

Easter Island (Rapa Nui)

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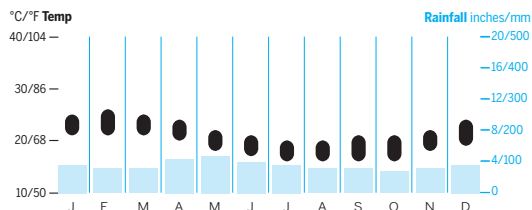
Why Go?

Easter Island (Rapa Nui) to its native Polynesian inhabitants is like nowhere else on earth. Historically intriguing, culturally compelling and scenically magical, this tiny speck of land looks like it's fallen off another planet. In this blissfully isolated, unpolished gem it's hard to feel connected even to Chile, over 3700km to the east, let alone the wider world. It's just you, the indigo depths and the strikingly enigmatic *moai* (giant statues) scattered amid an eerie landscape.

When the *moai* have finished working their magic on you, there's a startling variety (for such a small island) of adventure options available. Diving, snorkelling and surfing are fabulous. On land, there's no better ecofriendly way to experience the island's savage beauty than on foot, from a bike saddle or on horseback. But if all you want to do is recharge the batteries, a couple of superb expanses of white sand beckon.

Although Easter Island is world famous and visitors are on the increase, everything remains small and personable – it's all about eco-travel.

When to Go Easter Island



Jan–Mar Expect high prices and scarce accommodation, especially during Tapati Rapa Nui festival.

Jul–Aug A bit chilly. It's not the best time for the beach, but is ideal for hiking or horse riding.

Apr–Jun & Oct–Dec The shoulder season is not a bad time to visit; the climate is fairly temperate.

Connections

Short of sailing your own boat, the only way to and from Easter Island is by air. Flights between Easter Island and Santiago are frequent and last about five hours. There are also less frequent flights to/from Lima (Peru) and to/from Pape'ete (French Polynesia). Public transport is nonexistent on the island. Private minibuses, rental cars and bicycles are the most convenient ways to get around.

ITINERARIES

Four Days

Start the day by visiting the Museo Antropológico Sebastián Englert for some historical background. Next, take a half-day tour to Rano Kau and Orongo ceremonial village and soak up the lofty views. On day two take a full-day tour to marvel at Rano Raraku and Ahu Tongariki. On your return to Hanga Roa head straight to an atmosphere-laden bar on Av Atamu Tekena for the night vibe. Day three is all about Hanga Roa. Hit the *mercado* (market) to put a dent in the wallet and amble down Av Te Pito o Te Henua to enjoy the sunset at Ahu Tahai. Attend a traditional dance show later in the evening. Day four should see you lazing the day away at Anakena beach.

One Week

Follow the four-day agenda then make the most of the island's outdoor adventures. Book a horse-riding excursion along the north coast, spend a day diving off Motu Nui, scramble up and down Maunga Terevaka, and explore Península Poike.

Sustainable Travel

Easter Island is a superb open-air museum, but it's under threat due to the growing number of visitors. A few rules:

- » Don't walk on the *ahu*, as they are revered by locals as burial sites.
- » It's illegal to remove or relocate rocks from any of the archaeological structures.
- » Don't touch petroglyphs, as they're very fragile.
- » Stay on designated paths to limit erosion.
- » Motor vehicles are not allowed on Península Poike or Terevaka.
- » Don't pitch your tent in the park.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Chilean peso (CH\$)

Language Spanish, Rapa Nui

Mobile phones Local SIM cards are available and can be used with unlocked GSM phones. Roaming agreements with most operators.

Money A few ATMs

Visas Not required for visitors from most Western countries

Fast Facts

- » **Country code** 56 32
- » **Land area** 117 sq km
- » **Main city** Hanga Roa
- » **Population** 6700

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	CH\$517
Canada	C\$1	CH\$496
Europe	€1	CH\$641
Japan	¥100	CH\$642
New Zealand	NZ\$1	CH\$404
UK	UK£1	CH\$795
USA	US\$1	CH\$509

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » **Car rental** CH\$35,000
- » **Guesthouse** CH\$40,000
- » **Island tour** CH\$25,000
- » **Pisco sour** CH\$2500
- » **Two-course dinner** CH\$15,000