

...Travellin' Round



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Carved in Stone

Close your eyes and picture yourself on a very small remote island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The rugged coastline is dotted with large black volcanic rocks which the surf repeatedly pounds up against. There are spectacular cliffs, stunning coastal views, and dormant volcanos with picturesque crater lakes. There is one idyllic sandy beach dotted with palm trees on the north end of the island providing a tranquil contrast to the southern coast. There are an estimated 6000 wild horses that wander freely around the island; grazing amongst the statues; galloping along the beaches. It has an air of the untamed and undiscovered - a wilderness with a stark beauty. The dominate feature of the landscape is Ranu Raraku; and it is along the southeastern rim and the southern banks of this volcano that you will find the islands treasures; what makes this place unique in the entire world - the moai; the massive stone statues.

This is Easter Island. And it is quite small; shaped like a triangle the sides measure only 16kms; 17kms; and 24 kms respectively. And it is remote; roughly 3600 kms off the coast of Chile. The island was originally inhabited @ 300-400AD by people of Polynesian descent who gave the island the name of Rapa Nui. The western world refers to it as Easter Island due to the fact that it was "discovered" by a Dutchman on Easter Sunday in 1722. Chile annexed the island in 1888; hence the Spanish translation- Isla de Pascua.

It has one airport, one gas station,




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and one town. What it does have in abundance are the moai, which are massive stone statues carved out of volcanic "tuff". Close to 900 remain scattered throughout the island; and nearly 400 of these can still be seen either standing or toppled beside their ahu or stone platform.

The statues were all carved out of the quarry on the hillside of the volcano known as Ranu Raraku. It is there that the people of Rapa Nui crafted the moai long ago, somewhere between the 13-16th centuries; most likely as a tribute to their ancestors. From the quarry they were transported all over the island and raised on stone platforms facing inland with the exception of one site, Ahu Akivi. Why the exception? This is unknown and only adds to the mystery. The statues are quite large and although most people think of them as heads, the majority of them have torsos. The heads themselves range in size but average approximately 13 feet, while a torso can average another 25 feet. The torsos have been buried over the years by time and the elements and

so what is visible to us are the heads. Massive in themselves, but when one considers that they are attached to an equally large torso, it defies comprehension as to how these were carved and transported all over the island. Maybe not everything needs to be explained. There is an old myth however that they just "walked".

There are several main sites to view the statues; on the slopes of Ranu Raraku; the stone platforms of Ahu Akivi; Ahu Nau Nau and Ahu Tongariki; as well as single moai found all over the island. The best way to get around to is to drive. Cars are no good. The roads are rough and washed out in areas and have potholes large enough to swallow a small vehicle! Travelling by jeep is the best way to go and as long as you watch out for the horses and cattle that are roaming about, it is perfectly safe. It is a breathtaking experience to come around a bend and see in the distance the platform of Tongariki with its 15 statues which are overlooked by the moai studded

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green slopes of the volcano, Ranu Raraku.

The journey to Easter Island is not an easy one. You must first fly to Santiago, Chile; and from there take the 5-6 hour flight out to the island. Once there the lodgings offered are decent, not luxurious but rustic; the vehicles are expensive to rent; and the meals and drinks are outrageously priced. But it is worth every penny! It may be small but it has a lot to offer. The island is also great for hiking, snorkelling, and diving. Easter Island is truly like no other place on earth. The opportunity to see these stone giants; to stand beside them; to have them tower over you; is unforgettable. It is a once in a lifetime experience.

If I have captured your sense of adventure, let me set you on the path to this amazing journey.

Call me at our Strathroy office: 519 245 2201 or email: monica@blowestravel.com

