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## Spa Profile: Kamaha'o, a Marilyn Monroe Spa

Stunning oceanfront vistas and specialized service packages make this resort spa a standout.

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[Images: Courtesy of Kamaha'o, a Marilyn Monroe Spa]

Stunning oceanfront vistas and specialized service packages make this resort spa a standout. When you consider its backdrop—which includes an open-air balcony complete with a 180-degree view of the Hawaiian coastline and the sound of waves crashing on the sand—one might think that Maui's only oceanfront, full-service salon and spa could rest on its laurels. But the staff at the Kamaha'o, a Marilyn Monroe Spa, at the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa, are doing just the opposite—working hard to ensure the property stays at the top of the saturated Hawaiian spa market.

### A Stunning Setting

There's a seemingly endless list of activities, restaurants, sights and shops available to guests on the 40-acre Hyatt Regency Maui property—everything from an exhibit of African black-footed penguins to expert-led stargazing sessions. But the Kamaha'o spa (which translates to "wonderful, astonishing, marvelous") stands apart, both literally and figuratively, from all the rest. For starters, it occupies its own building (shared only with the fitness center) on the southern edge of the resort.

PHOTOS: Aê Spa & Wellness Collective at Turnberry Isle Miami

The spa's front desk, retail area and locker rooms are simple and understated, and a shallow, beautifully tiled Jacuzzi occupies a nook of the women's locker room; however, the spa's star spaces are its open-air, ocean-facing relaxation lounge and naturally lit Glamour Room. The latter, complete with nearly a dozen hair and makeup stations, three manicure chairs and six pedicure stations, has an exterior wall that features gigantic glass windows. Outside, within a literal arm's reach, the resort's white sand beach and upward stretching palms beckon.

These views have been a staple for decades, but their easy accessibility is relatively new—part of a major renovation that took place in late 2013 and included a shift from the Moana Spa to a Marilyn Monroe-branded spa and salon. General manager Lacey Matsumoto was deeply involved in this transition, which she says was very similar to opening a new spa. "The four-month changeover included hiring; rebranding; implementing new concepts, products and protocols; and extensive training and education," Matsumoto explains. She notes that the spa chain embodies a feeling that she consistently works to instill in her guests. "Embracing the timeless legacy of Marilyn Monroe, we provide an ambience where guests can be spoiled and flirty, and feel wonderful yet still conquer the world," she comments. "We created our sense of place by blending two cultures, and we created an environment where glamour meets paradise."

Paradise, indeed. I received the Golden Glow Facial (80 min. / \$215), after which I lay back in an oceanfront lounge, basking in the effects of the oxygen infusion and trance-inducing facial massage. My skin desperately needed a refresh, but my esthetician's methodical care and attention were what made the treatment feel luxurious and relaxing—and reminded me that I was on a tropical island.

PHOTOS: The New Four Seasons Hotel Downtown NYC

### The Group Advantage

With so much happening on site, it's logical to wonder if the spa can get lost in the shuffle, especially considering its bungalow isn't physically front and center. Ben Premack, the resort's director of sales and marketing, assures that's not the case. "We work together to ensure our guests have all the information they need to book services at the spa, including menus and in-room communication pieces. Monthly specials are detailed in our activity sheets and regular emails, and of course we utilize social media to add visuals and a voice to the spa," he explains.

In addition, the Glamour Room serves as the perfect space for groups and events—especially bridal parties. The Hyatt Regency Maui has put a lot of effort into establishing itself as a go-to wedding destination. Its breathtaking beach vistas, extensive array of preplanned wedding packages, 100,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor function space, and multitude of on-site restaurants and eateries are certainly enticing, but the Marilyn Monroe-themed spa enables couples to take their Hawaiian wedding extravaganza that extra mile.

"We make it easy for larger groups and wedding parties to have everything they might need—without having to leave the property," says Premack. "We encourage them to utilize all of our services and amenities, including the spa." To make that a reality, the resort staff has

compiled several spa-specific offerings for brides and grooms. The first is incorporated into the champagne-centric Bubbles and Bliss menu. For the Private Glamour Room & Sparkling Wine service, five bottles of bubbly are provided while up to eight participants get their hair and makeup done.

A two-page group menu lays out ideas for bachelorette parties, bridal showers and day-of wedding parties, including services expressly designed for the mother of the bride (or groom!) and an opportunity to let the spa create custom goodie bags. A Couples Retreat package (190 min./\$700) allows soon-to-be or just-wed twosomes to indulge in couples' massages, facials and mani/pedis.

#### Kamaha'o, a Marilyn Monroe Spa



The Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa

#### Local Inspiration

The spa has spent the past year developing and promoting its Exclusive Hawaiian Treatments selection. Services range from a Sun Recovery Facial (25 min./\$85) and Body Treatment (50 min./\$145) that pamper guests with aloe, coconut water and coconut milk, to an All'i Indulgence body service (80 min./\$230) featuring mineral-rich organic clay, Hawaiian coffee fruit extract and a pohaku hot stone. "The products we've selected are made in Hawaii using indigenous ingredients," notes Matsumoto.

PHOTOS: Four Unique Hotel Spas in Prague

Following my Lomi Lomi Massage (80 min./\$215), I was left entranced thanks to my therapist's rhythmic, hula-inspired touch and the spa's CocoMango signature scent, part of the private label Marilyn Monroe collection. "Marilyn Monroe Skincare products are rooted in aromatherapy, plant therapy, Certified Organic ingredients and seed oils," says Matsumoto, who adds that the line supports global fair trade framing and sustainability practices.

In addition to utilizing organic and local formulations, Kamaha'o is very much aligned with eco-friendly methods. The entire resort is Silver level LEED certified for Existing Buildings Operations and Management (EBOM) and has extensive water reduction and waste minimization programs in place. Eorts are all-encompassing: The Chef's Garden grows local herbs used in kitchens across the resort; the property boasts the largest rooftop solar photovoltaic system in its county; a storm water management system ensures as little ocean runoff as possible; and green cleaning products are used throughout the hotel and spa.

Because of Maui's tourist nature, however, 90 percent of the spa's visitors are hotel guests. Another 5 percent come from neighboring hotels, and the final 5 percent are locals. To draw in the latter group, the spa runs a membership program, but Matsumoto is pushing to create more enticing offerings for island residents. "We're working on developing an exclusive locals menu with competitive pricing to increase our capture rate on consistent repeat guests," she says. "In the near future, we're looking to host a monthly local's night in the Glamour Room that will focus on specials for salon services."

Aside from the trials of attracting Maui residents to her facility, Matsumoto references the evolving spa industry and the hotel's seasonal nature as the big tasks she faces. "Generally speaking, seasonality is a challenge for resorts, so of course it affects our spa as well. Focusing on the local market is not only good business, it also helps address this seasonality issue," she explains. "Another challenge is remaining ahead of the curve in an industry that seems to move at light speed when it comes to innovation, design, technology and, most importantly, trends is also a pressing task.

"Today's clients are more sophisticated, and although they seek what is familiar, they also want something new," continues Matsumoto. And how does Kamaha'o deliver just that? "We strive to provide the best quality products, unparalleled service and a unique, timeless experience," she says.

This sentiment echoes in my mind as I think back to my day at Kamaha'o. I arrived craving that familiar, thorough facial and deep tissue massage I knew my skin and muscles desperately needed—but was also hoping to simultaneously experience a unique Maui touch. And that's exactly what I was given.

—by Rachel Kossman



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