

The Laniwai Spa at Disney's Aulani Resort Is the Ultimate Treat for the Whole 'Ohana

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By Bekah Wright

The Hawaiian Islands are all about *'ohana*, or family. On O'ahu, a destination that checks many wish list items is [Aulani](#), A Disney Resort & Spa in Ko Olina.

But don't let the company name fool you; many surprises await at this family resort, among them, minimal appearances by Disney characters. Instead, the Aulani embraces island culture, leaving visitors with an indelible sense of place. Something else that's unique – the resort spa, Laniwai, welcomes with family-gear treatments. Says Spa Director Lucia Amasio, "With family wellness becoming such a rising trend, experiencing the spa together is a wonderful way to ensure extra family bonding time."

Checking In

Located on O'ahu's leeward side, the Aulani's 21 acres of landscape combines mountains with the Pacific Ocean. There are 351 rooms, 481 vacation club units and 19 Grand Villas, equipped with amenities for little ones, from high chairs to Pack n' Plays. All encompassing of family needs are one- and two- bedroom villas with full kitchens and stackable washers/dryers.

Two full-service restaurants and upward of five cafes/lounges/snack shacks are on property. "Not to miss" events for the kids are character breakfasts and buffet fare at Makahiki. More formal dining can be had at the open-air 'AMA'AMA.

When an urge to explore the island comes on, an Alamo Rent A Car kiosk is on site. A nightly fee of \$35 is required, whether valet or self-parking. Balancing this out – the Aulani has no resort fees.

Amenities for All Ages

Aulani's pool area beckons with its waterslides, lazy river and splash zone. Particularly memorable is reserved time for snorkeling in Rainbow Reef. Of course, the ocean has its own allure, and Maikiki Joe's Beach Shack has accouterments including sand toys, snorkel gear, paddle boards and kayaks for enjoying the sea to its fullest.

The crème de la crème for the younger set is the complimentary Aunty's Beach House day program for ages three through 12 (pre-registration required). Arts and crafts, games, dress-up, movies and activities intermix with classes in hula, Hawaiian storytelling and "science."

The entire family can get in on the Starlit Hui (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday nights), where live Hawaiian and Disney music commingle with hula and Disney character dances. More low-key are evenings around a firepit for storytelling sessions.

Laniwai's Aloha Spirit

The Aulani further deepens familial bonds via spa time. Where this magic takes place is Laniwai, which translates as "fresh water heaven." And heaven it is.

A private entrance leads to a dedicated, family spa suite, where treatments specific to 'ohana are performed. Designed for up to six family members, ages five and up, is the apropos "Ohana Treatment," which features

Hawai'i's sacred *lomilomi* massage technique.

Each spagoer is given their own lomilomi massage stick. More than a mere memento, the use of this tool is demonstrated by spa practitioners for at-home use. This is one of Laniwai's goals. "Families can use spa time as a learning experience about their health and well being," says Amasio. "It's ideal for instilling healthy habits for day-to-day lives."

New on Laniwai's family menu is a sleep treatment that combines aromatherapy, meditation and massage. Joining it is the Summer Glow Organic Facial, which soothes skin after exposure to the sun.

'Ohana who've welcomed a new member can partake in the Ka Makana, a special massage session for parents and baby. Just right for expectant moms is the Hāpai Massage and Yummy Tummy skin treatment.

Targeted for *keiki*, or children (12 and under), are "Magical Makeovers" including everything from hairstyling and manicures/pedicures to light makeup, clothing and accessories. Set aside for the older children is Painted Sky Teen Spa, a private, fun environment for tweens and teens to learn about the benefits of spa culture.

When it's time to depart for home, 'ohana leave not only relaxed and invigorated, but with new skills for enhancing wellness and a lifetime's worth of memories, magic and aloha.

About the Author: *Travel writer Bekah Wright spans the globe experiencing everything from fly fishing to sheep herding. Her writing has been featured in GOOD, Bon Appetit, National Geographic Kids, Los Angeles magazine and TV Guide. For more travel antics from Bekah Wright, visit [Change Your Life Travels](#).*

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