



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **MAUI-MADE ROMANCE**

**MAUI**, Hawai'i - Maui's distinctive romantic appeal is quantified by its large numbers of destination weddings and honeymooners, as well as by its numerous "Top 10," "Best of," "Most Romantic" designations - but the island's true qualities can only really be understood by being here. Centuries of aloha-based culture, breathtaking natural beauty and an established vacation industry have created a unique, romantically charged destination like no other.

For lovers seeking a never-to-be-forgotten experience for a proposal, wedding, honeymoon, anniversary or vow renewal, Maui Nui (the islands of Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i) offers unique romantic settings and activities for every celebration.

Couples in love may claim to be "walking on air," or "floating," but how about the opportunity to drift hand-in-hand 800 feet above the ocean in a tandem parasail? West Maui Parasail suggests a champagne toast mid-air while overlooking West Maui, Lāna'i and Moloka'i. They'll even attach a "JUST MAUIED" banner to the two-seater harness for a playful photo opportunity. Or take to the Maui skies in a helicopter! Air tours of secluded sandy beaches or inaccessible mountain waterfalls are wonderful, but imagine landing in those remote paradises to picnic under a palm tree, take a dip in a cool mountain pool, or better yet, exchange vows. Helicopter pilots and accompanying videographers often perform double duty as ministers and musicians, helping to create the memory of a lifetime.

Everyone knows about the spectacular sunsets in Maui, and that picture-perfect golden hour. But how about the sunrise? At an elevation of 10,023 feet, Maui's dormant volcano Haleakalā (House of the Sun) is the best place to observe celestial events; so good in fact, that Haleakalā

has been selected for the world's largest solar telescope. (The plan to build a 143-foot telescope is not without controversy for this sacred Hawaiian mountain.) When the sun rises over the 22-mile diameter crater, it casts pinks, reds and golds across its sandy ridges. Early risers are rewarded with an awe-inspiring stillness, a vast unworldly beauty, surprisingly crisp air, and perhaps for that lucky bride-to-be, the sun's rays sparkling on a new diamond ring!

At night, Star Gazers Maui offers large computerized telescope viewing along with hot chocolate, cozy down jackets and dinner. A great time for couples to snuggle up on Haleakalā's summit is in August, during the Perseid meteor showers. Resident astronomers also provide private stargazing tours for starry-eyed lovers, maybe from a hotel rooftop, or even the deck of a sailboat.

Once a month, beneath the full moon, Maui Buggy Rides offers a romantic drive for two along the moonlit lanes of Upcountry, Maui. Settle into the cozy plush seats of an open-air carriage, open a bottle of "Maui Splash!" pineapple and passion fruit wine from the local Maui's Winery, watch for the sacred pueo (Hawaiian owl) with its protecting presence, listen for the haunting drumbeat of the huaka'i pō night marchers (Hawaiian warrior ghosts), and talk story about Maui myths and legends. Horse and buggy clip-clop past grassy pastures, eucalyptus groves and panoramic island views stretching to the Pacific.

Maui's Upcountry also offers lovebirds unusual opportunities like pitching in for evening chores at a local goat farm and even milking the goats! Famous for its cheeses, Surfing Goat Dairy hosts romantic walking tours with the herd. Amble over lush green pastures amid butterflies, dragonflies, pheasants and occasional wild deer. Pet and feed the goats, sample over 20 varieties of goat cheese, learn about cheese-making and tuck in a barbecue steak for dinner. After all, Upcountry Maui is paniolo (cowboy) country, and Ulupalakua Ranch still has over 2,000 breeding cattle across 20,000 acres of land.

And what romantic getaway is complete without an indulgent spa day? Maui's boutique and mega-spas showcase the uniquely Hawaiian lomi lomi massage, adding warm lava stones, sea salt scrubs, volcanic ash masks, and kukui, pīkake and plumeria oils. The 50,000-square-foot Grand Wailea Spa, reputed as one of the best spas in the U.S. by travel magazines, is known for its Roman-style architecture, aromatic baths and therapeutic showers. The Spa at the Four Seasons Resort Lānai's at Mānele Bay offers private spa evenings for up to eight guests (perfect for bridal parties!), complete with pineapple tea, exclusive run of the facilities, spa treatments and pūpū (appetizers). And nothing is more romantic than the "child-free/adults only" summer months at the Hotel Hāna-Maui, where a couple's massage in the tranquil Asian-inspired garden can be followed by a sunset soak in a private Sea Ranch Cottage hot tub.

Couples visiting Hāna will want to hike two miles up the stunning Pools at 'Ohe'o, to where Waikamoi Falls crashes 400 feet into a crystal pool. A well-maintained trail and wooden walkways traverse through cow pastures, dense bamboo forests and over playful streams. Another special spot is the Paul Fagan memorial cross on the grassy hill above the Hotel Hāna Maui. Dedicated to the hotel's builder, this serene overlook is a perfect place for a proposal, a picnic or watching the warm, sun-kissed colors slip from the slopes of Haleakalā, to the town of Hāna and out to the ocean.

It was in Hāna that one of the most passionate love affairs in Maui's history took place. Chiefess Kamaka, a daughter of the chief of Hāna, loved to surf at Keanini along the west corner of Hāna Bay. One day, Chief Kiha-a-Pi'ilani, the son of the ruling chief of Maui, joined her at the beach, and Kamaka taught him how to ride the waves on her heavy olo board of wiliwili wood. But one long wave carried them to the beach together, and they lay together on the sand and made love. Unfortunately, Kamaka was betrothed to Kiha's brother, Lono, and when she became pregnant by Kiha, the dispute that followed turned into an epic battle.

Passionate love memoirs and Hawaiians' sacred genealogies were conveyed for hundreds of generations through the art of hula, a beautiful dance that depicts stories. Dancers in a hālau (hula schools) dedicated their lives to learning the steps of the dance and its spiritual significance. Hawaiian hula chants often included a mischievous "intimate" double entendre within its poetic imagery, while the accompanying sensual movements shocked the early Protestant missionaries, causing them to demand that dancers cover their bodies. The abandonment of kapu (the governing social and spiritual system) paired with increasing missionary influence, forced hula into the shadows for years, until 1874 when King David Kalākaua restored hula to the public domain through an extravagant inauguration re-introducing his culture's lost arts. Today, visitors can see authentic Hawaiian hula at many cultural events and lū'au. One of the most acclaimed is the Old Lāhaina Lū'au in Lāhaina. Here in lush oceanfront grounds, a morning program offers visitors an opportunity to learn the dance steps and the greater meanings behind them, while enjoying a bountiful buffet breakfast and the ever-present aloha spirit. Old Lāhaina Lū'au also coordinates spectacular island-style weddings for brides and grooms who wish to share Maui's sensual magic with their guests.

And it's not just Maui's old-style song and dance that warms the heart. Maui's contemporary music scene will sweep any melody-loving, romance-seeking visitor off their feet. Hawaiian music is recognized with its own Grammy category and credited with the introduction of slack-key guitar and the 'ukulele's popularity. Home to many world-renowned musicians, both Hawaiian and mainstream, Maui is a place where listening to a mega-star jam session in a small roadside bar is not an uncommon experience. Additionally, the Maui Arts & Cultural Center with its two indoor stages and outdoor amphitheatre brings in diverse big-name entertainers from around the world. And for a truly Maui-made evening, the "Wailea Nights" dinner show with Hapa at Mulligan's on the Blue is just the ticket. Barry Flanagan's spectacular guitar playing, in harmony with Nathan Kawai Aweau's accompaniment and Hawaiian vocals, captivates a dining audience with heartfelt aloha.

For many honeymooners, Maui Nui's glorious outdoors hold the key to adventures that will be remembered for a lifetime. One of the most special adventures listed in any guidebook is the chance to ride a mule down the world's highest sea cliffs to Moloka'i's Kalaupapa National Historical Park. Traversing 26 switchbacks for almost three miles, visitors enter the isolated settlement of Kalawao with permission from the current residents. Infamous as the 1865 "leper" colony (today, leprosy is known as Hansen's Disease), this spectacularly beautiful site is surrounded on three sides by the Pacific Ocean. Here, the revered Father Damien eventually sacrificed his own life caring for the infected community, his simple gravestone now standing as a reminder of the suffering that continued until a cure was

finally discovered in 1946. A hike afterwards through native forest to the sacred six-foot-high Phallic Rock may add some spice to a couple's visit. Hawaiians believed that Ninahoa, the male fertility god, turned to stone here. Women who wished to conceive would bring offerings and spend the night, and rocks from the area were used to make other land more fertile. Hawaiians still pay tribute here, and the rock should be held in reverence and respect.

Adventures aside, classic island romance can be as simple as a rubber raft. Start the day off floating in the warm ocean, side by side on an inflatable rubber mat. The calm, shallow waters of Lāhaina's Baby Beach (behind the largest Buddha statue outside of Japan) are an excellent setting for this tranquil activity. As the sun sinks lower, The Secret Service, a professional romance concierge, can set up a table for two on the sand and enlist a personal chef to create a gourmet meal à deux. Paired with a chilled bottle of "tiny bubbles," attentive service, and a magnificent Maui sunset, luxurious oceanfront dining doesn't get any more magical than this!

A thriving industry of romance professionals, from wedding planners to concierges (some resorts even have Directors of Romance), can assist couples with every imaginable detail, from fresh tuberose leis to conch blowing, tiki torches to rose petal hearts, hula dancers to moonlit escapades. The island sets the stage for a love affair poised against tropical warm waters and exotic floral and fauna, while centuries of rich history and a warm and passionate culture inspire the script. From here, the romance is up to that very special couple...

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