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SPECIAL REPORT

Taking Hawaii Private

A boom in exclusive clubs is transforming the islands By Don Chapman

The Hawaiian Islands have been capturing people for centuries, turning travelers into transplants with just a glance. This continues to happen, but with a new wrinkle. Thanks to six recently opened private clubs on two islands, many golf-minded mainlanders are doing more than playing tourist. They're purchasing homes and joining clubs—often in tandem.

This is a rather dramatic development in the fiftieth state. Until 2003, each of its private golf clubs save one was located on Oahu and had limited nonresident membership. The only private club on the other islands was Maui Country Club, a flat nine-holer with a tiny clubhouse and a modest initiation fee.

Now, however, the new clubs are actively courting nonresident members and offering an array of impressive amenities. Competition for members is hottest on the Big Island, where four private clubs in the Kailua-Kona area have quietly opened in the past four

years—so quietly, in fact, that many residents on other islands are unaware of the trend. But they will be soon.

This development appears to be a logical outgrowth of the dazzling 1990s, during which time the number of Hawaiian courses doubled, turning what had been a lovely archipelago with a few good courses into one of the world's top golf destinations. More and better courses went hand in glove with the construction of luxury hotels on five islands, which coincided with three other crucial factors: the explosion of spa mania, new resort shopping complexes featuring international brands, and the recognition by culinary magazines of the state's regional cuisine. Throw in topflight performing arts, film festivals and museums and suddenly Hawaii was a place that offered everything the good life requires.

So who's investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in golf memberships and millions

Under the volcano: David Kidd's design at Nanea sprawls across the slopes of dormant Mount Hualalai.



more in second or third homes? Captains of industry, sports superstars, Hollywood and music moguls—there's no shortage of candidates. And there may be no shortage of options for them either: As these clubs come online, other facilities, both existing and prospective, will be keeping an eye on them and considering going private themselves.

The following is a look at some of the higher-profile developments on the Big Island and Maui.

ON THE BIG ISLAND

Developed by Charles Schwab and Safeway magnate George Roberts and designed by David McLay Kidd of Bandon Dunes fame, **Nanea Golf Club** is the most exclusive retreat west of San Francisco Golf Club.

"I've been instructed by the membership to say that they really do not want any publicity," said the otherwise cordial pro who answered the phone. "They're not being snobby; this is a private club." Membership is by invitation only. But as a neighborly gesture to the locals, Nanea allows nearby Kealakehe

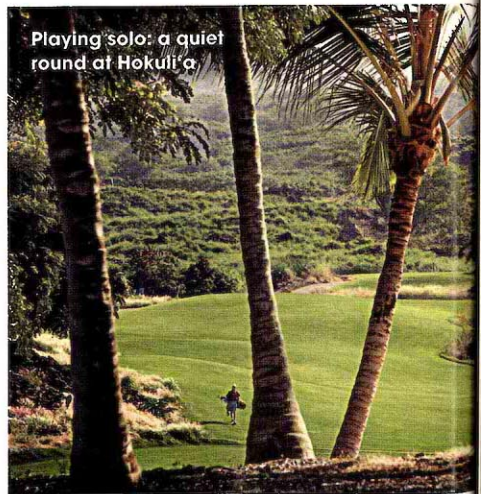
High School's golf team to practice and play home matches there.

The facility itself is impressive. Nanea's clubhouse, developed by Group 70 International of Honolulu, was designed to resemble *pu'u*—cones created by the island's five volcanoes. As for the course, Kidd has said the founders wanted a walking course similar to the British links they loved yet in the tradition of the top clubs of America. And they wanted a challenge, with no corners cut for the sake of resort hackers.

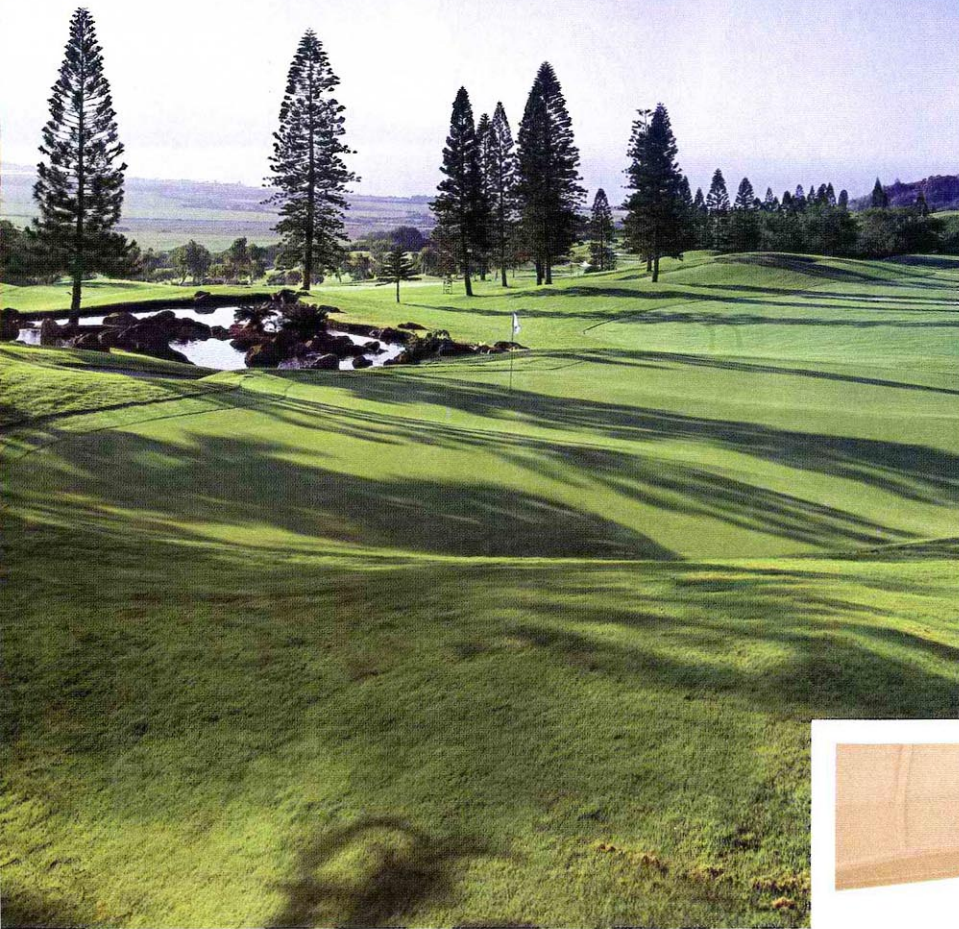
A few miles downslope, **Ke'olu** is a private Tom Weiskopf course that is part of the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai. "The key draw for us is the overall scope of the resort and the value for the money," said John Freitas, director of golf and club member services. "In addition to the Weiskopf course and the private clubhouse, membership also includes use of the Jack Nicklaus resort course, sports club and spa, and the Canoe Club, which features a variety of

beach and ocean activities. We also have a residential concierge, which provides all the services of a hotel concierge."

The golf course is blessed with some of the most dramatic lava formations on the Kona coast. Weiskopf made great use of them, turning lava spires into target lines and building the ninth green beside a giant collapsed lava tube. It's a good members' course in that there are some blind shots and lots of visual trickery requiring local knowledge.



Playing solo: a quiet round at Hokuli'a



Island life (clockwise from left): Towering Cook pines line the ninth fairway of King Kamehameha Golf Club; beverages with a Hawaiian punch; Hokuli'a head professional Erik Kutz takes a spin on the golf course.



Ke'olu translates to "gentle breeze" and secondarily as "a pleasant place to be." That's certainly the case at the clubhouse, a series of elegantly understated pods that blend with the terrain. It often feels just as much like an art museum, starting with a pair of tall hand-carved doors that graced a castle in Bali two hundred years ago.

Sharing a property line with Hualalai is **Kuki'o**, where a 375-lot residential area runs from the ocean up to six hundred feet in elevation. Kuki'o features a beach club and spa, and a casual family atmosphere prevails—coats and ties are rarely seen at dinner.

The course at Kuki'o, designed by Tom Fazio, now vies with Mauna Kea, Kapalua's Plantation course and the Prince course at Princeville to be the top course in Hawaii. The layout is breathtaking: Fazio routed holes through little valleys, sometimes playing from lava promontory to grotto.

The par-five sixteenth is especially dramatic, with a volcanic cone rising nearly two hundred feet on the right.

On the south side of Kailua-Kona is **Hokuli'a**. Jack Nicklaus had completed the golf course by 2004, when a series of lawsuits shut down further construction. The legal problems arose because the land was zoned for agriculture; through an agreement reached last year, all lots must now include an ag component. I saw one home where the owner harvested sixty-eight pounds of coffee beans and actually produced a private-label brew for his family and friends.

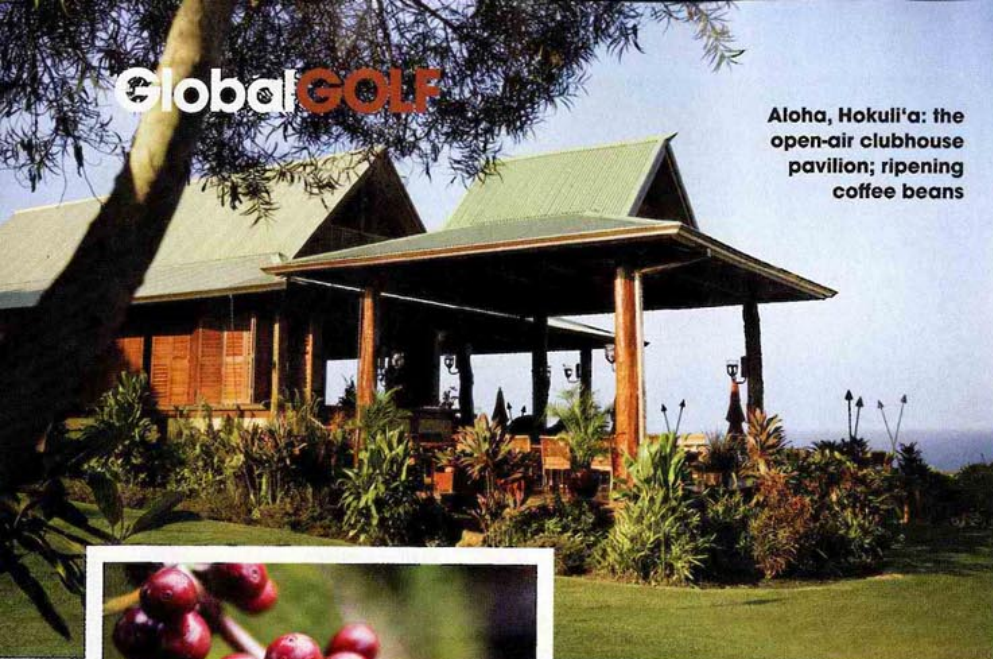
Hokuli'a covers two and a half miles of rocky coastline—no sandy beaches here—and rises to 1,250 feet in elevation, with 650 planned homesites. The Nicklaus course—his twelfth for developer Lyle Anderson—plays up and down

hillsides and along the shore, as well as by a number of ancient archaeological sites. Nicklaus made great sight-line use of towering Pu'u Ohau. The turf is championship Bermuda, which on greens displays less grain than other Bermuda strains do.

ON MAUI

King Kamehameha Golf Club is the most affordable of the new facilities and the only one that seems to be seeking both local and nonresident members. It's the club's second time around: Born as a private Japanese club in the 1990s, it failed and went dormant until last

Aloha, Hokuli'a: the open-air clubhouse pavilion; ripening coffee beans



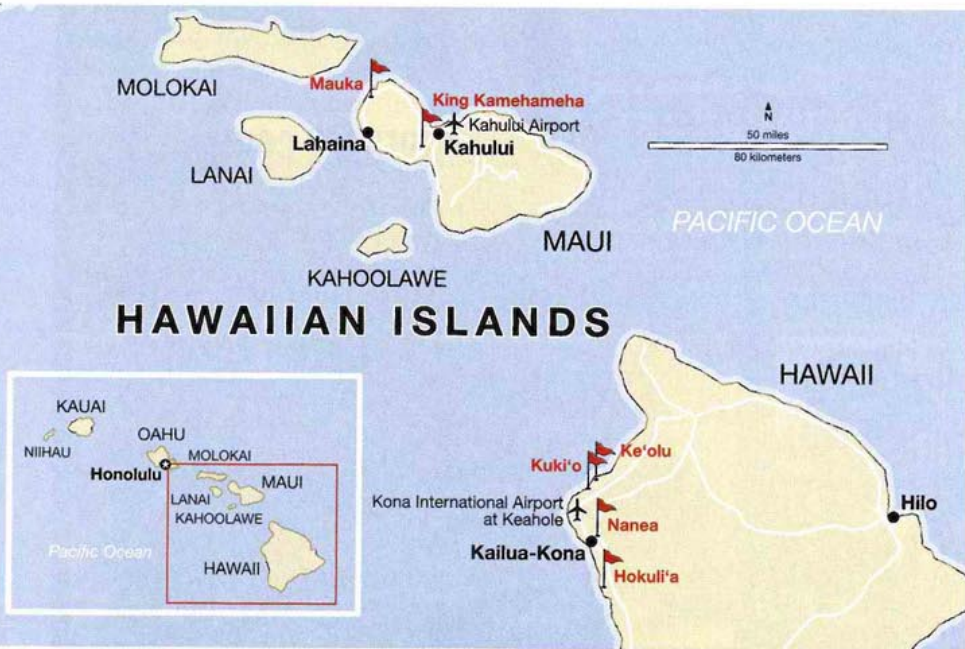
year. The Ted Robinson course (recently updated by Ted Jr.) offers expansive views, and the water features appear to tumble naturally down from the West Maui Mountains. Its fairways are lined with tropical flowers, and the clubhouse was built using plans purchased from Frank Lloyd Wright's foundation.

On the other side of the West Maui Mountains at the Kapalua Resort, the Village course is scheduled to close this month to make way for the private

Mauka course. The Tom Fazio design is due to open in early 2009, with a new clubhouse offering commanding views of the nearby islands of Molokai and Lanai. Membership includes access to all three Kapalua courses, including the Plantation, home of the PGA Tour's Mercedes-Benz Championship.

"The Mauka will use some of the existing corridors of the Village course," said Gary Planos, Kapalua senior vice president of resort operations, "but we'll also be engaging fantastic new property up to eleven hundred feet in elevation.

"It's something our property owners started asking for," he added. "If they were going to have a home here, they wanted their own club, too." •



+ Hawaii's New Private Clubs

HOKULI'A Big Island

ARCHITECT: Jack Nicklaus
INITIATION FEE: Valued at \$150,000 (equity); membership is included in purchase of homesite
ANNUAL DUES: TBD
REAL ESTATE: Lots start at \$1.8 million
MEMBERSHIP INFO: 800-465-8542, hokulia.com

KE'OLU COURSE (Four Seasons Hualalai) Big Island

ARCHITECT: Tom Weiskopf
INITIATION FEE: \$175,000 (thirty-year refundable deposit)
ANNUAL DUES: \$19,500
REAL ESTATE: Options range from villas (starting at \$2 million) to single-family homes (\$4 million to \$25 million)
MEMBERSHIP INFO: 808-325-8500, hualalairesort.com

KUKI'O Big Island

ARCHITECT: Tom Fazio
INITIATION FEE: \$250,000 (equity membership)
ANNUAL DUES: \$20,000
REAL ESTATE: Lots start at \$2 million
MEMBERSHIP INFO: 808-325-4040, kukio.com

NANEA GOLF CLUB Big Island

ARCHITECT: David McLay Kidd
INITIATION FEE: Said to be \$250,000
ANNUAL DUES: Unknown
REAL ESTATE: None
MEMBERSHIP INFO: By invitation only

KING KAMEHAMEHA GOLF CLUB Maui

ARCHITECTS: Ted Robinson Sr., Ted Robinson Jr. (renovation)
INITIATION FEE: Nonresidents, \$30,000 (up to twenty rounds per year); Hawaii residents, \$35,000 (both are non-equity)
ANNUAL DUES: \$4,200 (resident), \$2,400 (nonresident)
REAL ESTATE: None
MEMBERSHIP INFO: 808-249-0092, kamehamehagolf.com

THE MAUKA COURSE

(Kapalua Resort) Maui
ARCHITECT: Tom Fazio
INITIATION FEE: Kapalua landowners, \$100,000; nonowners \$150,000 (up to 80 percent refundable)
ANNUAL DUES: \$9,600
REAL ESTATE: 690 new real estate units; condos from \$1.1 million, single-family homes from \$6.8 million to \$14.2 million and lots from \$1.8 million to \$6.2 million
MEMBERSHIP INFO: 808-669-8803, kapaluaclub.com