

Coastal Cachet

Business-friendly Beach Resorts Offer Planners the Best of Both Worlds

By Christine Loomis



Kauai Marriott Resort & Beach Club boasts a spectacular setting on Kalapaki Beach in Lihue. Credit: Kauai Marriott Resort & Beach Club

Beaches and business are not mutually exclusive. In fact, everything that leisure vacationers love about beach destinations holds true for meeting attendees and planners too.

When a hotel combines its meeting and function space, business amenities and business-focused services with a desirable beachfront location, it offers the best of two worlds to meeting groups, and the likelihood that registration goals will be met or exceeded. Sure, business comes first — but who doesn't want to conduct business with sun, sand, ocean breezes and maybe a palm tree or two? There are business-friendly beachfront properties from one coast to another.

Here are just a few of the best beach destinations to consider.

Hawaii

Across the continent, on the island of Kauai, William Davies, managing director of Muse Events Management, found an ideal beach location for the 2017 LifeVantage Master Incentive Trip. The group of 340 gathered at **Kauai Marriott Resort & Beach Club** in May. “Hawaii as a whole is a good option for incentive trips as it’s safe and usually on someone’s bucket list. The cost of hosting an event on Kauai can be a little higher than other islands and availability of flights is a bit limited; however, the scenic nature of the island and slower pace captures the North American ideal of a tropical lifestyle.”

The group explored the entire island. “We traveled around the island both in Lihue and south to Port Allen and Poipu,” Davies says. “We visited **Kilohana Plantation** for a luau, which was a true authentic experience. The hotel’s location is ideal as it was only 10 minutes from the plantation, making transfers very quick.”

The island and resort met the group’s needs. “The destination of Kauai is ideal for smaller groups,” Davies says. “Planners should choose a trusted DMC to be put in contact with strong vendors. In addition, **Kauai Marriott Resort** is part of **Marriott’s Convention & Resort Network** (CRN), which recently expanded and now has eight properties throughout Hawaii, giving planners more options in a highly sought after destination.”

All meetings were held at the Marriott, and Davies notes that the group only went off-property for some dinners and activities. In terms of the resort’s beachside location, Davies says it has what he was looking for. “I was seeking a true Hawaiian experience and Kauai Marriott Resort was able to offer that. The resort is close to the airport and features a complimentary 24/7 shuttle, which is very convenient. It’s also located in Lihue, a perfect location as it has consistently sunny weather and the landscape is quintessential ‘Hawaiian.’”

He calls the setting on **Kalapaki Beach** spectacular. “The view of the water and mountains on the far side is the perfect guest room view. And ocean views give a strong sense of place, so it keeps you in the environment. There’s also a small shopping area located along the beach within a short stroll from the resort, which showcases the local community.”

Because the goal of this trip was to keep attendees together, the resort’s layout was very effective. “The hotel has an open layout with large lounging areas and one central pool,” Davies says. “I wanted everyone to be together as much as possible for strong team building.”

The staff also worked to meet the group's needs. "Honestly, there are so many people to mention," Davies says. "From the start, the sales team was amazing. Dana and Lori took the time to learn about our group and program, and from our first site-selection trip we knew this was the right fit. We knew the resort would be the perfect partner to work with us on this event. The banquet team was incredible, and Jackie led her team very well.

"Everyone on the engineering team was also outstanding. They came to the aid of our volleyball game when they saw it was a struggle to keep the barriers together. They jumped in and came up with great solutions to help." At that moment, Davies says, we knew we had a lifetime partner in Kauai Marriott Resort.

"I also don't want to miss the opportunity to call out John in valet," he adds. "I took the time to stop and listen to some of the interactions he and his staff had with the guests, each of whom they called by name. They knew each of their cars and were genuinely interested in where they were going, and even took the time to give suggestions. The customer service level was definitely at an all-time high."

Davies points out that the resort works well for groups of all sizes. "Inside the hotel there are numerous options for the size of groups the hotel can accommodate. The meeting space is top-notch, the oceanfront luau garden is very pleasant, and being right on the beach with the expansive views is beautiful. The staff has the planner and group in mind at all times and will do whatever they have to in order to bring your vision to life. They make our job easy."

In addition, Davies says, "Marriott's CRN, which has grown to more than 100 properties across the US, Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico, provides planners with strong tools to efficiently and successfully execute meetings and events." He mentions the Meetings Imagined Inspiration tool as just one asset, plus "virtual site visits and a new website, to name a few."

Even upon reflection, Davies says of the experience on Kauai, "There weren't any real challenges in the program. We came in with changes and the hotel offered options best suited for our group. Even the process after the program, with settling and billing, was exceptional. I really can't find enough good things to say about the staff and hotel. My group and I are delighted to encourage everyone who's thinking of hosting an incentive trip in

Hawaii to visit Kauai and Kauai Marriott Resort, and to explore Marriott's Convention & Resort Network's other properties as well."