

# HI LUXURY

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2 | AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2009

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# A Regal Getaway

Amazing amenities make the Royal Hawaiian Hotel's Kamehameha Suite an A-list destination

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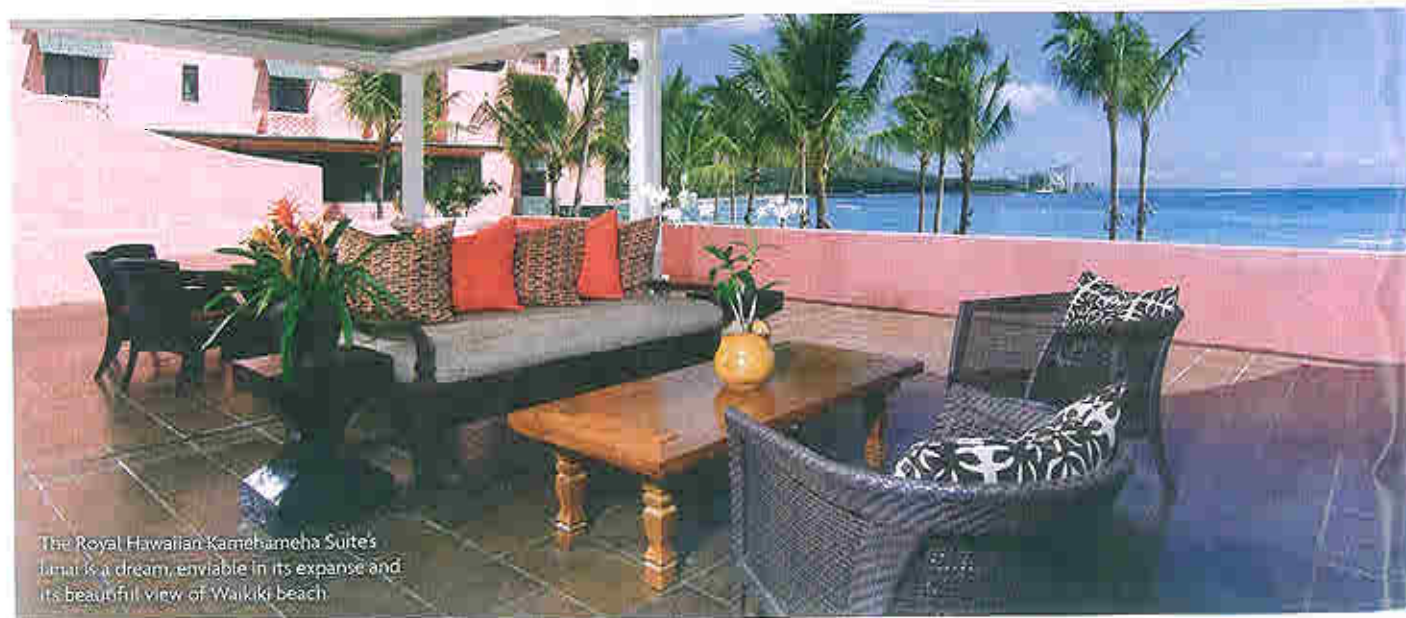
**L**ike hula and surfing, the Pink Palace doesn't need an introduction. A familiar Hawaii landmark for kamaaina and visitors alike, the elegant lady has graced Waikiki for more than 80 years.

The Royal Hawaiian first opened in February 1927 and, with its 14 acres of Waikiki beachfront, the "Pink Palace of the Pacific" made an immediate splash. Conceived as a luxury getaway for the rich and famous, its romantic Spanish-Moorish architecture, a popular style of the period inspired by silent movie star Rudolph Valentino, became one of the destinations for upscale travelers: big screen stars like Clark Gable and Shirley Temple (the cocktail of the same name was created here) as well as the wealthy Rockefellers, Fords and Du Ponts were captivated by its beauty and elegance.

But when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, ushering the United States into World War II, the six-story, 400-room grand hotel was leased exclusively to the U.S. Navy as a rest and recreation center for the Pacific Fleet.



The iconic Royal Hawaiian Hotel's entrance  
photo courtesy Starwood Hotels & Resorts Hawaii



The Royal Hawaiian Kamehameha Suite's lanai is a dream, enviable in its expanse and its beautiful view of Waikiki beach.



A quilt and pillows in red and yellow, the traditional Hawaiian colors of royalty, bedeck a four-post bed in the suite's master bedroom.

In fact, as a little girl I was fascinated by my dad's stories of those days, as he, like many young men, joined the U.S. Navy during the war and was sent to the South Pacific. He spoke of his stay in the Pink Palace, recalling how "they rolled up the rugs and put away all the knickknacks" so the sailors could stay there. When as an adult I moved to the Islands, Dad visited here only once more before he passed away, and we strolled through the hotel lobby together while he reminisced.

It's not easy to envision the elegant Royal Hawaiian we know today bustling with young sailors, and a barbed-wire barricade fronting the length of the property on Waikiki Beach. But not much damage was done, and when the war ended, the owners renovated the hotel and it reopened to the public in February 1947.

Many famous faces have since been seen at the resort, including The Beatles, who caused quite a stir in the 1960s, filling the lobby with young, excited fans. Harrison Ford, Kevin Costner, Pierce Brosnan, Samuel L. Jackson and many others are on its star-studded list of recent guests.

Today, The Royal Hawaiian, a Luxury Collection Resort, once again has been redone, completed in January 2009 by WCIT Architecture with award-winning interior design by Philpotts Associates Inc., who, while upgrading the resort with modern amenities and chic accents, still managed to retain its beloved classic design. In addition to the facilities, services and amenities — including the freshwater swimming pool and private beach area — each

guest room has high-speed Internet access, wireless LAN is readily available in the hotel's lobby, and guests have access to the hotel's business center, located near the front desk. Also, guests can enjoy the luxurious Abhasa Waikiki Spa right on the premises and have 24-7 access to the Sheraton Waikiki's Core Fitness Center next door, as well as a "Doctors on Call" 24-hour medical clinic at the nearby Sheraton Princess Kaiulani.

*HiLuxury* knows a thing or two about, well, luxury, so we decided to experience The Royal Hawaiian's best accommodations and spend a night in the Kamehameha Suite, which we're told the Pussycat Dolls' Nicole Scherzinger chose for her recent stay on the island. Spacious and opulent, the suite is decorated in the colors of the monarchy— red and yellow — and complementary hues.

The master bedroom's four-poster bed, complete with regal red-and-yellow Hawaiian quilt and shams, turns down to pristine white, soft downy bedding, ensuring a blissful night's rest. The master bath offers an inviting, deep soaking tub with double windows that open up to the lanai and the ocean beyond, and the room is complete with a marble-tiled resting area with a large, comfortable lounge chair nestled in front of double doors that also open onto the lanai. For your entertainment, there are big-screen televisions in both the living room and master bedroom, and a Bose audio system.

With its koa and teak hardwood flooring, Hawaiian artifacts and carved-wood furniture accented by soft, fluffy pillows, comfort abounds in the rooms, and the luxurious ambiance spills out



onto the tiled, 26-by-38-foot lanai overlooking Waikiki Beach. The romantic outdoor setting, which successfully complements traditional Hawaiian style with contemporary accents, offers an intimate retreat for two. There is a dining table that seats eight, a separate seating area complete with a large, carved-wood couch smothered in soft, down pillows, and a pair of uber-comfortable cushioned lounge chairs for sunning.

With the hotel's accommodating room service, there really is no need to leave this suite. (I had to practically use a crowbar to get my husband out of there!)

But you may want to venture out for the dining.

The resort's new Azure restaurant, located oceanside right next to the popular Mai Tai Bar, offers "fine dining seafood with island accents." Very contemporary, the space is defined by a mother-of-pearl mosaic wall, and its candlelit ambiance literally sparkles.

With fresh-to-the-table seafood daily from the Honolulu Fish Auction, Chef de Cuisine Jon Matsubara, formerly the executive chef of Stage Restaurant, who has won multiple awards, offers diners a choice of two preparations for the seafood selection of the day, and a menu that includes everything from Kona lobster to roasted lamb.

Dinner here can be as simple or as decadent as you wish. We

started with cocktails, and since we enjoyed a late lunch at the Mai Tai Bar (a Caesar salad for me, and a hot dog, of all things, for him, which he heartily relished), my husband Bryan and I skipped the appetizers and each ordered an a la carte entree — fresh island opah for myself, and roast lamb for my carnivorous other half. The fish was melt-in-your-mouth perfect, roasted medium-rare and served atop a ginger-shoyu barbecue glaze, accompanied on the plate by a small salad of fresh greens. The glaze, which our server recommended for the "meaty opah," was a bit too sweet for me, but delicious nonetheless, and none was left on my plate (thanks to my appetite and Bryan's wandering fork).

I'm no fan of lamb, but Bryan declared the "Grilled Mountain Meadow Lamb Chops with Marcona Almond and Meyer Lemon Crust and Spicy Zinfandel Reduction" tender and delicious and ate every bite. A basket of assorted fresh breads accompanied our meal, and the service was superb. Never were our glasses empty, and used plates and utensils were whisked away immediately. I completed my meal with Azure's unique tea menu, offering a box holding small vials of tea that can be opened and sniffed before making a choice. I chose "Jade Leaf," and the tea was smooth and satisfying.

After dinner, we strolled slowly through the lobby and headed back to our suite, feeling, I must say, in the pink. ✱