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A Hiking Guide to Easter Island

By David Stanley

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Ask me which Pacific island has the most to offer hikers and I'll probably answer Easter Island. Here on an island 11 km wide and 23 km long you'll find nearly a thousand ancient Polynesian statues strewn along a powerfully beautiful coastline or littering the slopes of an extinct volcano. Getting there is easy as Easter Island can be included in the Oneworld Explorer airpass introduced on <http://www.southpacific.org/air.html> , and a fine selection of inexpensive places to stay and eat await you.

The legends of Easter Island have been recounted many times. What's less known is that the island's assorted wonders are easily accessible on foot from the comfort of the only settlement, Hanga Roa. Before setting out see the sights, however, visit the excellent archaeological museum next to Ahu Tahai on the north side of town (the term "ahu" refers to an ancient stone platform). Aside from the exhibits, the museum has maps which can help you plan your trip. An online map is available at http://www.mapsouthpacific.com/easter_island/

The first morning after arrival, I suggest you climb Easter Island's most spectacular volcano, Rano Kau, where Orongo, a major archaeological site, sits on the crater's rim. But rather than marching straight up the main road to the crater, look for the unmarked shortcut trail off a driveway to the right just past the forestry station south of town. It takes under two hours to cover the six km from Hanga Roa to Orongo, but bring along a picnic lunch and make a day of it. (If climbing a 316-meter hill sounds daunting, you can take a taxi to the summit for around US\$6 and easily walk back later in the day.) Once on top, you'll find hiking down into the colourful crater presents no difficulty. It may also look easy to go right around the crater rim, but only do so if you're a very experienced hiker and have a companion along as sheer 250-meter cliffs drop into the sea from the ridge.

Another day, rise early and take a taxi to lovely Anakena Beach at the end of the paved road on the north side of the island (you should pay under US\$10 for the 20 km). A few of the famous Easter Island statues have been restored at Anakena and you could go for a swim, although the main reason you've come is the chance to trek back to Hanga Roa around the road-free northwest corner of the island. You'll pass numerous abandoned statues lying facedown where they fell, and the only living creatures

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you're unlikely to encounter are the small brown hawks which will watch you intently from perches on nearby rocks. If you keep moving, you'll arrive back in town in five or six hours (but take adequate food, water, and sunscreen). This is probably the finest coastal walk in the South Pacific.

Almost as good is the hike along the south coast, although you're bound to run into other tourists here as a paved highway follows the shore. Begin early and catch a taxi to Rano Raraku, the stone quarry where all of the island's statues were born. This is easily the island's most spectacular sight with 397 statues in various stages of completion lying scattered around the crater. And each day large tour groups come to Rano Raraku to sightsee and have lunch. However, if you arrive before 9 am, you'll have the site to yourself for a few hours. When you see the first tour buses headed your way, hike down to Ahu Tongariki on the coast, where 15 massive statues were reerected in 1994. From here, just start walking back toward Hanga Roa (20 km) along the south coast. You'll pass many fallen statues

and enjoy some superb scenery. Whenever you get tired, simply go up onto the highway and stick out your thumb and you'll be back in town in a jiffy.

An outstanding 13-km walk begins at the museum and follows the west coast five km north to Ahu Tepeu. As elsewhere, keep your eyes peeled for banana trees growing out of the barren rocks as these often indicate caves you can explore. Inland from Ahu Tepeu is one of the island's most photographed sites, Ahu Akivi, with seven statues restored in 1960. From here an interior farm road runs straight back to town (study the maps at the museum carefully, as you'll go far out of your way if you choose the wrong road here).

A shorter hike takes you up Puna Pau, a smaller crater which provided stone for the red topknots that originally crowned the island's statues. There's a great view of Hanga Roa from the three crosses on an adjacent hill and you can easily do it all in half a day. A different walk takes you right around the 3,353-meter airport runway, which crosses the island just south of town. Near the east end of the runway is Ahu Vinapu with perfectly fitted monolithic stonework bearing an uncanny resemblance to similar constructions in Peru.

Easter Island's moderate climate and scant vegetation make for easy cross country hiking, and you won't find yourself blocked by fences and private property signs very often. You could also tour the island by mountain bike, available from several locations at US\$10 a day. If you surf or scuba dive, there are many opportunities here. A minimum of five days are needed to see the main sights of Easter Island, and two weeks would be far better. The variety of things to see and do will surprise you, and you'll be blessed with some unforgettable memories.

David Stanley is the author of Moon Handbooks South Pacific <http://www.southpacific.org/pacific.html> which has a chapter on Easter Island. His online guide to Easter Island may be perused at http://www.southpacific.org/text/finding_easter.html

Tips For Buying Easter Lilies

By Gray Rollins

Give the gift of Easter lilies

Easter lilies are one of the most popular of all holiday plants. They are gorgeous little flowers that will bring joy into the home of anyone who is lucky enough to receive them. If your home needs a little oomph this year then pick up some Easter lilies and if you are invited to an Easter dinner or Easter party, consider bringing along some Easter lilies to give as a hostess gift. They will simply light up the room!

What makes Easter lilies so wonderful is their complete versatility. You can grow your Easter lilies in your home for as long as you want, you do not ever have to plant them outside if you don't want to. But if you do decide that your garden would be better for the Easter lilies then you can simply plant them in the garden when the weather gets a little warmer. They will change the entire look and feel of your garden. They will add a light and airy feeling filled with love and hope. That is the magic of Easter lilies and why so many people have fallen in love with their lovely little trumpets over the years.

So how do you choose the Easter lilies that are right for you or someone close to you? It is easy, follow the steps below and always come away from the store with the perfect Easter lilies for any occasion.

Look for lots of healthy green leaves.

The more leaves that the Easter lilies have on the plant the healthier they are going to be. These leaves should be plentiful all around the plant and should go right down to where the Easter lilies meet the potting soil in the pot.

Do not choose the Easter lilies with the already blooming flowers.

Many people make the mistake of choosing the Easter lilies that already have many open buds. Try to choose one with a couple opened and even more unopened. This way you will be able to enjoy your Easter lilies much longer. If you buy them already bloomed in a couple of days those will have died and there will be no buds to take their place.

Choose the Easter lilies that look good on all sides

Try to choose the Easter lilies that look just as pretty from the back as they do from the front. This is the best way to choose the Easter lilies that are right for you this year.

Gray Rollins is a featured writer for

. For more info about Easter lilies, and

more visit



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