



Hawai'i

Look out for surfacing whales and tee shots over jagged lava amid some of the world's most spectacular golf. Peter Ellegard goes island-hopping in the South Pacific

As a sightseeing boat was slowly cruising around in circles just offshore as my local golfing partner and I teed off. Reaching the coconut palm-fringed green he explained that it was a whale-watching cruise boat looking out for humpbacks.

"Can you see them from the course?" I asked hopefully while lining up my putt. Sure, he replied, although it was now mid-April and there were fewer around. But in the peak months of December to March they often spouted and surfaced in full view, he explained.

The 3rd hole, Mauna Kea, Big Island: 240-yard carry, anyone?



PETER ELLEGARD

"Like that, you mean?" I ventured, seeing a sudden burst of spray erupt from the water when I looked up from my putt. He didn't need to answer, as the giant whale had already surfaced. We just stood and watched, awe-struck, until it arched its back and slid gracefully back below the blue waters. Golfers on adjacent holes were doing exactly the same, even after its tail flukes had disappeared.

We were playing the Gold Course at Wailea Golf Club, on Maui, but I could have had a similar experience on many other courses in

Hawai'i. During the 1991 LPGA Women's Kemper Open on Wailea's Blue Course, some players were warned for slow play because they stopped to watch cavorting whales.

To play golf in Hawai'i is like playing nowhere else in the world. That same hole where I saw the whale has an ancient lava rock wall lining the fairway. The lush fairways and slick greens of a number of courses are laced through rugged lava flows—true rough in every sense. Some holes not only call for shots over jagged lava, but over foaming ocean as well.

How about a round high up on an active volcano, or on rainforest-clad slopes of razor-like peaks with carries over yawning chasms? Maybe a game with the world's largest mountain, measured from its ocean-floor base to its peak, as the backdrop?

And there's nothing like a game in the lush surroundings of Kaua'i where they filmed the movie *South Pacific*. With more than 80 courses in Hawai'i, spread throughout the six main islands and all offering heavenly golf, this really is golfing in the garden of the gods.

