

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Four Seasons platforms justice-minded teen education program in Maui

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The camp is a way for Four Seasons to signal a move mindful approach to Hawaiian travel, educating the youth on the region. Image credit: Four Seasons

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Luxury hospitality group **Four Seasons** is celebrating the natural wonders of Hawaii per an outdoor adventure offering for kids and teens.

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The brand's Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea is inviting kids aged nine to 17 for the second time to explore their natural surroundings in Hawaii at **Camp Manitou**, the camp first debuting in December of 2022. As environmental activists and native Hawaiians increasingly urge travelers to stay away from the islands, criticizing luxury resorts' exploitation of their natural resources and appropriation of local indigenous culture, the move offers a more mindful way of experiencing Hawaii via education and slow travel experiences.

"We are super excited to be returning to Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea for Spring," said Tristan Hewat, director of Camp Manitou, Melbourne, Australia.

"Most of the programming we offer the younger guests and families of Four Seasons resorts is off the resort footprint, so there is an incredible amount of opportunity for adventure, fun and special little moments with new friends," Mr. Hewat said. "Allowing kids and teens to explore together outside of the resort environment seems to forge genuine friendships it's a special thing."

New narratives

From April 1 to 14, young guests can get to know the island with the guidance of camp counselors.

The offering is specially designed for those staying at the Four Seasons resort, platforming exclusive outdoor experiences for teen and pre-teen luxury travelers. From exploring via surfboard to hikes around the island, camp participants will have the chance to get to know the island on a more immersive basis.

"As a father of three, I can personally attest that providing engaging experiences for pre-teens and teens during vacation elevates the experience for the whole family," said Ben Shank, general manager of Four Seasons Resort Maui, Hawaii.

"Many kids this age want time away from parents, and the capable counselors at Camp Manitou offer exciting ways to explore the island," Mr. Shank said. "Not only that, but the camp culture fosters making connections with other guests their age.

"And, it gives the parents some time to reconnect as they enjoy the Resort's many amenities."

Adventuring in Hawaii at Camp Manitou

In an effort to include Hawaiian perspectives, the resort tapped navigator Kala Baybayan Tanaka to lead Hawaiian Stories Under the Stars a 30-minute story session under the tropical night sky. The navigator will educate teens and accompanying adults on Polynesian wayfinding practices, telling the story of how indigenous groups have been using the wind, ocean currents and stars for millennia to sail around the Pacific Ocean, eventually landing in the Hawaiian islands.

As luxury resorts historically and currently use Hawaiian culture as a marketing scheme to draw western tourists to the islands, painting the indigenous practices and beliefs as exotic and sellable rather than sacred, the Saturday night story-telling programming offers a look into the humanity of the Hawaiian identity.

"Four Seasons Resort Maui has always aimed to provide our guests with authentic Hawaiian cultural experiences, a sentiment the team at Camp Manitou shares," Mr. Shank said.

As Four Seasons' inclusion of educational opportunities makes the brand well-positioned in the increasingly criticized resort market of the region, the resort is expanding its lineup in this regard.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Four Seasons Resort Maui (@fsmaui)

Joining the adventure camp, Four Seasons Maui Academy is to return from March 13 to April 15. Through the seasonal classes, kids aged five to 12 can learn about the Hawaiian culture and environment through hands-on learning and storytelling.

Focusing on forging a connection to land, Four Seasons is adding two new offerings to the class lineup Chef's Garden Club and Maui Whale Watchers, addressing Hawaiian food justice and sovereignty as well as whale conservation, respectively.



Led by naturalists, teens get the chance to explore the natural beauty of the island at Camp Manitou. Image credit: Four Seasons

The Chef's Garden Club is to be offered year-round, led by Taylor Fujimoto, the on-site sustainability manager. Educating children on local food traditions, the programming is especially timely, getting at a trending topic amongst global sustainability discussions food justice.

Four Seasons is projecting a conscious, just image with this emphasis on education at the resort, offering a contrast against the classically damaging travel options on the islands.

"Outdoor excursions of any kind, especially when offering an interactive or educational component, help people of any age to form a bond with the natural surroundings," Mr. Shank said.

"The aim is to instill the same love of the land and sea for which Hawai'i is known in our young guests, therefore encouraging mindful and responsible travel to the islands for generations to come."

Just travel

As conversations continue to be had concerning the ethics of certain travel offerings, the demand for slow travel and cultural travel is surging.



Justice-conscious travel offerings are on the rise, as people increasingly educate themselves on the impacts of global travel. Image credit: Four Seasons

Travelers increasingly want more just options when it comes to their vacations, wanting to avoid contributing to environmental or humanitarian crises and gather meaningful experiences. Travel brands like cruise line Seabourn are starting to take note ([see story](#)).

The company now offers immersive travel experiences on its voyages to far-out places, allowing travelers the chance to truly connect with the natural world.

LVMH-owned hospitality group Belmond is addressing the need for cultural justice, rather than environmental justice. The brand's Copacabana Palace location in Rio, Brazil has been platforming Brazilian culture, presenting odes to the heritage of the city it calls home ([see story](#)).