



## Historical Highlights

- 1888** Captain John Ross leases acreage from Kamehameha's heirs for a ranch on the site of what is now the Wai'alaie Golf Club, but had abandoned the venture by 1888.
- 1900s** Paul Isenberg of the Kaua'i Island Sugar-planting family leases 3,000 acres at an annual rent of \$12,000 for about 40 years that includes the lands now occupied by The Kahala Hotel & Resort, the golf course and the thousands of handsome homes in the Kahala area.
- 1947** City Planner David Wolbrink of Harlan Bartholomew Associates devises a plan for the best use of Bishop Estate lands in Wai'alaie-Kahala area, including the golf club whose lease was about to expire. He suggests they keep the golf and proposes a world-class hotel on a 12.5-acre beach site to enhance and maintain the exclusive character and ambience of the neighborhood. A full-page advertisement announces the availability of the site, but there was no response.
- 1959** Real estate investor Charlie Pietsch obtains a lease on the site from Bishop Estate. The lease includes the golf course with an extension of 15 acres on the opposite end. The golf lease has 10 years to maturity, but Pietsch negotiates with them to extend to 65 years, if a hotel were to be built. With lease in hand, Pietsch flies to Los Angeles and puts together a 50/50 deal with friend Conrad Hilton.
- 1960** Charlie Pietsch returns to Honolulu to obtain proper zoning changes. This involves skirmishes with Wai'alaie-Kahala residents, but eventually passes.
- 1961** Charlie Pietsch signs contract with Hilton International and architects Killingsworth, Brady, and Smith of Long Beach, and the groundbreaking takes place later in the year.
- 1962** Construction begins with a traditional Hawaiian blessing ceremony. Interior designers David Williams of New York assisted by Roland Terry of Seattle were selected. Honolulu Structural Engineer Alfred Yee is also named to the project along with Wilbert Choi as Landscape Architect. Haas and Haynie of San Francisco are named as contractors. Charlie Pietsch suggests the name The Kahala Hilton because Wai'alaie was too hard to spell.

The hotel was the first to be air conditioned and at 20 by 16 feet, with his and her bathroom configurations and walk-in closets, The Kahala has the largest rooms of any hotel on O'ahu. Décor was dubbed "Tropic Chic." One guest described his room as a "living room with a bed." 28,000 multi-colored pieces of beach glass glistened in the the chandeliers, which highlight the lobby, each weighing over a ton. Seattle's Irene McGown and New York's Leslie Wheel design the lighting.

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- 1964** Reverend Abraham Akaka officiates at the blessing ceremony on January 22, 1964 that also includes pastors of many faiths. An inaugural luncheon is held with a menu that reflects a taste of the islands. The grand opening dinner is called Polynesian Fantasy and choreographed by Jo Flanders. It was held on the beach on January 23. Inmates of O'ahu Prison assemble the highly-polished kukui candlenut leis. Hotel rate is \$32.50 a day.
- Esteemed travel writer Horace Sutton is among the guests and he later refers to The Kahala as an "once-in-a-lifetime hotel." Honolulu Advertiser writer Francis Harris writes that the hotel is 'a fairyland of utter elegance'.
- Entertainers include Don Ho, Hilo Hattie, The Kamehameha Schools Alumni Glee Club, Ray Kinney, Bernie Hal Mann, Alice Fredlund, Bill Lincoln, Elaine Frisbie and Pierson Thal.
- 1965** Kahala management and culinary team are enthusiastically involved early on in the startup of the University Of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Travel Industry Management School.
- Sea Life Park asks The Kahala to host two dolphins while a pool is being built. The dolphins are very popular. NBC selects The Kahala for its annual meeting of affiliates bringing a parade of major stars including Andy Williams.
- 1967** Danny Kaleikini signs a five-year contract as starring entertainer in the Hala Terrace. His run lasts so long that he is nominated to the Guinness Book of Records.
- 1968** Charles Pietsch sells his half of The Kahala to Hilton International for \$16.5 million.
- President Richard M. Nixon visits the hotel. Soon after, the resort welcomes visits from high profile Heads of State in Mexico, Italy, Jordan, Japan, Britain, Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam, and many other countries.
- Hawaii Five-O TV Series debuts bringing famous celebrities Helen Hayes, Broderick Crawford, Geraldine Page, Luther Adler, and Hume Cronyn as well as Loretta Swit, Mike Farrell, Martin Sheen, Pat Morita, and Ed Flanders to the hotel.
- 1969** Nobel Prize-winning novelist Yasunari Kawabata lives in the Japanese-themed bungalow on the dolphin lagoon while teaching at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
- 1971** Management sends trainer Randy Lewis to Gulfport, Mississippi, to bring three mammals (Uku, Nihoa, and Kui) to the hotel's lagoons.
- Rex Harrison and new wife Elizabeth spend their Honeymoon at The Kahala.
- 1973** Hilton sells its shares in the hotel to mortgage holder Massachusetts Mutual life, but retains management contract.
- Massachusetts Mutual Life sells its shares to MEPC, one of the largest property development companies in the world at a price of over \$20 million.

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- 1974** Honolulu Star-Bulletin writer Ben Wood calls The Kahala “the bunkhouse of the stars” after visits by Rod Stewart, Helen Reddy, Eydie Gorme, Merv Griffin, Steve Lawrence, Sammy Davis, Jr., Peter Lawford, Jack Lord, Jim Nabors, Jack Nicklaus, Chi Chi Rodrigues, Lee Trevino, Byron Nelson, Lucille Ball, John Wayne, Burt Reynolds, Ted Williams, Reggie Jackson, Tom Seaver, and many other Hollywood celebrities and sports and entertainment world notables.
- 1975** Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako visit the hotel on their U.S. official visit. Other Royal visits include Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV of Tonga.
- 1976** Visits by Bette Midler, Cary Grant, Henry Kissinger, James Stewart, Hal Wallis, James Garner, and Henry Fonda. Author Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne. Didion writes The Kahala is the place where “Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show guests go to rest.”
- 1977** Elderly Honolulu resident moves in and stays 11 years.
- Ex-President Gerald Ford dines for lunch while his successor Jimmy Carter has dinner on the same day.
- New York Times travel story reports, “The Kahala is among the three hotels worth considering in the islands.”
- William Weinberg initiates a plan to buy the hotel for a price between \$26 and \$28 million. The contract takes two years to negotiate before closing the deal in May 1977.
- 1980** Celebrities continue to visit The Kahala, among them are Jack Lemmon, Danny Thomas, Julie Andrews, Frank Sinatra, Johnny Carson, Jerry Lewis, Gene Barry, Bob Newhart, and Don Rickles.
- With concert stopovers, The Kahala is home to the Rolling Stones, The Who, The Beach Boys, and Sha Na Na.
- 1981** Plumeria Beach House opens at a construction cost of \$350,000.
- 1983** Premier Zhao Ziyang of China visits The Kahala. Other dignitaries in include Secretary of State George Shultz, First Lady Rosalynn Carter, Monaco’s Prince Ranier and Princess Grace, Vice President George and Barbara Bush, and King Birende of Nepal.
- 1984** The Kahala celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary party with a celebration that welcomes a Presidential visit by President Ronald and Nancy Reagan. During a light-hearted moment, President Reagan picks up a coconut and tosses it, football style.

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- 1985** Royal visit by Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana requires an entourage of 100 rooms.
- Culinary affairs include visits by guest chefs and winemakers such as Michelin Chef Paul Bocuse and Napa's Paul Mondavi. The most requested recipe is for the celery-seed dressing on the Royal Maile Salad.
- 1986** The Kahala receives its first Five Star Award from Steven Sterns' *Guide to the Great Resorts of the World*.
- World Bank President Robert McNamara visits.
- 1987** Danny Kaleikini celebrates his 20th anniversary performing at The Kahala with a shore side gala. He has entertained more than 10,000 audiences total with more than 2,000,000 visitors.
- Major renovations and redecorating, at a cost of over \$2 million, include new corridors, painting, re-carpeting, and new wallpaper. Lobby rejuvenation costs \$250,000. Japanese rock garden is created in hotel's Hala Cove with waterfall and fishponds.
- More influential guests come to The Kahala including Richard Pryor, Liza Minelli, Tony Curtis, Arte Johnson, Sylvester Stallone, Barbara Walters, Michael Caine, Jesse Jackson, Senator Robert Dole, Arthur Murray, and Carol Burnett.
- 1989** The resort's 25th Anniversary marks the publishing of *The Kahala: The Hotel That Could Only Happen Once* by Ed Sheehan.
- 1996** Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group assumes partial 40 percent ownership and management of The Kahala and renames it The Kahala Mandarin Oriental, Hawaii. Other partners include Kahala Royal, Inc. The resort closes and undergoes a \$75 million renovation which includes the creation of a new signature restaurant, Hoku's, new furnishings, wall coverings and carpets in guest room and public areas, Fitness Center, Keiki Club, and Business Center. The Maile Restaurant closes and transforms into the new Maile Ballroom. Plumeria Beach House also undergoes major renovation.
- While the hotel is closed for renovations, the dolphins are moved to Sea Life Park and the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology. Lagoon is enlarged, making it one of the largest in the U.S., at the time.
- The Kahala reopens on March 1, 1996. The April 13 grand opening gala affair hosts 800 attendees and proceeds benefited Child and Family Services.

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**1997** The Magnum Bar from the TV show starring Tom Selleck is refurbished and renamed *Kahala O Ke Kai* which means *Kahala of the Sea*. This beautiful site serves as the venue for many weddings and receptions.

The Kahala is recognized by Island Business Magazine with the Investing in the Environment Award given by Governor Ben Cayetano.

Hoku's is voted Best New Restaurant by local readers.

**1998** Honu Terrace, next to Plumeria Beach House undergoes a major facelift.

Japanese TV series HOTEL uses The Kahala for location filming and wins for The Kahala national exposure in Japan.

**1999** Wayne Hirabayashi is appointed as Executive Chef

**2000** The Veranda opens in May.

Zagat names Hoku's as the top Eclectic/International Restaurant.

Coveted Five Diamond Award from the American Automobile Association is bestowed upon the resort.

Dolphin Quest is named to manage The Kahala's dolphin and marine animal visitor education programs.

Japanese restaurant Tokyo Tokyo opens in December. The menu's emphasis is on Robatayaki-style grilled seafood, meats, and vegetables.

New Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin, named Mahina, which means Full Moon in Hawaiian, joins the other three dolphins, Keola, Kamali'i, and Maka in the lagoon.

**2002** Hoku's takes honors from Food & Wine Magazine as one of America's 50 Best Hotel Restaurants.

High profile celebrities such as Adam Sandler, Secretary of State George P. Schultz, and Kareem Abdul Jabbar visit the resort.

Major renovations to pool and surrounding area include the opening of a beachside eatery, Seaside Grill.

Spa Suites at The Kahala soft opens in July. Each suite includes private shower, infinity edge deep-soaking Jacuzzi bathtub, well-lit vanity, wardrobe space, and relaxation area as well as treatment platform.

Kahala Culinary Academy commences with monthly cooking classes on third Saturdays of each month.

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- 2006** The Kahala Mandarin Oriental is renamed as The Kahala on March 1 with new management under Landmark Hotels, Inc.
- 2010** Secretary of State Hillary Clinton holds important diplomatic meetings with the Japanese Foreign Minister at The Kahala.
- New hit TV series remake of Hawaii Five-0 debuts on national TV. The Kahala is again a location site for filming and frequent stays by guest stars of the show.
- The Very Right Reverend Desmond Tutu stays at The Kahala.
- 2011** Kahala hosts attendees of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting coming from the Sultanate of Brunei and the countries of Vietnam and Russia. The Sultan of Brunei and the President of Vietnam stay at The Kahala. Secretary of State Clinton meets with the President of Vietnam at the hotel.
- 2012** The Kahala hosts first-ever James Beard Foundation Dinner establishing a scholarship for Kapiolani Community College's Culinary Arts Program
- Sir Elton John is once again a The Kahala guest for his Honolulu concert.
- His Holiness The Dalai Lama stays at The Kahala during major peace Summit
- The Veranda is remodeled with sleek new Tommy Bahamas Royal Kahala furnishings and an updated menu.
- 2013** Sony Open returns to The Kahala with 144 of the world's best professional golfers.
- New Napoli-style Italian eatery, Arancino at The Kahala, opens.
- The Kahala launches its Golden Jubilee Celebrations program in the Fall.
- 2014** The Kahala celebrates its 50th anniversary on Wednesday, January 22, 2014.
- Resorttrust, the operator of 44 luxury resorts throughout Japan, acquires The Kahala Hotel & Resort for \$290 million on October 14, marking the first step in the company's global expansion. With the acquisition of its first U.S. property, The Kahala Hotel & Resort serves as its flagship international resort as it forges ahead with plans to extend its portfolio of upscale properties overseas across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.