



Big Island Visitors Bureau Media Contact:

Jessica Ferracane, Irondog Communications, (808) 895-5740, jessica@irondogpr.com

HAWAI‘I’S BIG ISLAND IS THE WORLD’S MOST DIVERSE GOLF EXPERIENCE

Hawai‘i Island – the Golf Capital of Hawai‘i – Has Greens to Envy, and Enjoy

Hawai‘i’s Big Island – There is one island in Hawai‘i that has it all for golfers: the southernmost course in the United States; greens where players tee off in view of smoldering Kīlauea volcano; designer golf courses with historic signature holes at oceanfront resorts; affordable and scenic municipal courses where wild turkeys and endemic *nēnē* (geese) strut about, and mountain courses where refreshing breezes rustle through native forest.

That island, of course, is **Hawai‘i’s Big Island** – hailed as the Golf Capital of Hawai‘i but as some say, the most diverse golf experience on earth . . . and perhaps, the most distracting. Flip through the colorful new guide “Golf Hawai‘i – Hawai‘i’s Big Island: The Golf Capital of Hawai‘i,” available online at <http://www.bigisland.org/hawaii-golf-courses> for a “teaser.”

Or just ask Dave McNair of Nebraska, whose ambitious goal to golf all 50 states hit the 49th mark with a recent visit to the Big Island, where he played seven out of 18 possible courses in his signature tam- o’- shanter cap, knickers, long argyle socks, and classic Tom Stewart hickory clubs, all made between 1908 and 1915.

“The Big Island presented some the most challenging golf I’ve ever played, not because of the difficulty of the courses but because of the great views,” McNair said. “It was the first time I’ve ever played alongside black lava rock, and I couldn’t take my eyes off it!” That setting was the **Kings’ Course** at **Waikoloa Beach Resort**, regarded as one of Hawai‘i’s top courses, designed by Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish. But the day he and his wife Cindy arrived on island, he headed straight for the resort’s famous **Beach Course**, a Robert Trent Jones, Jr. creation.

“As you’re coming down the signature seventh hole, there’s palm trees jutting out of the greens, and this huge ocean in front of you. You think, *wow, now that’s Hawai‘i*,” McNair said. Also bordering holes six, seven and eight is an ancient Hawaiian petroglyph field.

For golf enthusiasts, resort courses at **Hualālai Resort, Waikoloa Beach Resort, Mauna Lani Resort, Mauna Kea Resort** and **Kona Country Club** all present diverse golf opportunities adjacent to full service resorts. For example, the **Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa** is a swing away from the **Kona Country Club's Ocean Course**. Overshoot the green on the second-hole fairway and your ball could easily end up in the ocean on this challenging hole. The **Mountain Course** designed by William Bell, Nelson and Robin Wright offers breathtaking Kona coastline views.

McNair and his wife Cindy, who often walks alongside him as he plays, are amateur bird watchers and marveled as they observed species like the native Hawaiian stilt (*ae'o*), saffron finch, Hawai'i's state bird the *nēnē* (goose), kajil pheasants, and red-crested cardinals.

They were also treated to Hawai'i Island's prevailing aloha spirit. At **Sea Mountain** – the southernmost golf course in the United States located near Punalu'u Black Sand Beach – the pro suggested they hike a coastal trail that led them to an ancient *heiau*, or Hawaiian temple not on the map.

At Kīholo Bay on the Kohala Coast, the couple counted nearly 40 Hawaiian green sea turtles after playing Mauna Lani Resort's renowned **Francis H. I'i Brown South Course**, which boasts more oceanfront holes than any course on the Kohala Coast. (McNair shot an 82, and made par on each ocean hole.) In Hilo, they visited Hawai'i Tropical Botanical Gardens before heading back to West Hawai'i to golf at **Mauna Kea Golf Course** – originally designed in 1964 by the late, great Robert Trent Jones, Sr. This historic and revered course, which sets the standard by which most courses in Hawai'i are judged, was renovated by the architect's son, Rees Jones, and unveiled in 2009. The legendary service and amenities continue to lure golf enthusiasts from around the world.

Another historic icon in Hawaiian golf, who would have undoubtedly approved of McNair's ode to Scottish decorum, was the *ali'i* (Hawaiian nobleman) **Francis H. I'i Brown**, considered the “father of Hawaiian golf.” Brown, who purchased the 3,200-acre Kalāhuipua'a in 1930, now known as **Mauna Lani Resort**, won the California State Championship that same year. The two 18-hole courses still bear his name, and its signature oceanfront 15th hole on the South Course is one of the most photographed in the world. In winter months, it's not unusual to see humpback whales breaching offshore and the snow-capped peaks of Maunakea from *any* of the courses that grace the Kohala Coast.

Today, the pros continue to converge on Hawai'i's Big Island for the **PGA Champions Tour Mitsubishi Electric at Hualālai Championship**, an event that happens every January at the spectacular **Hualālai Golf Course**, a Jack Nicklaus Signature Course.

Special note to media: The Big Island Visitors Bureau (BIVB) recognizes the use of the 'okina ['] or glottal stop, one of the eight consonants of the modern Hawaiian language; and the kahakō [ā] or macron (e.g., in place names of Hawai'i such as Kīlauea). However, BIVB respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

For more information on Hawai'i's Big Island, please visit <http://gohawaii.com/big-island>

###