

Haute Hawaii, past and present, from left: Jeff Bezos, Doris Duke, Laurance Rockefeller, Priscilla Chan, Mark Zuckerberg, Peter Thiel, Barbara Hutton, and Larry Ellison.



Let's All Move to Hawaii...

Mai Tais at Zuckerberg's? Golf with Bezos? Oh no, is that Peter Thiel? Keeping up with the billionaire brigade inside the private playgrounds of America's most exclusive getaway.

BY HORACIO SILVA ILLUSTRATION BY JOE DARROW

In 1969 a young idealist, on her first trip to Hawaii, checked into the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, a sublime pink confection of a place in Waikiki Beach, on the island of Oahu. She threw open the balcony curtains, only to have the view of the surrounding mountains spoiled when she looked down onto the parking lot of the neighboring Sheraton Waikiki, then under construction. In April of the following year, the woman in question released "Big Yellow Taxi," a protest song inspired by her stay at the legendary resort. A couple of the lyrics—"You don't know what you got 'til it's gone" and "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot"—became bywords of the '60s counterculture.

If Joni Mitchell were to check in today, and her antennae were still finely tuned (according to local lore, the line "They took all the trees and put 'em in a tree museum/And charged all the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em" refers to Foster Botanical Garden in downtown Honolulu), the vista might inspire an entire catalog of new music. Pilloried by its detractors for being as ersatz as an Elvis movie, Waikiki has more than lived up to its planners' promise to become a Bain de Soleil-covered bastion of resort living. And the gentrification doesn't stop there.

In a turn of events that in another era might have galvanized a generation of tambourine-wielding folklorists, the rest of this remote Pacific archipelago has become Eden for the one percent. EBay founder Pierre Omidyar, who spent part of his childhood in Hawaii, is now back as a full-time Honolulu resident. Salesforce boss Marc Benioff holds court on the Big Island, along with Starbucks capo Howard Schultz. Oprah is over in Maui, as is Jeff Bezos. If they squint they can make out Peter Thiel's lair in Makena, on the south shore. In December, Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan bought an additional chunk of land on Kauai, bringing their total to more than 1,500 acres. And the film producer Allison Sarofim is in Kahala on Oahu, where her family owns the old Clare Boothe Luce estate.

"Going there has taught me the concept of *pono*, which means living in harmony with each other and the environment," Sarofim says. "It's a fundamental value that is deeply ingrained in Hawaiian culture, and it's my hope that people see and understand that part of Hawaii, as opposed to simply a beautiful vacation destination."

Promoted for 120 years as a tourist escape for its sun, surf, and great year-round weather, Hawaii is a victim of its own success; sales of properties costing \$10 million or more have increased sixfold in the last year.

"We always thought people wanted authentic experiences, and we encouraged them to come and live like a local," says Chris Kam, president and COO of Omnitrak, a Honolulu-based research company. "Somewhere along the line that messaging got interpreted as 'Move to Hawaii and become a local.'"

One of Omnitrak's recent findings, Kam says, has been a trend during the pandemic of outsiders immersing themselves in a place they're considering moving to, a fad well suited to the kaleidoscope of sights on offer here. This development has been encountered firsthand by Titus Kinimaka, a long-haired 64-year-old big wave surfer who is also an actor and the owner of the Hawaiian Surf School in Kauai, where the students include tech bros and corporate bigwigs. "There are a lot of really interesting things going on below the surface, if you're willing to make the effort," he says. "I'm not surprised that a lot of these people who come decide to stay."

The first gentrifiers of the islands were mostly robber barons, but today's status-conscious transplants are more likely to come from Palo Alto or Wall Street. The Big Five (the sugarcane conglomerates that wielded considerable power in the early 20th century) may have gone the way of traditional instruments like the *pahu*, but a scan of the map and headlines reveals that serious money from the mainland is as prevalent as ever.

Though there are no formal programs or tax incentives to attract residents from out of state, the draw of Hawaii, beyond the *Gilligan's Island* escapist fantasy, remains its isolation and the perception that it's a safe place to visit and, by extension, to live. Then there is the allure of the not insignificant anonymity of a largely TMZ-free zone.

The charge of the billionaire brigade, at least as portrayed in the media, is being led by the notoriously press-shy Zuckerberg, who purchased several hundred acres on Kauai in 2014 for \$53 million and shelled out \$120 million on subsequent expansions. Last year he became the poster boy for "There goes the neighborhood!" anxieties when he infamously shared a video of himself, slathered in zinc cream, surfing on a hydrofoil—an image that is not likely to be featured on official tourism channels.

Before him, Oracle co-founder and megadeveloper Larry Ellison had, by 2012, bought most of the land on the island of Lanai for \$300 million, and he has since spent some \$500 million developing it, including the famed Sensei Lanai resort. And Bezos recently splurged on a secluded 4,500 square-foot \$78 million megamansion with ➤➤➤

girlfriend Lauren Sánchez on La Perouse Bay, near the southern tip of Maui, about two miles from the Four Seasons Maui at Wailea, where the HBO series *The White Lotus* was filmed.

But it is the 35-mile Kona-Kohala coast, on the northwest part of Hawaii Island, as the Big Island is also called, that continues to attract the likes of Walmart heir S. Robson Walton, Emerson Collective billionaire Laurene Powell Jobs, Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, and Benioff, who wears Hawaiian shirts to work and named his dog Koa, or warrior. They join Michael Dell, founder and CEO of Dell Technologies, who bought the Four Seasons hotel and the surrounding Hualalai Resort in 2006, going on to build an oceanfront home valued around \$75 million in Hualalai's tony Kukio Golf and Beach Club. For his part, Bill Gates reportedly stays up the coast at the Hilton Waikoloa Village, even though, since 2007, he has co-owned the Four Seasons hotel management company with Saudi prince Alwaleed bin Talal. (Last year Gates became the majority shareholder.) It is increasingly hard to see the forest for the megayachts.

There are wait lists for private jets, and good luck getting into the right golf club without the right connections, although Bezos and Co. can always emulate Charles Schwab, the founder of the brokerage company, and billionaire investor George Roberts, who founded their own golf course on the Big Island in 2003. The club is said to be open to just 100 members, invitation-only.

The land remains Hawaii's most precious inheritance, one that requires caretaking by visitors and locals alike.

Not surprisingly, a lot of these tech arrivistes are buying their way in with the help of organizations, such as the Hawaii Community Foundation, that connect donors with charities. Benioff recently made the news as a good neighbor by coordinating the donation of 1 million face masks to Hawaii County Civil Defense through the University of California San Francisco, where he funded the Benioff Center for Microbiome Medicine. In 2016 Zuckerberg incensed locals by building a six-foot-tall wall along the perimeter of his enormous estate, so he then poured more than \$22 million into various non-profit organizations on Kauai, including \$4 million to save the Alakoko Fishpond. In January he gave \$50 million to the University of Hawaii, its largest cash gift ever.

According to John De Fries, president and CEO of the Hawaiian Tourism Authority, it all sounds like a lot of movement, but the change has been more gradual than most people know. "Obviously, it's highlighted right now by the top entrepreneurs and global game changers," De Fries says, "but before those headlines came here, the wealthy kind of came here quietly."

De Fries is referring to the decades-old migration of high society, led principally by transplants from San Francisco, which has been beating a path to Hawaii ever since Laurance Rockefeller, the son of John D. Rockefeller, built the landmark Mauna Kea Beach Hotel on the Kohala Coast in 1965. Rockefeller tapped his friend Lurline Matson Roth, who was possessed of not only immaculate taste but also a substantial shipping fortune, to design a template for the beau monde to luxuriate in style, like Luce and Doris Duke, [CONTINUED ON PAGE 126]

.. And
In this modern



Live Like This

Shangri-La, cinematic views span from here to eternity. »»

BY OLIVIA HOSKEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MUNDY

A 7,000-square-foot vacation home decorated by designer Michael S. Smith in Kailua-Kona is the opposite of a "reductive beach house."



After 20 years, the view from the Kona Coast remained spectacular. It was the inside of the home that needed a refresh. That was the confession an elegant couple, well-traveled art collectors, shared with the interior designer Michael S. Smith about their spread in Kailua-Kona, originally conceived by the San Francisco architect Sandy Walker in 2001.

“It was still a gorgeous house, but a bit like a beautiful bespoke suit made for somebody else,” Smith tells *T&C*. The designer, who has something of a couturier’s touch, knew just how to correct the fit. He’d start, as any alum of the Obama White House would, with history, the area itself and that of its colorful residents over the years. There was Shangri La, of course, which Doris Duke conjured after her travels in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, and also Geoffrey Beene’s modernist oasis in Honolulu.

“Hawaii is so sophisticated,” Smith says. “There’s extraordinary architecture from the ’50s, ’60s, and

’70s that has always inspired me, the result of all these rich cultures coming together. Some homes in Honolulu look as though they could be in New England. I wanted to include all of that in this project.”

Taking his cues from that clash in sensibilities, Smith assembled treasures from Thai antiques dealers alongside newly commissioned works by contemporary decorative artists. The juxtaposition of these finds throughout the home’s 7,000 square feet became its signature. This was to be no summer beach shack but a place the couple gathered with their children to holiday. “It wasn’t going to be about a tiki bar and sweeping views of the ocean,” Smith says. “Not that there’s anything wrong with either.”

“It’s hard to tell where the pool ends and the ocean begins.”

—Michael S. Smith

Instead, 18th-century Japanese screens lined rooms filled with collectibles, such as a Rose Tarlow coffee table, a custom tree branch chandelier by David Wiseman, and Chinese Art Deco rugs, all surrounded by rich teak walls. The material, as a matter of fact, proved to be the phantom thread running throughout. ➤➤➤



In the living room (top left) a custom chandelier by L.A. artist David Wiseman floats over an 18th-century Japanese screen. The seating is by Classic Design and Ralph Lauren, and the coffee table is by Rose Tarlow.

In the main bedroom (above), a James Welling photograph, an antique Turkish rug, and a chaise that Smith reupholstered with Madeaux fabric.

A lantern Smith saw in a London antiques store was remade for the breakfast room (left). The vintage Iznik tiles are inspired by Shangri La, and the ceiling is painted in a Japanese cloud pattern by Maria Trimbell.

The painted ceiling in the main bedroom mirrors the antique Japanese screen. A bedframe by Holly Hunt and Chinese prosperity chairs from the 1900s round out the space.



“The teak forms this gorgeous box that allows these different pieces to be on display, creating an immersive experience,” Smith says. He asked California artist Maria Trimbell to paint the ceilings, also teak, gilding them with Japanese-inspired cherry blossoms and swirls of clouds, the sort one might see in traditional lacquer and textiles. Potted plants everywhere invite the outside in, gently blurring the boundaries of the four lanai-style bedrooms that appear to float over the pool, one of the largest on the Big Island.

“It’s hard to tell where the pool ends and the ocean begins,”

Smith says. The bedroom wing is so close to the water that, from the primary suite, one can dive right in, like a scene out of a movie. Smith had exactly that in mind. “I have this romantic notion that if you photograph a house in black-and-white, it should look as if it was from 40 years ago or 10 years from now,” he says. “It should have a cinematic quality.” A timelessness, in other words. In this corner of the world, which the Beach Boys once called “the island mecca...a South Sea garden of paradise,” that’s one natural resource in miraculously abundant supply. **T&C**



The ocean is five minutes away from the bedroom wing, and the pool even closer. "At the end of the day, it's about celebrating the healthy indoor and outdoor lifestyle that this place offers," Smith says.



QUEEN HEREAFTER

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85] a very complicated way. It's a gift to have her in the room, to have her energy and her insight."

There have been countless adaptations of *Macbeth* over the years, but the list of women of color who have played Lady Macbeth is very short (including Akiya Henry, Shirley Verrett, and Angela Bassett), and it was imperative that casting Negga not be tokenism. "It's important for me to work with people who aren't just excited about the surface attention it will garner," Negga says. The racial dynamic of her coupling with Craig, which is reverse-mirrored by Coleman and Dizzia as the Macduffs in this color-conscious production, was one of the first things she and Gold discussed, and something she interrogated with dramatize Ayanna Thompson. "What happens when Lady Macbeth, who is born for power, can, in the world Shakespeare wrote, achieve her power only through her husband?" Gold asks. "Ours is a play in which this powerful Black woman has obstacles to the power she innately should be able to manifest."

The fact that Shakespeare wrote so few roles for Black women makes the premise that much more interesting, says Kim F. Hall, a professor of English and Africana Studies at Barnard College. "There are no big roles for Black women inherent in Shakespeare, so to have a Black woman play a Shakespeare lead on Broadway is a phenomenal thing," she says. "There's something compelling about a politically significant woman who has incredible emotional vulnerability."

Negga has overcome obstacles on her road to success, but she's aware of the privilege her work affords. Her platform comes with the ability to select characters (such as her upcoming turn as Josephine Baker) who may have been maligned, misread, or ignored. "It's about making sure that your desires are in alignment with the legacy that you want to leave," she says. "The only way I can do that is with the power of saying, 'What do I want to do as an actor and for myself? How am I being useful to the world?'" It's a question Lady Macbeth doesn't ask—but might, were she ever given the chance. **T&C**



MUMMY'S BOY

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 89] great coup for Andrew. "That is an example of how much she cares for him," she says.

Even as Andrew fell deeper into the mire, he was called on more frequently to be the queen's plus-one. He was there to greet world leaders, including President Trump in 2019. He joined her at Ascot and at church services at Sandringham. Andrew was even seated next to Prime Minister Boris Johnson at a festival of remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall in November 2019. Seven days later the *Newsnight* interview landed like an Exocet in the royal bows.

Not even the support of the queen was enough to spare Andrew his humiliating retreat from public and military life. Within days he had shut his office and canceled his public appearances—even his own 60th birthday party, which had been due to include his long-awaited promotion to admiral of the Royal Navy. Many sensed the hand of an older brother with an eye on the future in Andrew's defenestration. Even if, in spite of the settlement, which the palace surely hopes will quiet chatter, Charles would still rather exclude Andrew from the jubilee celebrations, most agree he would not be so harsh as to banish his brother from their father's memorial service in March, an event that may be his last public appearance.

At some point, of course, Prince Andrew will be without his mother. Even absent a scandal hanging over him, it was likely, under a king who has announced his wish for a slimmed-down monarchy, that Andrew would have a diminished role. Until then, as the post-*Newsnight* Windsor horse ride showed, the bluest blood is thicker than water too. In the turbulent months since then, Andrew has escorted his mother to church and spoken on her behalf after his father's death.

Then came a third photo, which seemed to show a bond that has withstood so much. At Philip's socially distanced funeral at Windsor, the queen sat in solemn solitude. What a few of those images showed was who among her family she had chosen to sit closest to. It was Prince Andrew. **T&C**



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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 98] whose estate, Shangri La, became part of the modern mythology of Hawaii. (Her feud with Barbara Hutton escalated there, when the Woolworth heiress decided to help out her friend by redecorating Duke's Xanadu.)

"If you cut a tree, you can read the rings, and Hawaii has a lot of rings," says designer Michael S. Smith, referring to the melange of architectural influences at play in the islands, everything from Balinese to Midcentury Modern and Mediterranean. "But the essence of Hawaii style really comes from the fabulous homes of these grandes dames."

Luce commissioned the Russian-born Hawaii modernist master Vladimir Ossipoff to build her a post-retirement sanctuary that exalted the lush tropical splendor. Halenai'a, or House of the Dolphins, was finished in 1967, and 32 years later the beachfront manse was acquired by Allison Sarofim's father Fayeze. Today Sarofim too preaches the gospel of environmental conservation: "Like many, I go to Hawaii to recharge, and a crucial part of that experience for me is to connect with nature."

The land remains Hawaii's most precious inheritance, one that requires caretaking by everyone, visitors and locals alike, from generation to generation. De Fries, who was born in Waikiki, learned that early on from his grandmother. When asked to explain the concept of a glass half full versus half empty, her reply was that it is always 100 percent full—with the water we drink and the air with breathe. And all of it filled with light.

"She taught me that until you learn to value what's intangible the same way you value what is tangible," De Fries says, "you will just keep repeating the same lessons in life. Each is a life-giving force: Our ancestors referred to them as *ha*, that breath of life; *wai*, the water we drink; and *i* was in reference to the light or spirit in the glass. In this story is the essence of who we are as a place and as a people. And it speaks to our fullest potential, because we come from the land of life-giving water with lessons to learn and lessons to teach." **T&C**