



## NEWS RELEASE

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## A MAUI LOVE AFFAIR

**MAUI**, Hawai'i - Rarely do people say they *like* Maui. Instead, what people profess to is something deeper, something more permanent, in fact: they *love* Maui. Year in and year out, Maui visitors repeat the same mantra: "We don't want to leave!" Married on Maui, they form a bond with the island - falling in love with the place as they fell in love with each other.

And Maui makes it so easy to fall in love. To fall into an endless, lovely romance that quickens the breath and fills the heart; that wraps visitors in warm breezes and fills their senses with the fragrance of plumeria; that gently rocks them in salty waves and whispers in the palm fronds above long, golden stretches of sunlit beach. Romance that stays with a couple from pastel sunrise to glowing sunset; and on into the starlit night.

Once "Maui'd," a couple retains that romance for a lifetime. And so they come back – for honeymoons, anniversaries, vow renewals – knowing that returning to the island is like walking into the arms of a trusted friend – a physical sense of peace, well being and joy.

Maui is the top destination in the world for weddings and honeymoons. In 2007, nearly 20,000 destination weddings (in which both bride and groom were non-residents) took place in Hawai'i, according to the State Department of Health, which issues marriage licenses. Of those weddings, an overwhelming majority was held on Maui: 8,561 weddings; compared to 5,986 in Honolulu; 3,070 on Kaua'i; and 1,762 on the Hawai'i Island.

In the month of May 2006 alone, Maui was the site for a stunning 969 weddings, more than any other island. For the year, Honolulu's highest monthly wedding count topped out at 651,

while Maui consistently produced an average of 750 weddings each month. And that's not counting marriages in which either the bride or groom, or both, are Maui residents - bumping the total number of Maui weddings in 2006 up to 9,577.

"Maui is the ideal spot for both a wedding in paradise and a honeymoon all in one," says wedding coordinator Carolee Higashino, owner of A White Orchid Wedding, Inc. "After having traveled to many of the world's 'top wedding destinations,' I can truly say, Maui nō ka 'oi – Maui is the best. Hands down: the pristine beaches, luxurious hotels and spas, the romantic, tropical escapes infused with an exotic cultural experience will not disappoint even the most discerning customer."

One aspect of Maui's appeal lies in its convenient proximity to the Mainland U.S., paired with its wonderful "far away" feeling as part of the most isolated archipelago in the world. Floating in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the Hawaiian Islands are entities to themselves. In fact, the Ancient Hawaiians believed each island was a complete spiritual body, populated with the plants and animals necessary for its survival.

Ruled for many years by King Kahekili, Maui was won in 1790 by Kamehameha the Great. Kamehameha later named the town of Lahainā on Maui's sun-kissed West shore, the capital of the united Hawaiian kingdom. Lahainā remained a seat of power for almost 50 years, attracting whalers and missionaries who made use of the area's bountiful resources and added to the island's colorful history. Later industries brought sugarcane and pineapple to the slopes of Haleakalā, the island's dormant volcano, and the region's economy thrived.

Maui remains, as Hawai'i's second-largest island, amazingly pristine - offering both the native wilderness of Hāna and the upscale resorts of Wailea, the deep history of Lāhaina and the modern conveniences of Kahului, the family farms of Kula and the billion-dollar industries of the Maui Research & Technology Park in Kihei.

Maui has been called the heart chakra of the Hawaiian Islands, a place that opens the heart and calms the mind. The island hosts a rainbow of races, religions and cultures - a warm and gracious people. Residents are still cognizant of Hawai'i's old-style ways (particularly on the island of Moloka'i, which maintains the highest concentration of native Hawaiians), and they still take the time to talk story, watch the sunset, and extend easy hospitality. With temperatures averaging a balmy 75 to 85 degrees, cooled by soft trade winds, visitors find all the little worries just slipping away. Strolling along Maui's Keawakapu Beach at sunset, holding hands with the one you love, just try thinking of anything other than romance!

In the 20th annual *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers' Choice Awards Poll, Maui captured "Best Pacific Island" (for the 17th consecutive year) and "Best Island in the World" for the 13th time. Maui is also consistently ranked at the top of *Travel + Leisure's* "World's Best Top 10 Islands."

The island's elite status isn't hard to understand. Maui is home to stunning native flora and fauna; hidden tropical waterfalls; rolling pastureland; steep, rocky cliffs; and some of Hawai'i's most stunning sunsets, framing the islands of Maui Nui: Maui, Molokini, Kaho'olawe, Lāna'i and Moloka'i. With red, black and white sand, Maui's beaches have consistently been chosen by "Dr. Beach" Stephen Leatherman as ranking among the best beaches in the U.S. Kapalua,

Kā'anapali and Wailea beaches have also been named among his top 40 choices as the "healthiest" beaches in the country, based on water quality, amenities, safety and environmental factors.

Maui's thriving wedding and tourism industries treat brides, grooms and honeymooners to a banquet of one-of-a-kind memorable experiences: world-class, award-winning spas; fine dining with nationally recognized chefs; artistic and cultural entertainment; championship golf courses; unique Maui-made mementos and luxury goods; a bevy of adrenaline-pumping or romantically engineered activities; polished service from whale-watch guides to resort concierges; bliss-filled beach days and the kind of photo backdrops brides dream about. "What more can you ask for in a wedding experience?" says Carolee.

Maybe just one more thing: "aloha," or compassionate love – and Maui supplies that in abundance. "If you want to look where aloha starts, go to any archaeological site on Maui, sit down, clear your mind, listen and feel, and you will feel aloha," says Ed Lindsey, a widely regarded Native Hawaiian *kupuna* (elder) and president of Maui Cultural Lands, Inc. "It will come from deep in your heart, with deep emotion."

Hawaiians are living practitioners of aloha. Couples marrying on Maui pick up on the island's natural deep aloha and feel it increase their own love and joy. "Love yourself, respect yourself, then spread it out to other people," Ed says. "When you leave here, you should be beacons of aloha, spreading the light." Of course, it's leaving Maui that's always the hardest part...

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