

EXPLORING TRAVEL FAVORITES AND FRONTIERS

40 YEARS
1969-2009

TRAVEL AGE WEST

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Spotlight 2010

Special Issue

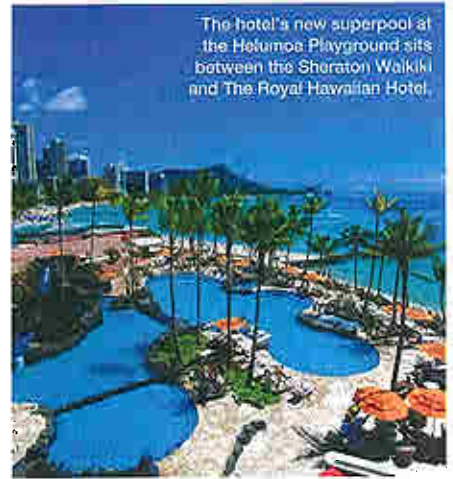
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An Industry Outlook for the Year Ahead

The Sheraton Waikiki underwent extensive renovations over the past two years.



The hotel's new superpool at the Helumoa Playground sits between the Sheraton Waikiki and The Royal Hawaiian Hotel.



Waikiki Beach between the Sheraton Waikiki and The Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

Designed by famed local architects Rob Iopa and Wayne Goo of WCIT Architecture, the new superpool is a family-friendly setting with two freshwater swimming pools, a 15-foot-tall, 70-foot-long water slide, an outdoor staging area for functions, two large whirlpools with views of Waikiki Beach, a fountain area for children, creative food and beverage options, in-water chaise sunning benches and a pool hut where guests can borrow towels or purchase pool goods such as sun lotion or pool flotation devices. The Playground also offers the perfect spot for family activities such as lei making, water slide races, hula lessons, storytelling and stargazing.

"By transforming what was simply a grassy area into a superpool, similar to those at our neighbor-island properties, Sheraton Waikiki offers a family-friendly resort environment unsurpassed by other Waikiki hotels," said Sanders. "Helumoa Playground is an important piece of our master plan to take the product and service in each area of our operations to a new level, reaffirming Sheraton Waikiki's position as a hub of activity, vibrancy and entertainment in Waikiki."

In addition to the Helumoa Playground, the Sheraton Waikiki also renovated its ballroom and convention space. The Hawaii Ballroom is now Hawaii's largest ballroom, with 26,000 square feet of space, and the renovation of the ballroom was just the beginning of the physical improvements to the resort's convention space. The \$5 million renovation included improvements to everything from the elevator landing to breakout rooms.

"The transformation of our meetings product, service and food and beverage concepts will completely revolutionize the way banquets are perceived and done in Hawaii," said Sanders.

Other enhancements to the resort include

A New Era for Sheraton Waikiki

BY JANEEN CHRISTOFF

It's a new era for the Sheraton Waikiki. The oceanfront Oahu property underwent extensive renovations for the past two years and now offers a fresh experience for guests.

"I think the biggest message is that the Sheraton Waikiki is all new and renovations are complete," said Kelly Sanders, general manager, Sheraton Waikiki. "Clients will truly enjoy the property. We have retained the feel of Waikiki,

and we are ready to bring to them 'The New Breath of Aloha.'

New Additions

The resort began to usher in changes late last year with its new Helumoa Playground, just one of the many resort upgrades the property planned during its \$200 million overhaul. The new 12,500-square-foot playground area sits on

dining options such as Kai Market and the Flights at Twist wine bar.

"Locals and visitors who come to Kai Market will have a chance to experience an authentic taste of the Islands," said executive chef Darren Demaya. "By offering fresh, local products, we support our local farmers, help promote agricultural sustainability and nourish Hawaii's economy."

In addition to traditional Hawaiian fare and ethnic dishes, Kai Market's menu will feature family recipes that Hawaii's people have enjoyed for decades.

• The new wine bar, Flights at Twist, located 30

beginning to commit to meetings and events," said Sanders.

However, according to Sanders, the Sheraton Waikiki is in a unique position.

"We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in hotel renovations for [Starwood's] three beachfront hotels in Waikiki ... The investment in the Sheraton Waikiki will total close to \$200 million and will be complete in early December of this year. Our belief is that, with the large investments in our resorts in Waikiki, we will not only have a competitive advantage in the short term, but we are now positioned to lead once the economic recovery begins."

'Our belief is that, with the large investments in our resorts in Waikiki ... we will be positioned to lead once the economic recovery begins.'

floors from the sand, will allow guests to experience an assortment of wines and discover new wine regions and varietals, as well as sample superb wine and food pairings with a new tapas menu by executive chef Ryan Loo.

Looking Forward

Even in light of the resort's historic transformation, the company outlook in 2010 may not seem as rosy.

"We believe 2010 will be another year of flat revenues with our thoughts being that, beginning in the late summer, we will begin to see an uptick in the economic conditions, and customers, especially in the group market, are

Making Connections

The Sheraton Waikiki, along with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, plans to use the Internet to keep agents up to speed on the transformations.

"My sales team at the Sheraton Waikiki plans to participate in upcoming informational Webinars with travel partners, such as Pleasant Holidays and the Oahu Visitors Bureau, to keep travel agents updated with the transformation of the resort," said Revell Newton, complex director of sales and marketing for Starwood Hotels & Resorts in Waikiki. "We are also planning multiple trips to the U.S. mainland to visit our travel partners in person with Sheraton Waikiki presentations and events scheduled in San Francisco, Los

Angeles, Orange County, Seattle and Chicago.

Newton added that Starwood Hotels & Resorts Hawaii has three U.S. Mainland-based sales managers who work with travel agents on a daily basis doing agency presentations, updates, sales calls, wholesale joint sales calls, assisting VIPs and answering questions.

"The sales managers also work closely with the onsite sales and marketing team at the Sheraton Waikiki to share updates with wholesale partners, consortiums and agency groups to market to the consumer and drive business into the travel agency community," Newton explained. "This U.S. mainland-based team allows us to also work more closely with home-based agencies and home-based agency trade shows."

The Sheraton Waikiki will also continue to post updates on Starwood's travel agent Web site, StarwoodHotelsHawaii.com/Agents and distribute e-mail and direct-mail newsletters to travel professionals.

"We also offer travel professional educational rates at the Sheraton Waikiki and will host travel professional fairs throughout the year to experience the new and exciting changes firsthand," said Newton. "The Sheraton Waikiki is continually keeping our travel professionals updated because we know that their success in selling our resort is our success."

To encourage bookings, the hotel is offering everything from discounted dining to resort credits, as well as packages and attractive rates.

"Since my property is the Sheraton Waikiki, I have the unique opportunity to upgrade guests to oceanview rooms, and many of our retail agent partners can e-mail me directly so their clients are ensured a great room and the magnificent view that 82 percent of our guest-rooms offer," said Sanders. "I would offer this opportunity to any agent who books the Sheraton Waikiki in the first half of 2010: Please e-mail me at kelly.sanders@sheraton.com, and I will give personal attention to the reservation and ensure an ocean view."

Sanders also said that the resort will continue to offer its highly recognized Aloha Amenity program to its retail agent partners. This program provides an arrival amenity to customers free of charge, along with a note to say "Mahalo" to the customer for booking with their preferred agent and staying with the hotel.

"This helps reinforce the relationship with the agent and customer while also building a strong new relationship with the customer and Sheraton Waikiki," said Sanders. ■

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A guestroom at the Sheraton Waikiki