

Home + Hotels and Resorts

# 13 Amazing Asian American-owned Hotels in the U.S.

From Napa Valley and Martha's Vineyard to Alaska and Hawaii, get to know some of the incredible U.S. hotels owned by Asian Americans.

BY **RACHEL CHANG** | JUNE 20, 2021

When we check into hotels, we rarely think of the owners whose entrepreneurial spirit has created the luxurious accommodations we immerse ourselves in. And for Asian American hoteliers, bringing their visions to life often comes with a unique set of challenges.

"Being Chinese and an immigrant, I have to work harder to communicate my vision to contractors and vendors, and also ensure that clients ultimately appreciate the efforts I've made to create a welcoming and friction-free experience," Shannon Wu, who recently opened her first hotel, [The Amelia](#) in the Hudson Valley, tells *Travel + Leisure*. Her previous career at the World Bank Group kept her sheltered from any discrimination, but she says her view of race has changed since she left that international industry. "I realized racial inequality and discrimination are rampant, and things will never change if people do not stand up for themselves," she adds. "Asian Americans are branded as a 'model minority' because while we excel at many things, we try to stay out of 'trouble.' The recent anti-Asian hate crimes make it clear that this philosophy of keeping our heads down will not shield us from being victimized." Now, she's grateful for the open community in Hudson, and looks forward to sharing that welcoming energy with her guests.

Asian Americans make up a large chunk of hotel owners in the U.S., with members of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), which was formed by Indian American hoteliers in 1989, accounting for one in two hotels in the country, California Hotel & Lodging Association (CHLA) chairman Bijal Patel, who has also held AAHOA leadership roles, tells T+L. That number represents a wide range of hotels, as well as hotel owners.



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While nowadays, many are second and third generation, first-generation immigrants often bought properties in the 1970s when the oil embargo made it affordable. It was also a way to set up roots since family members could chip in and help with operations, while also having a place to live, he explains. "These Indian immigrants became 'accidental hoteliers' - people who came to America for a better life and just happened to become the pioneers of America's hotel industry," Patel, who is also the CEO and principal partner of Coast Redwood Hospitality, says. "For Indian Americans in America, hoteling has always been a family business. That's even more true now... We count on each other, and that makes our problems - whatever they may be - much smaller and more solvable."



It's that banding together that has made Asian American hoteliers such a powerful force - and that's the message they hope to pass along to their guests. "As Asian Americans, we should all make a concerted effort to help educate and spread that inclusive spirit wherever we travel," BJ Kobayashi of BlackSand Capital, which owns [Kaimana Beach Hotel](#), says.

Here are 13 of our favorite Asian American-owned hotels.

## Kaimana Beach Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii



CREDIT: COURTESY OF KAIMANA BEACH HOTEL

As Waikiki Beach's only boutique right on the sand, the [Kaimana Beach Hotel](#) was originally built in 1963 as a Japanese-designed and owned hotel, integrating touches of Asian influences. So, when it reopened this February, owner BJ Kobayashi, who long sought to bring the iconic property back into the hands of Hawaiians, was careful to honor those traditional odes, but also freshen them up [into an Instagram-ready getaway](#). "When guests enter our lobby and see our beautiful views and the eclectic mix of colors, patterns, and art, we hope they will be inspired by the melting pot of Asian influences that is uniquely found in Hawaii," he tells T+L. Its Hau Tree restaurant now has Pan-Pacific items throughout the menu, and Henderson Design Group sourced the local art and furnishings, "many of which have Asian influences and represent Asian artists."

While he calls the rise in anti-Asian hate "extremely saddening," he's also hopeful that the state can lead the way. "Here in the Hawaii market, we have a long history of Asian Americans in leadership positions across the hospitality industry," Kobayashi says. "We all have a unique bond, as we have worked hard to preserve and protect the hospitality experience on the islands for all ethnicities to enjoy. I truly feel that there is a lot that people can learn from Hawaii and the inclusive environment we strive for here."