoor pursuits. That’s really what makes it such an exciting project for him. “After all,” de Reus says, “that’s the beauty of being here in Hawaii—being able to be outside.”



A SNAPSHOT VIEW: MAKENA'S GOLF COURSE

BUILT IN: 1993

DESIGNER: Robert Trent Jones Jr.; redesigned in 2014 by Dennis Wise, who worked with Tom Fazio for 28 years

PAR: 72

CHAMPIONSHIP LENGTH: 7,051 yards

PRACTICE GREENS: Two, including one with a practice bunker

HIGHLIGHTS: The driving range has lounge furniture, an outdoor bar, and music. On the course, head over to the comfort station on the 10th hole for a full bar and complimentary grilled ahi, mahimahi, Kobe-beef sliders, ahi poke, and elk sausage from Maui's Ulupalakua Ranch, plus Maui onion-flavored nuts and homemade beef jerky.