

Subject/ Area: Easter Island – the easy way

Which one of us, cruising around the world, hasn't been tempted one day to visit the famed Easter Island? We certainly were attracted by the island, but the bad reputation for safety and comfort at anchor made us abandon the idea to stop there on our way to French Polynesia. Later on, while in Tahiti, we found an easier and safer way to visit the island: leave your boat in Papeete and fly to Easter Island!

We contacted Tahiti Nui Travel agency in Papeete < sales@tahitinitravel.com > or (689) 54 02 06 (Tatiana) and bought our airline tickets from them. They also offer special discount airfare/accommodation packages from time to time. Since Lan Chile airline flies between Papeete and Easter Island direct, twice a week, you can stay 3, 4 or 7 days there. Prices on Easter Island are so low compared with French Polynesia that it's nice to indulge oneself in the best restaurants and accommodations! Our favorite restaurants were: Pea restaurant next to the harbor, Kopakabana & Iorana in town, the restaurants of the Iorana Hotel and Hanga Roa Hotel. We found top accommodations at the Taha Tai and Iorana hotels and our favorites guesthouses were Cabana Vaianny (say hi to Theresa), Hotel Pedro Atan, Vai Moana cottages, Hotel Victoria (we tried a different place each night for the fun of it!).

The much fresher climate is also great! We went in mid-June and the "winter" wx wasn't as cold as we had been told. It was similar to winter in So. California. We even camped one night at the famous Anakena beach and were not cold (take some warm clothes: wind-breaker/rain jacket, lightweight polar fleece and socks just in case!). The ubiquitous hot showers (found even in the most modest guesthouse) and the light comforters on the beds just hit the spot, and made for great sleeping!

You can get inexpensive tours around this fascinating historic place, we had good experiences with Kia-Koe tours (see Victoriano, the manager, he is very helpful). We also rented a quad from Sergio Lopez (55 10 46) or you can get a car to tour the island on your own (with an inexpensive personal guide if you like)! For you scuba divers, go with Michel at Orca Dive Center and explore the unique undersea world. Do not forget to get a bottle of Pisco, the national liquor, from Florencine at 'Te pito te henua' (the navel of the world) grocery store. We won't go into details about all the interesting places to visit as you can get all the info from the travel brochures and plenty of other sources. All that we will say is that it IS fascinating, and that there is much to discover beyond the already-interesting standard tours.

We are very glad we did visit Easter Island this way. We didn't have to suffer uncomfortable anchorages, or feel nervous visiting while the boat was unattended! It was a nice vacation from hot, humid, expensive Tahiti and the best part, is that the height of the cruising season here, is the low season on Easter Island. There were low season airfare and packages in June and Sept. We experienced great people, fascinating tours, and excellent food and accommodations at a very reasonable cost without the tourist crowds! We may do it again!

When we came back to Tahiti, we spoke to several cruisers who went later the same way we did ... and everybody came back very pleased! Plus some got a new tourist visa here in Polynesia when they flew back!

Check on < www.noonsite.com/EasterIsland > for details about hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, activities and general information. Also, if you plan to go there with your boat, I talked directly to the Port Governor and posted plenty of info about customs, immigration, harbor, anchorages, wx info, etc ... on Noonsite. If you don't know yet, you can get all that information sent to you via winlink, sailmail or your shore email address free!

And remember to let the local businesses that you patronize know that you are a cruiser, even if you come by air, so they realize our impact on the local economy! Each of us gives an image of cruisers to the local population! We are truly ambassadors for future cruisers passing thru!

January 2003

Luc & Jackie on s/v Sloepmouche