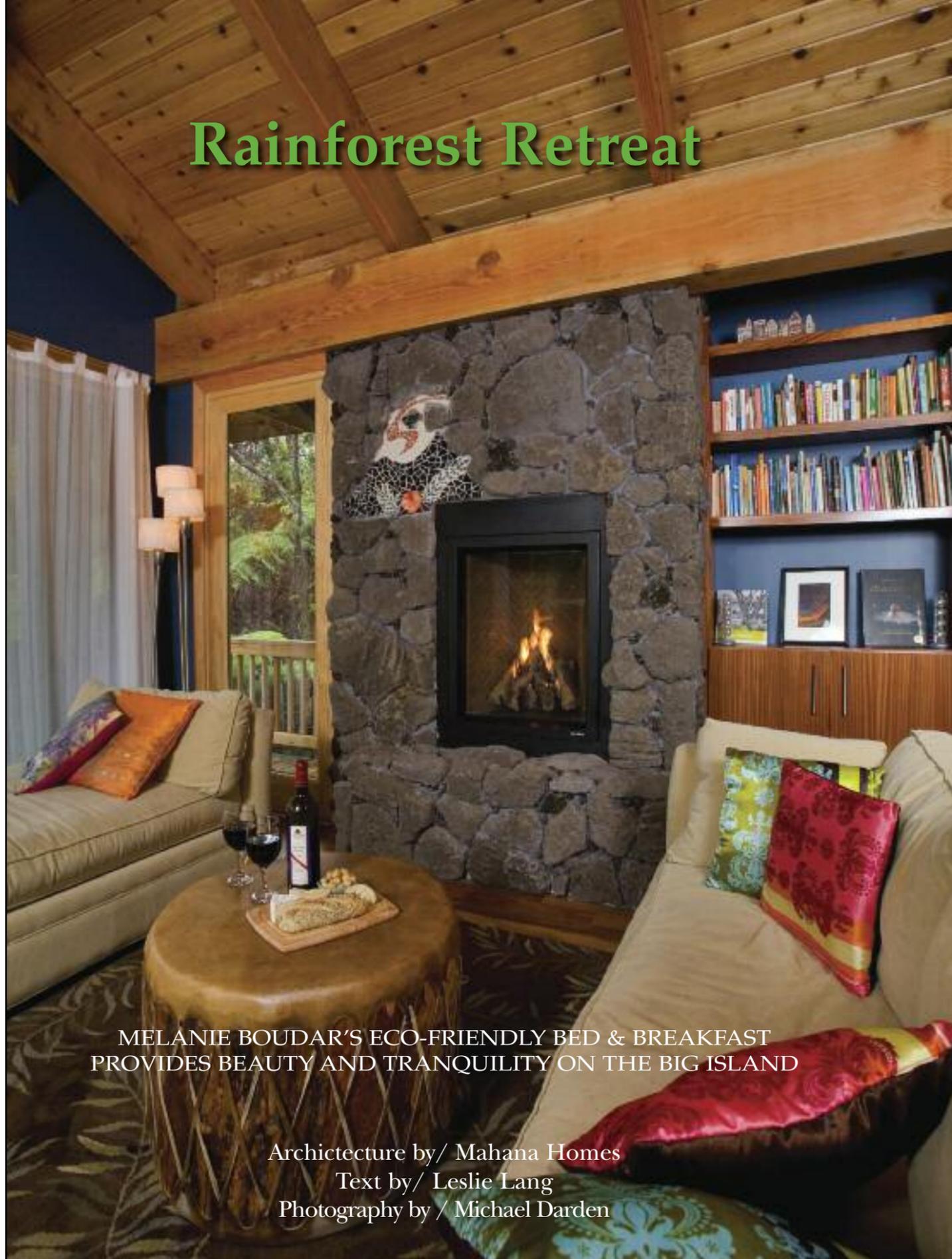


# Rainforest Retreat



MELANIE BOUDAR'S ECO-FRIENDLY BED & BREAKFAST PROVIDES BEAUTY AND TRANQUILITY ON THE BIG ISLAND

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OPPOSITE: The living room in the Volcano Deckhouse. Only timbers from managed forest were used as part of Boudar's overall plan to build with sustainability in mind.

ABOVE: The modern kitchen in the The Volcano Deckhouse, across from the two guest suites, is also available for rent. The home is a "kit house" Boudar and her partner sell through their company Mahana Homes.

WHEN MELANIE BOUDAR WAS BUILDING HER LUXURY BED & Breakfast home in the rainforest of the Big Island's Volcano area, she first made a map of the property and its major trees. Then she designed the house to fit around those trees, and rented a huge crane to lift the lumber over them.

When she says her B&B "At the Craters Edge" is sustainable, she means it. "We're respecting the fact that this is a Biosphere Preserve," she says. "There are plants and birds here that are found nowhere else on earth, and we don't want to destroy their environment, their home."

Sustainability didn't stop when the construction ended. Walk onto the property where sculptures and vibrant blooms stand alongside the forest path and you pass recycling bins tucked just inside the front fence. Out back, in the 'ohi'a forest, sits a water catchment tank, which captures rainwater that supplies all the B&B's needs. The home uses on-demand propane that only heats water as needed.

Inside, the home is made of timbers from managed forests,

painted with low-toxic paints, and filled with organic cotton linens.

Boudar emphasizes that she only buys from companies "putting into practice really conscious renewable resources. For every tree they cut down they're planting 10," she says. "I do a lot of research."

She decided to create this lodging for the affluent travelers after her retirement from the jewelry industry. "I wanted people's experiences to be intimate," she says. "I wanted them to feel in their own private world."

"I wanted the whole experience to take them out of their everyday element and put them in touch with things they wouldn't normally have. A very comfortable bed, the abundance of a bowl of very different fruit, the exotic setting. I wanted it to be a very sensual experience."

To that end, the guest suites—one is called Nahelelani (which translates to "Heavenly Forest") and the other, Haiku Garden—are elegant. Each has soft carpeting, wood and win-

“At night when there’s a light rain,” Boudar says, “and you see shadows of the giant hapu’u ferns, and it’s a little drippy—you definitely know you’re not in Iowa.”



The master bedroom in the Volcano Deckhouse.



ABOVE: The Nahelelani Suite, with plush comfort inside and gorgeous views outside. In both guest suites, doors on two walls open to wrap-around lānais and private forest views.

LEFT: The headboard is made with thin bamboo reeds bound together.



dows everywhere, and two walls with doors that open completely, privately, to the Volcano forest, where bursts of tropical orchids bloom out of hapu’u ferns. Boudar also rents out the lovely, larger space across from the guest suites that she calls the Volcano Deckhouse.

The beds are four-posters, layered with organic cotton sheets and down comforters atop thick “memory foam” toppers nestled upon very comfortable mattresses. Armoires are fitted with espresso machines, small refrigerators, microwaves and dishes. Both rooms have radiant heat gas fireplaces. Furnishings are teak, bamboo and some Chinese antiques. And in the roomy bathrooms, where the floors are heated, sinks rest on countertops—in the Nahelelani Room, the sink is a carved-out root of a teak tree. In Haiku Garden, the frameless glass shower has a pebble “foot massaging” floor. The overall effect is luxury and comfort.

A Culinary Arts Institute-trained chocolatier (her wasabi-ginger-sesame chocolate helped her win a recent Kona Chocolate Festival competition), Boudar stocks guest rooms with hand-made chocolates, which sit under glass on a pedestal



**ABOVE:** The Haiku Garden Suite with its view of, and lānais adjacent to, the rainforest. The four poster beds are layered with organic cotton sheets and down comforters atop thick “memory foam” toppers nestled upon very comfortable mattresses.

that stands alongside a complimentary bottle of wine.

In addition to being a Bed & Breakfast, At The Craters Edge is also a model home. Boudar and designer Peter Fluker own Mahana Homes (mahanahomes.com), which markets upscale “kit homes,” of which the B&B is an example.

Mahana Home plans are based on a building system that uses a changeable grid of “sections”—with huge beams and floor-to-ceiling windows—that can be mixed, matched and fitted to other sections in seemingly endless configurations. The post-and-beam-with-cedar kit can be packed into a container and shipped to Hawai‘i, where it’s easily assembled by a local contractor.

The structural elements are Douglas fir, and all the shingles, deck and railings are cedar. Boudar describes the unique structures as timber homes that are influenced by different cultures. “There are elements of Indonesia,” she says, “country houses in Japan, old Hawaiian style, contemporary lodge houses. We fused them.”

Their building philosophy is about bringing the outdoors into the home, she explains. Her B&B is a good example, with its large, airy central lānai complete with wi-fi where guests often have their coffee and settle in with their laptops. “You’re out-

doors,” she says, “but then you all have your own space to retreat to.” There are also lānais wrapping around each guest room, which turn corners and continue out of site to privacy, and forest views, beyond.

“I provide a Jacuzzi tub for someone to have a luxury experience,” she says, “yet we’re on a fragile ecosystem here. I feel guilty providing that, in a way.”

She feels strongly that one cannot consume with a conscience.

To resolve some of her “eco-guilt,” Boudar says she will soon offer a “carbon credit package.” “People who fly to Hawai‘i are burning up a lot of carbon in the environment,” she says. “I am going to discount lodging for people who will make a contribution to a sustainable organization.

“For me it’s not about making money; it’s about spreading the wealth. It’s about being grateful that somebody came and chose this lodging, and that it’s enabled me to spread the money somewhere where it’s helping someone else. I personally use an organization called sustainableharvest.org. I can take some of the income I get and empower a woman in a third-world country to grow cacao, because I’ll need chocolate down the road.”

“I have enough,” she says. “I want to take part of what I have



**ABOVE AND BELOW:** The cedar pathway, which seems to float above the forest floor, leads to an infrared sauna and hot tub.

and spread the wealth.”

Behind the B&B, a beautiful cedar boardwalk without sides seems to float above the forest floor and then disappear into a misty forest. What she calls her “Indiana Jones” path is subtly lit at night to spotlight special forest plants and flowers.

Follow the meandering of the boardwalk and you end up at a hot tub and infrared sauna, tucked into a covered deck. There’s a counter where one can fix a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate for relaxing anytime of the day or night.

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**At The Crater’s Edge**  
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