



## CENTRAL SOUTH AMERICA

# Adventurous spirit of Easter Island

By Judy Koutsky | Jun 11, 2015



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For adventure travelers, Easter Island (indigenous name Rapa Nui) is on the short list of must-visit destinations.

Perhaps because getting there requires some patience and persistence (LAN flies from New York to Santiago, Chile, about 11 hours, and then on to Easter Island, another six hours), the destination sees only about 50,000 visitors a year (which is 10 times the population of the island).

Geographically it sits in Polynesia but is part of Chile, which lies 2,200 miles away.

So what makes this hard-to-reach island so worth the visit?

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In part, it's the exclusivity: it's one of the least-visited archaeological sites in the world, and its isolated status, in part, has helped preserve the moai statues.

Reaching over 13 feet in height and weighing over 14 tons, these "Easter Island heads," as they are often called, are scattered along the coast and interior and date back to the 13th century.

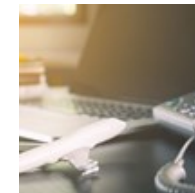
Starbucks, McDonald's and chain hotels are nowhere to be seen. Beachfront property is given to parks, playgrounds, mom-and-pop restaurants and dive shops. And while tourism is economically essential to this island, touristy it is not.

Instead, the focus is on nature, outdoor beauty and adventure activities like hiking, biking and diving. The three volcanoes on the island make for wonderful hiking opportunities.

In addition to the rugged, craggy coastline (lively crystal-blue waves crash against the volcanic rock, making it a sensory overload), hiking trails often lead past the moai,



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their oversized faces and bodies guarding the island.

Surfing here is also some of the best in the world, as is diving, due to the water's clarity.

ATV riding is another way to experience the magic of the island and see some of the 800 moai that dot the topography.

While most of the day is spent outside exploring the island, finding the right place to relax at night is equally important. **Hangaroa Eco Village & Spa** is a five-star resort that's both luxurious and environmentally sustainable.

The property was designed to pay homage to the ancient village of Orongo, which can be visited on top of the Rano Kau volcano, on the western part of the island.

Local materials were used in the creation of the hotel; we especially loved the bathtubs, which are all handmade (using local clay) and take two weeks to create.

But one of the best parts of the property is the location. It sits right on the coast, so whether you're having a cup of coffee on your terrace, having lunch at the outdoor restaurant or enjoying a drink in the evening, the views are stunning.

Plus, the hotel has a partnership with **Mahinatur**, a local ground operator with extensive experience arranging day trips on the island.

All excursions – biking, hiking, walking, diving, snorkeling, ATV riding and horseback riding – can be booked through the hotel via Mahinatur.

Visit [chile.travel/en/where-to-go/islands/easter-island](http://chile.travel/en/where-to-go/islands/easter-island).



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