

# Big Island hosts a happy mom

**HAWAII:** Stress-free, first-class family travel made possible at Hualalai resort

MHAIRRI WOODHALL  
FOR THE PROVINCE

As a new mom, I had resigned myself to the fact a vacation would never be relaxing again.

Between surprise public meltdowns, the copious amount of equipment required to feed, bathe, dress and transport our baby, and the fact we were relegated to a hotel room for naps twice daily, I was certain our fate had been sealed.

However, all of this changed after spending a week at the stunning Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu on the island of Hawaii.

Commonly referred to as 'The Big Island', Hawaii has a unique landscape of lush rainforests, white, golden, green and black sand beaches, snow-capped mountains, an active volcano spewing molten lava and vast expanses of volcanic desert.

Within a 45-minute drive, the scenery can change from fields of lifeless lava rock to rolling grasslands.

Although the Island of Hawaii offers a plethora of activities and endless scenic beauty, we actually chose the destination because of the multi-award winning Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, which has been touted as one of the world's best family-friendly resorts and recently won TripAdvisor's No. 1 luxury hotel in the world.

## Luxury like nowhere else

While I could rave about Hualalai's six pools, snorkelling pond, sandy beachfront, amazing fitness centre and impeccable grounds, which are set against a dramatic backdrop of black lava rock that spills into an intensely blue ocean, it was actually the baby-friendly amenities that put the biggest smile on this mommy's face.

Our room had filtered tap water (always needed for making up bottles), a crib with a perfectly firm mattress, diaper garbage and baby bath toiletries.

Upon request, a bottle warmer and high chair were delivered. A complimentary washer and drier, complete with detergent suitable for sensitive skin, were located within a few steps of our room



The Four Seasons Hualalai has magnificent spots where you'll be able to get some alone time and a protected bay to swim with sea turtles.

— a godsend for anyone travelling with children.

Of course, there is more to a holiday than bottles, laundry and diaper changes. Thankfully, the Four Seasons has the fun stuff taken care of as well.

We arrived at the family pool, an infinity pool with plenty of shaded cabanas, and were immediately greeted by a staff member who set up our chairs and offered us a pack 'n' play for the baby.

Our darling daughter actually napped in an open-air cabana (under our watchful eyes), allowing my husband and I to sunbathe, read and swim together.

Early bedtimes for babies tend to

be a nuisance on holidays, especially when the time change creates an even earlier one.

However, the room service at Four Seasons is restaurant quality and so we were able to enjoy romantic sunset dinners on our lanai while our little one slept.

Feeling exceedingly relaxed after a few days of sunshine, we booked a family portrait session with local photographer Toby Hoogs.

Our one-hour shoot took place throughout the resort gardens and on the white-sand beach, and left us with wonderful family photos that captured the memory of our time in Hawaii.

Although many of the returning

Four Seasons guests claim to never actually leave the resort, we felt compelled to check out some of the island's famous sights.

From Hualalai, which is located 30 minutes from the Kona International Airport on the Kona-Kohala Coast, you can easily make day trips to many of Hawaii's most popular beaches and attractions.

## Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is easily the most popular sight on the island.

It takes about two-and-a-half hours to drive from the Kona-Kohala coast to the park. Upon arrival, visit the

Kilauea Visitor Center for an overview of the park trails and to learn more about the current volcanic activity. There are driving and hiking itineraries available, depending on how much time you have to explore.

For shorter visits, the 18-kilometre Crater Rim Drive offers stunning scenery through desert and rain forest, with access to short walks and scenic lookouts along the way. If you plan on staying longer (and are not travelling with little ones) there is a five-hour driving itinerary, as well as many well-marked wilderness hikes.



A must see is the spectacular Akaka Falls, which drops more than 134 metres into a lush lagoon. These falls are located at Akaka Falls State Park.

## Akaka Falls a Big Island highlight

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### Akaka Falls State Park

Akaka Falls State Park is a lush oasis with two waterfalls that are easily accessed by a paved footpath fringed with draping ferns, brightly coloured orchids and bamboo groves.

The half-hour trail-loop has lookout points for the 30-metre Kahuna Falls and the impressive 134-metre Akaka Falls.

On the drive back take a short detour to the Waipi'o Valley Lookout to view the incredible eight-kilometre deep valley, which is surrounded by cliffs that are upwards of 610 metres high.

Of course, a trip to Akaka Falls isn't complete without a stop at the legendary Hawaiian Style Café in Waimea. This cash-only restaurant is known for great service, inexpensive prices and massive portions.

### Historic Kailua Village

The once-quiet fishing village of Kailua, 15 minutes south of the Kona Airport, is now a vibrant seaside community that hosts local and international events, including the Kona Coffee Festival as well as the world-renowned Ironman Championships.

This bustling village offers visitors a mix of waterfront restaurants and shops as well as historic buildings and monuments.

In the heart of Kailua, you'll find the Hulihee Palace, which was built in 1838 and used as a vacation home for Hawaiian Royalty as well as Mokuauikaua, which was built in 1820 and is the earliest Christian church in the Hawaiian Islands. Our favourite spot in Kailua is Hugo's on the Rocks to



Banana bread French toast at Big Island's Upcountry Bakery.

watch the sunset, listen to live music and take advantage of the half-price Happy Hour Mai Tai's and snacks.

### Beautiful beaches to enjoy

There are a handful of beautiful sand beaches, tucked away in quiet coves, within a short drive of the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai.

Hapuna is the largest and most famous white sand beach on Hawaii and only a 15-minute drive from Hualalai.

The calm waters are perfect for little feet to splash around in and there are picnic areas and restroom facilities if you care to make a day of it.

Laalao Beach, which is a few minutes south of the Historic Kailua Village, is commonly known as 'Magic Sands Beach' because it often disappears overnight due to tidal shifts.

This busy little beach is ideal for bodysurfing, body boarding or simply hanging out on the sand and watching the locals skim-board in the surf.

### Alternative accommodations

If you would prefer suite accommodations within walking distance of shops and restaurants, Waikaloa Village or Historic Kailua Village offer some great alternatives.

Hali'i Kai at Waikoloa (on the Kona-Kohala coast) has a selection of two and three-bedroom condominiums with large living rooms, gourmet kitchens, outdoor barbecues and in-suite laundry.

In addition to having a poolside restaurant, Hali'i Kai is a short stroll from the Queens' MarketPlace and Kings' Shops, where you can pick up groceries at the Island Gourmet Market, or dine at farm-to-fork style restaurants like the Merriman's Market Café.

The Aston Kona by the Sea in Kailua is a lower-priced option with ocean view balconies, full-kitchens and in-suite laundry. For more destination information visit [www.arrivalstravel.com](http://www.arrivalstravel.com)

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## Full Service - Whistler Style

By JONATHAN MOORE  
 SPECIAL TO THE PROVINCE

It's 8 a.m. on what looks like another bluebird spring day on Whistler Mountain. I was up at 5 a.m. getting all my gear together, then, noticing my ski's bases were looking a little worn, spent half an hour cleaning and waxing them down. This was followed by the usual fight with the car rack, the 3D jigsaw puzzle of loading the car, until finally, out of breath and with coffee spilling from my improperly closed travel mug; I'm grudgingly away at 6:30 a.m. and driving through the heavy Vancouver morning traffic to the Sea to Sky.

There must be a better way. A condo or Village ho-

tel room is a step in the right direction, and Ski in Ski out is even better, but still too much work. You still have to deal with the skis and/or a walk to the lift.

Let's go one better: The Four Seasons Resort Whistler offers a unique expert Ski Concierge service. When you drive up to the hotel, your skis and boots are whisked away by the friendly front door staff and they are out of sight, and mind, until you are ready to use them. Visiting guests without equipment are fitted with boots, skis or boards in the comfort of the hotel. Then, at a civilized time the next morning you are chauffeured to the slopeside Ski Concierge lounge near the

base of Blackcomb Mountain. My boots are warmed and my skis are clean, acclimatized, and ready to hit the slopes.

Having been offered a hand warmer and downed a fresh coffee, the Ski Concierge attendant tells me which runs will be best today. I grab water and a snack for later, and slide off to the Wizard Express Chair to start my day: Warm, happy, rested, and eager for an amazing experience on the mountains.

At the end of the day, I head for one of the red Ski Concierge tents that are at the bottom of both Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. The Ski Concierge staff there whisk away my equipment,

offer me hot chocolate and cookies, and I press on to the Village for some après. The red jacketed attendants will get my stuff back to the main Ski Concierge lounge, clean and service it, and have it ready to go for the next day.

The program takes the Four Seasons Resort's guest amenities to the next level. Ski Concierge Manager Fiona Stewart compares it to a full valet service on the slopes. She says, "We take all of the hassle out of skiing and will give you the information about runs and conditions to allow you the very best experience you can on the mountain. Our goal is to maximize your time and enjoyment."

What Fiona says is so very



PHOTO BY JOHN C. RUSSELL COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS RESORT WHISTLER

true. The Ski Concierge attendants anticipate your every need and are dedicated to making your Whistler visit as seamless as it is unforgettable.

I don't consider myself a high maintenance skier, but if someone is willing to deal with my ski equipment, hand me a hot chocolate

and cookie when I'm done, and have everything ready again the next day — I'm in! Get set for a fantastic day of skiing or snowboarding with the Four Seasons Resort Whistler's expert Ski Concierge program. And not only that, at the end of the day you will be staying at the Four Seasons!