

1/28/07 Day 14 – Easter Island – Sunday 28 Jan 2007: The ship arrived about 7am while it was still dark and anchored in open water off of the Easter Island town of Hanga Roa. It was still dark because we were on US Eastern Standard Time even though our longitude was about the same as Denver CO, that is, Mountain Time Zone. It soon got light and four of the lifeboats, also called tender boats, were lowered into the water so that they could carry passengers ashore. About 9am passengers started boarding the tender boats and going ashore. We had heard that rough seas prevented tender boat service and shore visits in 40 to 50 percent of the cruise ship visits here. We were thankful that the weather and seas were calm so that a visit ashore was possible.



This was our first view of Easter Island from the ship's anchorage. The town of Hanga Roa was visible at the shoreline.



Passengers boarded the tender boats by way of a hatch on a lower deck and a ladder leading to the boat.

Here is a view inside of a tender boat loaded with passengers headed for Easter Island.



The tender boats landed at an open, rather makeshift pier area in the town of Hanga Roa where vendors had set up tents and

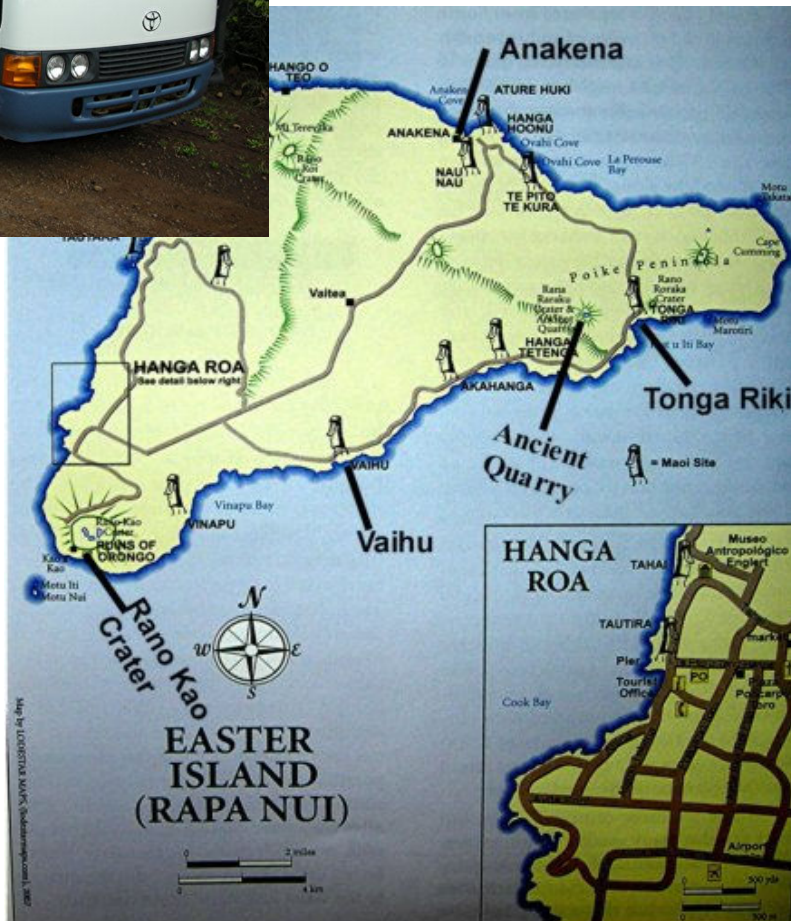
their wares were displayed. The minivans and taxis were lined up to take us on our tours.



The pier area is at the end of an airport runway that receives several commercial flights each week from Chile and Tahiti. Most people went on organized tours purchased from the ship but some went independently. We took an organized tour in a minivan and our guide's name was Jose.



Jose our guide, with Barbara beside our minivan. We were pleased with the way Jose presented the sites that we visited on Easter Island.



Easter Island: Easter Island, which has a Polynesian name of Rapa Nui, is triangular in

shape with the base of the triangle about 12 miles long and the height about 6 miles. Here is a map of Easter Island showing the major points of interest. The island has three large extinct volcanoes and many smaller volcano cones. The volcanic activity produced the porous and relatively soft stone material that was used in making the large carvings known as Moai (pronounced "mo-eye"). The Moai carvings have fascinated people since they were first reported back in the 1700s. Although the Moai were the primary focus of our visit we started the tour with a visit to the Rano Kao volcano crater at the southern tip of the island.



Rano Kao Crater: The Rano Kao Crater is over a mile wide and contains a fresh water lake that serves as the water source for the town of Hanga Roa.

We had read of how Easter Island was deforested by the original settlers. We were pleased to see that forests had returned to Easter Island. There were trees growing all along the roads and we went through several Eucalyptus groves

with very large trees. The guide said that the early settlers got too much blame for deforestation. He put the blame on a Polynesian rat that was brought to the island and ate the seeds of the original palm trees. The rats multiplied so rapidly that they wiped out the palm trees in a couple hundred years.

Moai Carvings: After seeing the Rano Kao Crater we proceeded to our main objective of checking out the Moai. Jose explained that a Moai carving represented a person that was important and did much good for his people. After the person died the Moai was carved in an attempt to preserve the presence of the person and continue whatever good the person brought to the community. The Moai were placed on a foundation, called an Ahu. The Ahu was a platform about 5 to 10 feet high and usually made up of carefully laid rock boulders. We were cautioned not to walk on the Ahu. Although our guide said there was not religious worship of the Moai or Ahu, it sounded very much like ancestor worship to us. The venerated person's body was not buried at the Moai site. The body usually ended up being cremated but it was not uncommon for the skull to be placed somewhere near the Moai. Here Jose dispelled a commonly held notion that the Moai stood looking out to sea as sort of sentinels. He said that the Moai were placed facing the community where the people lived. In many cases the Moai faced inland with their backs to the sea. In the photos most of us have seen the Moai are facing the ocean but they also were facing the community which happens to be between the Moai and the ocean. Since

evidence of the community is long gone it appears to us the Moai were positioned specifically to face the ocean. At the quarry where most of the Moai were carved, they are facing the sea looking out over about a mile of coastal land, presumably where the people lived. However, most of the Moai we saw today did not face the ocean. Around 900 Moai have been found on the island and about 600 have been restored or otherwise made accessible for viewing.

Vaihu: The first Moai site we visited was Vaihu on the East coast of the island. This site provides a view of what happened to the Moai as the native culture deteriorated during the 1700 and 1800s. There were no standing Moai at this site. About five large (15 foot long) Moai had been pulled over and lay face down in the rock rubble.

We are looking toward the ocean in this view at the Vaihu site. The remains of Moai that have fallen down are behind Barbara. To her left the backside of a Moai can be seen, head down and rear end up.



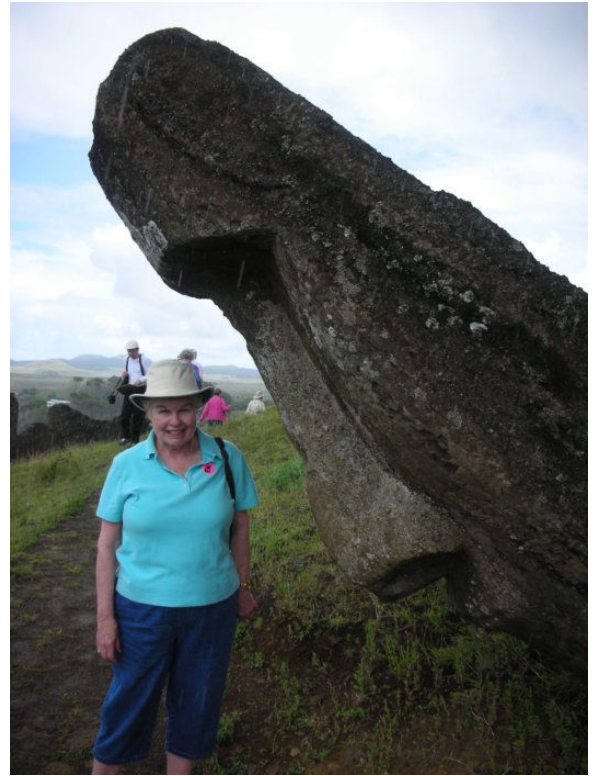
Several large cylinders of porous red lava like the one shown here were strewn around the Vaihu site. These were the hats that were placed on some of the Moai that can be seen face down in the background.



Our guide is seen here explaining how the porous, relatively soft volcanic stone he is touching was selected at the quarry and then used to carve the main body and head of the Moai. This piece of stone was probably part of a Moai that was broken into pieces at the Viahu site. Note the large red stone cylinder "hat" in the background. The carving tool was probably a piece of black obsidian flint stone available from some volcanic site on the island.

Ancient Quarry and Rana Raraku Crater:

Next we went to the Rana Raraku Crater and ancient quarry where Moai were carved. This place was mobbed by tourists but was probably the most intriguing. A large Moai was seen partially completed but still attached to the side of the crater. Unfortunately, that carving is not obvious in the photo below. Many Moai 10 to 15 feet tall dot the quarry hillside. People could walk around the Moai and even touch them, although we were warned by the Park Service not to do that. This scene reminded us of Stonehenge in England where 20 years ago tourists could meander amongst the huge stones. However, with the surge in tourist traffic to Stonehenge, people are now kept at a distance from the stones to prevent damage. It probably will not be long before the Easter Island folks will also have to tighten control of tourist traffic through the Moai sites. We feel fortunate to visit at this time.



Of course, we couldn't miss this opportunity to show that Barbara's Oak Ridge Library Card has visited another part of the world.



This is a fallen Moai with the quarry hillside, dotted with Moai shown in the background. The shoulder and head of the fallen Moai are to the right of Barbara.



While at the Quarry we happened upon a family from Tennessee that is an active contributor to the Cruise Critic (www.cruisecritic.com) message board. They are also fellow passengers on the world cruise.

Fellow Tennessee cruisers and Cruise Critic contributors (Swimdive of Tenn).
Left to Right, Kathy, Drew, Gail, Matt, and TENNcruiser Barbara.

Tonga Riki: The next site we visited was Tonga Riki where a massive tsunami had caused a lot of damage to a collection of Moai. Subsequent to the tsunami there had been a tremendous effort to restore the site to its original ancient condition.

Here is a view of the restored Moai at Tonga Riki. Note that the Moai are facing inland, presumably toward the village where the people lived.



A red stone hat had been placed on one Moai. Several large red stone cylinders were strewn around the area. Jose said that more money was needed to fund placing of these hats on the statues and further restoration of the site.

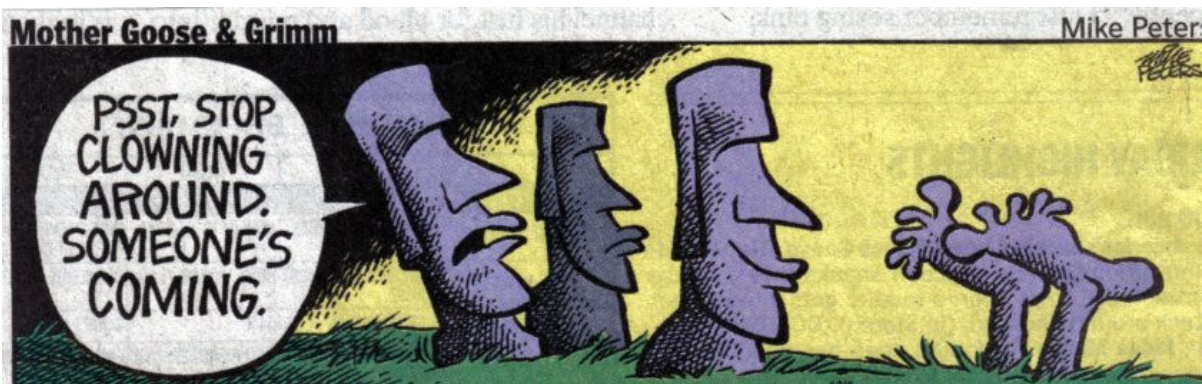
Our guide said that after the statues were erected in their final position, the deep eye sockets were carved out and white coral stone was inserted to represent the whites of their eyes. Flint or other black stone was

embedded in the white coral to represent the eye pupil. The Moai at the ancient quarry we had visited earlier did not have eye sockets carved in, presumably because they were not in their final location. The standing Moai here at Tonga Riki had deep eye sockets as illustrated by the Moai shown below.

The coral eyes are presumed to have been destroyed during the centuries of desecration by jealous neighbors, vandals and erosion by weather. According to our guide, Jose, there was historical reference to "putting in the eyes" of erected Moai. There was a presumption that reference simply meant that the eye sockets were carved in. Fairly recently one example of what could be a coral white eye was found. It seems a bit odd that all the other coral eyes that presumably existed could be so thoroughly destroyed. It also seems suspicious that the street vendors of small carved Moai have uniformly adopted the white eyed version of the Moai which sell at a more brisk pace and higher price than the more representative blank staring Moai.



At this point some humor should be injected. Thanks to our friend Linda Parks who made this cartoon part of her Bon Voyage good wishes. As far as we could tell Moai never had feet.



Anakena: We got back on the minivans and traveled on to the Anakena Cove where there was more restoration of Moai statues and also the tour company had set up tents for a luncheon. At this site there were four complete Moai with hats and three partial Moai positioned nicely on an Ahu as shown to the right.



At this site in the 1950s the Polynesian research project headed up by Thor Heyerdahl sponsored the first restoration of a Moai. Jose said that they did a terrible job of restoration but at least Heyerdahl sparked enough interest in restoration that later very good archeological work was carried out. The Moai restored by Heyerdahl, shown on the left, was standing by itself near the much larger series of Moai shown above.

We had arrived at Anakena Cove with at least 8 other minivans loaded with cruise passengers. We all took a quick tour of the Moai sites and then adjourned to the nicely arranged luncheon in the



tents that can be seen in the above photo. The setting for the luncheon was beautiful. In addition to the grove of palm trees there was a white coral sand beach and turquoise water cove where swimmers were enjoying themselves.



We were able to catch some other www.cruisecritic.com contributors in unguarded moments as they enjoyed their lunch in this beautiful setting.

Jack and Evelyn (travel2much)





Don and Gloria (Don1 from Florida)

And here to the right are Canadian friends, Richard and Sandy, who are neighbors on the Amsterdam.



Back to the ship: Back to the ship! This call reminds Orlin of Navy days. Too bad we have to go back to the ship after such a nice day on shore. We took the only paved road on Easter Island back to Hanga Roa. It goes through the center of the island and a nice grove of eucalyptus trees. We missed the main part of town and went directly to the landing where the tender boats come in. The vendor stalls were waiting for us. We picked up a few more tee shirts and miniature Morai (with white coral eyes) for souvenirs and then caught the tender back to the ship. Even though the seas were



calm the tenders bounced around a lot as they came up against the platform for entering the Amsterdam. The crew was great in helping all of us exit the tender. Here is what the ship looks like from the viewpoint of the tender boat. Pretty imposing!

We made it back on board safely and back to our stateroom. What a day! Everything went well and we saw first hand the unique Moai of Easter Island.