



The Kahala Hotel & Resort Milestones

- 1866 – Mark Twain was probably the first literary person of note to touch Kahala, plodding around Diamond Head on a reluctant horse in 1866.
- About 1888 - Captain John Ross leased acreage from Kamehameha's heirs for a ranch on the site of what is now the golf club, but had abandoned the venture by 1888.
- Early 1900s - Paul Isenberg of the Kauai Island Sugar-planting family leased 3,000 acres at an annual rent of \$12,000 for about 40 years that included the lands now occupied by The Kahala, the golf course, and the thousands of handsome homes in the Kahala area.
- 1947 – City Planner David Wolbrink of Harlan Bartholomew Associates devised a plan for the best use of Bishop Estate lands in Waiālae-Kahala area, including the golf club whose lease was about to expire. He suggested they keep the golf and suggested 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 announced 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 included the golf course with an extension of 15 acres on the opposite end. The golf lease had 10 years to maturity, but Pietsch negotiated with them to extend to 65 years, if a hotel were to be built. With lease in hand, Pietsch flew to Los Angeles and put together a 50/50 deal with friend Conrad Hilton.
- 1960 – Pietsch returns to Honolulu to get proper zoning changes.
- 1961 – Pietsch signs contract with Hilton International and architects Killingsworth, Brady, and Smith of Long Beach. Later this year the groundbreaking occurs.
- August, 1962 – Construction begins with Hawaiian blessing ceremonies. 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 fellow Oahuan Wilbert Choi as Landscape Architect. Haas and Haynie of San Francisco are named as Contractor.
- Pietsch suggested the name The Kahala Hilton because Waiālae was too hard to spell.
- The hotel was the first to be air conditioned and at 20 x 16 feet with his and her bathroom configurations and walk-in closets, The Kahala had the largest rooms of any hotel on Oahu. 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 glinted in the chandeliers which highlight the lobby, each weighing over a ton. Seattle's Irene McGowan and New York's Leslie Wheel did the lighting.
- Artist Mary Mayer created over one thousand collages for the rooms. John Young provided canvases for lobby and lounge areas. James Wegner provided menu and table-top designs. Carpets were woven by V'Soske of Puerto Rico.

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- Charlie Pietsch himself spent hours in canoes with childhood friends off Kahala capturing live specimens of reef fish and sea creatures for the lagoons.
- David and Cythinia Eyre, editors of Honolulu's Beacon magazine, were the first to dine in the new Maile restaurant. (They brought their own cocktails and laid out a box lunch picnic on the concrete floor!) Later when the Maile Restaurant actually opened, six guests were given a preview, among them baseball great Joe DiMaggio.
- January 22, 1964 - Reverend Abraham Akaka officiated at the blessing ceremony that also included pastors of many faiths. Inaugural luncheon is held with a menu that reflects a taste of the islands. The grand opening dinner was called Polynesian Fantasy. It was held on the beach on January 23. Inmates of Oahu Prison made the highly polished kukui candlenut leis. Hotel rate was \$32.50 a day.
- Esteemed travel writer Horace Sutton was among the guests and he later referred to The Kahala as a "once-in-a-lifetime hotel." Honolulu Advertiser writer Francis Harris wrote that the hotel was 'a fairyland of utter elegance.'
- Entertainers included Don Ho, Hilo Hattie, The Kamehameha School Alumni Glee Club, Ray Kinney, Bernie Hal Mann, Alice Fredlund, Bill Lincoln, Elaine Frisbie and Pierson Thal.
- 1965 - Kahala management and culinary team were enthusiastically involved early on in the startup of the University of Hawaii's Travel Industry Management School.
- 1965 - Sea Life Park asks The Kahala to host two dolphins while a pool was being built. The dolphins were very popular. NBC selects the Kahala for its annual meeting of affiliates bringing a parade of major stars including Andy Williams.
- 1966 – President Johnson is the first U.S. President to stay at The Kahala.
- 1967 - Danny Kaleikini is signed to 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 - Pietsch sells his half of The Kahala to Hilton International for \$16.5 million.
- 1968 – President Richard M. Nixon visits the hotel. Soon after there were high profile Heads of State visits from Mexico, Italy, Jordan, Japan, Britain, Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam, and many other countries.
- 1968 - 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 Hawaii.
- 1971 - Management sends trainer Randy Lewis to Gulfport, Mississippi, to bring three mammals (Uku, Nihoa, and Kui) to the hotel's lagoons.
- 1971 - 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.

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- 1973 - 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.
- 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.”
- Elderly Honolulu resident moves in and stays eleven years.
- Ex-President Gerald Ford dines at 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.”
- 1977 - 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.
- 1980s - Celebrities continue to visit The Kahala, among them 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 – The Plumeria Café 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 – Hotel welcomes Presidential visit by President Ronald and Nancy Reagan. During a light-hearted moment, President Reagan picked up a coconut and tossed it, football style.
- 1985 – Royal visit by Britain’s Prince Charles and Princess Diana requiring an entourage of 100 rooms.
- 1985 – Culinary affairs include visits by guest chefs and winemakers such as Michelin Chef Paul Bocuse and Napa’s Paul Mondavi. Most requested recipe is for the celery-seed dressing on the Royal Maile Salad.
- 1986 – The Kahala receives it first Five Star Award from Steven Sterns’ Guide to the Great Resorts of the World. World Bank President Robert McNamara visits.
- 1987 – The Maile Restaurant earns another Travel-Holiday Magazine Award.
- 1987 – The dean of Hawaii painters, John Young, is named Artist in Residence.

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- 1986/87 – Major renovations and redecorating, at a cost of over \$2 million, include new corridors, painting, re-carpeting, and new wallpaper is initiated. Lobby rejuvenation costs \$250,000. Japanese rock garden is created in hotel's Hala Cove with waterfall and fishponds.
- The Kahala joins Adopt a Park program, and also contributes scholarship money for the TIM School at UH.
- 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 – 25th Anniversary marks the publishing of The Kahala: The Hotel That Could Only Happen Once by Ed Sheehan.
- 1994 – Emperor Hirohito and Empress Michiko of Japan visit Hawaii.
- 1996 – Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group assumes partial 40% ownership and management of The Kahala and renames it The Kahala Mandarin Oriental, Hawaii. Other partners include Kahala Royal, Inc. The Hotel is closed 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 is closed and transformed into the new Maile Ballroom. Plumeria Beach House opens oceanfront as an all-day dining room.
- 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.
- 1996 - March 1, The Kahala reopens.
- 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 is the venue for many, many weddings and receptions.
- 1997 – Hotel is recognized by Island Business Magazine with the Investing in the Environment Award given by Governor Ben Cayetano.
- 1997 – Hoku's voted Best New Restaurant by the readers of Honolulu Magazine.
- 1998 - Hoku's named Restaurant of the Year at Honolulu Magazine's Hale 'Aina Awards.
- 1998 – Honu Terrace, next to Plumeria Beach House undergoes a major facelift.
- 1998 - Japanese TV series HOTEL uses The Kahala for location filming and wins for The Kahala national exposure in Japan.
- 1999 – Wayne Hirabayashi is promoted to Executive Chef.
- 2000 – Grand Opening of the Veranda 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.
- 2000 – Dolphin Quest is named to manage The Kahala's dolphin and marine animals visitor education programs.
- 2000 – Japanese restaurant Tokyo Tokyo opens in December. The menu's emphasis is on Robatayaki-style grilled seafood, meats, and vegetables.

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- 2000 – 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.
- 2000 – The Kahala joins Earth Day efforts to clean up and improve Waialae Beach Park. The Kahala also participates annually in Visitor Industry Charity Walk and a host of other community events.
- 2002 – Hoku's is named Restaurant of The Year by the Honolulu Advertiser's Hale Aina Award. Hoku's also takes honors from Food & Wine Magazine as one of America's 50 Best Hotel Restaurants.
- 2002- High profile celebrities such as Adam Sandler, Secretary of State George P. Schultz, and Kareem Abdul Jabbar visit the resort.
- 2002 – Major renovations to pool and surrounding areas include the opening of a beachside eatery, Seaside Grill.
- 2002 - 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.
- 2002 – Kahala Culinary Academy is started, with monthly cooking classes on third Saturdays of each month.
- 2002 – Two Hawaiian Green Sea Turtles, Iki and Nui, are released back into the ocean. The turtles were hatched at Sea Life Park and were raised in the lagoons at The Kahala by the Dolphin Quest trainers. Two new turtles, Koa and Ohia, join the dolphins.
- 2002 – Executive Chef Wayne Hirabayashi is a celebrated Guest Chef at the James Beard House in New York City.
- 2002 – Condé Nast 2002 Gold List votes The Kahala as having the #1 Best Rooms in the United States.
- 2003 - The beautiful Hawaiian quilts in the Kahala Spa treatment suites were created by Kahala employees Carol Arai, Jeanne Won, Wanda Lew, Laurie Niiyama, and Cindy Akai. There were five plants and flowers that were originally selected: Ginger and Pikake because of their fragrance and the fact that they are used in aromatherapy, Naupaka which is indigenous to the resort; Loulu because it is native to the islands, and Ohia Lehua for its association with the romantic Legend of the Lovers. This quilt is placed in the suite.
- 2003 - New CHI Fitness Center opens in mid-November
- 2003 - The Kahala Spa officially opens and is named the Best New Hotel Spa in America by Departures Magazine.
- 2004 – Major renovations to Plumeria Beach House were undertaken with opening in November.
- 2004 - Television series LOST debuts on national television. LOST stars and guest stars often stayed at The Kahala and The Kahala was a site for filming.
- 2005 – Chefs invent their version of the Portuguese sweet treat and name it Kahalasada. The donut-like breakfast cakes are coated with a fine mix of sugar and Li Hing Mui powder.
- 2005 - Sony Open Professional Golf Tournament debuts at Waialae Country Club and selects The Kahala as host hotel. It is one of the most internationally televised golf events in the world

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- 2005 - The Kahala Hotel & Resort is purchased by Kahala Hotel Investors, LLC, and becomes an independent hotel in early 2006 under the Leading Hotels of the World flag.
- 2007 - The Kahala embarks on a 2-year, \$52 million full room renovation.
- 2008 – The Kahala signs a reservations and marketing agreement with Okura Hotels & Resorts, with call center services in Tokyo.
- 2008 – Emperor Hirohito and Empress Michiko return to The Kahala for celebrations in Honolulu for their 50th wedding anniversary. They last stayed at The Kahala for their 25th wedding anniversary.
- 2008 - Former Hawaii Resident Barrack Obama becomes President of the United States. President-elect Obama selects The Kahala as the venue for his Hawaiian presidential fundraiser event.
- 2010 - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton holds important diplomatic meetings with the Japanese Foreign Minister at The Kahala.
- 2010 - 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.
- 2011 - Kahala hosts attendees at 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
- 2012 – Sir Elton John is once again Kahala guest for his Honolulu concert.
- 2012 - His Holiness The Dalai Lama stays at The Kahala during major peace Summit
- 2012 - The Very Right Reverend Desmond Tutu stays at The Kahala
- 2012 - The Veranda remodeling is completed 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, since 1999 they have raised more than \$11 million for local non-profits
- 2013 - New Napoli-style Italian eatery, Arancino at The Kahala, opens in April.
- 2013- Stevie Wonder and Paul Carpenter visit the hotel.
- 2013 - The Kahala launches its Golden Jubilee Celebrations program in the fall. Stories about the hotel are included in the nightly turndown, 60s menus and cocktail lists are developed. Hawaiian entertainer Makana starts the anniversary countdown with shows featuring a Hawaiian music tribute to the 60s.
- 2014 - The Kahala celebrates its 50th anniversary on Wednesday, January 22, 2014.