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Easter Island (Rapa Nui) – Birding the Navel of the World! 2021

March 3 – 7, 2021

**Guided by Josie Nahoe Mulloy and
Ricardo Matus**

May be combined with Chile – Argentina, Birds & Wine!



Ahu Tongakiri – perhaps the best known image of the island.

What was that? Navel of the World? Yes, Rapa Nui or Easter Island is known by the locals as the Navel of the World. Why? Well, it is in the middle of nowhere for one, also even historically the islanders thought their island was unusual. There are plenty of

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islands in the South Pacific, but nothing comes close to Easter Island – it is absolutely unique! It is the only Polynesian Island where Spanish is spoken for starters, as it is considered a part of Chile. But it is also an island that for many has been steeped in mystery. All around its shores are big giant heads, known as Moai, each representing the soul of an ancestor and set there to defend a family plot of land. But most are toppled, and the quarry where they were built exists and it appears eerily as if the artisans dropped their tools and just left...with everything remaining frozen in time. What happened? Well, warfare broke out due to their over-extending the natural resources, and their culture was nearly wiped out. Fortunately, Rapa Nui culture remains and it is going strong, and many amazing Moai remain as well, of various periods and forms, as well as some fantastic architectural work. All of that in nearly the most isolated island in the world, astounding!



Some of the Moai truly express feeling. They are fantastic pieces of art.

This is also the land of the Birdman Cult, from the later period of the history of the Rapanui. Young men would climb down a steep cliff swim to seabird nesting islands and wait until the “Manutara” laid its egg. This bird, assumed to be the Sooty Tern now, but perhaps was originally the Great Frigatebird. Once an egg was laid, the first young man

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to return to the main island with an unbroken egg won the competition for the year. The priest he represented would then become ruler of the island for that year. Well, these seabird nesting islands are still there, and for a long time it was thought that most of the seabirds were gone. Fortunately they are not! Alvaro was involved in research here that showed that populations of many and some new seabirds remain on the islets (known as "Motus"). Not only that, now a total of six species of *Pterodroma* petrel are known to nest here; perhaps it is now the most accessible place on earth to see that many *Pterodroma* in one go! Most common are the Herald and Kermadec, with lesser numbers of the Phoenix and the endangered Henderson petrels. Most recently, Murphy's Petrel has been recorded as a breeder as well, and now Black-winged Petrel. We have a great chance to see four of these species, perhaps five. Add to this Red-tailed and White-tailed tropicbirds, Masked Booby, Grey Noddy, Brown Noddy, Christmas Shearwater and Great Frigatebird and you have a heck of a good bird list for an island that is supposed to "have no birds." The land birds are all introduced from the mainland, but it includes the Chilean endemic Chilean Tinamou, which can be relatively easy to see here.



Surise and a Moai.

The birds are fantastic, and you can get good looks at them as they are nesting in the area. But this is the icing on the cake, for what is amazing to go and see is the island, its people and amazing culture and history. Even those who are not very spiritual come back in awe; it is truly a magical place. But a real place, and one that draws you. For me, I must admit that on my first trip I did not expect that it was going to live up to its fame. Now, I find that it is among my favorite places in the world, and I long to go back. The island pulls like you would not believe. It is an utterly charming place, with nice people, and it is small enough that you really feel like you get to see the whole place.

You will understand why so many people for so many years have been absolutely enchanted by this speck of land rising from the middle of nowhere in the ocean! Come



experience it for yourself, either as a standalone trip or as an add-on to Chile-Argentina Birds & Wine.

The Sites We Visit

Rapa Nui — On the main island the focus will be on the archaeological sites, although birds do show up here and there. All land birds on Easter Island are now introduced from the Chilean mainland. Perhaps the most interesting introduction here is of the Chilean Tinamou, a Chilean endemic, which is doing quite well on the island. We will also see Common Diuca Finch and Chimango Caracara. Some seabirds may show up, but more so on the motus (see next section). Our exploration of the island will cover all of the important archaeological sites. The island is of course known for its Moai, the giant heads, which in fact are full human figures of which the head is the most prominent part. They are thought to be images of ancestors, in a sense deified ancestors, which were set up to watch over and protect villages. There are nearly 900 Moai, although most lay toppled or still in construction. The first site where we shall learn of the Moai is **Ahu Tahai**, where we can see an early period restored site (restored by William Mulloy, grandfather of our local guide Josie!). Here the Moai has the coral eyes, which are missing on most, as well as the red topknot. One unusual ahu is **Ahu Akivi**, another restored site, which is inland rather than on the coast as are almost all other Ahus. This site was also restored by William Mulloy in 1960. **Ahu Vinapu** is not visually stunning, but there is more here than meets the eye. The Moai were toppled a long time ago, but the size of the stone bases of the Ahu is impressive and likely meant it was among the more important Ahu on the island. But what has intrigued people is the stonework. Here huge stones have been worked to fit together almost perfectly. This fantastic fit of large stones has been compared to the feats of the Inca, and was one of the elements of “proof” that Thor Heyerdahl proposed to show that it was South Americans who had voyaged here and given rise to this culture. This theory is now disregarded; in fact the opposite may be true, that Polynesians reached South America! Many visitors to Easter Island lament the fact that it is not the classic South Pacific Island with big sandy beaches and coconut trees, as the island is of volcanic descent. But on **Anakena Beach**, you do get a bit of the sun and the sand! Apart from the gorgeous scenery here, the Ahu here holds some very interesting Moai, where you can still see how the original, newly carved Moai likely were patterned throughout their backs, probably mimicking classic tattoo patterns worn by the locals. **Ahu Tongakiri** is perhaps the most famous of the Ahu, where 15 Moai stand on the most impressive Ahu on the island. The tsunami of 1960 destroyed this site, but it was restored in the 1990s by a Chilean Archaeological team, with the help of the Japanese. A site that is amazing to see is **Rano Raraku**, this is the extinct volcanic cone where the Moai were carved. A visit here allows you to understand the level of work that was associated with creating the Moai. There are many places where you can see how the

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Moai were created, and how exactly they extracted each from the rock. Here we will get a sense of the amazing feat that it was to both create these huge stone entities, and then carry them miles from the single quarry to all corners of the island, and finally to erect them! It is no wonder that Rapa Nui has been shrouded in mystery, it is hard to believe that people of a “primitive” civilization were able to undergo this amazing feat, out in the middle of the Pacific. At Rano Raraku we may see Red-tailed Tropicbirds coming to their nesting sites on the rim of the volcano. Finally there is the ceremonial grounds of **Orongo**, where the birdman cult flourished. This is a later stage in the history of Rapa Nui, after they had ceased to produce Moai. The birdman cult is right up our alley, we will learn of the details of what happened when we are there, for it is an amazing story. It is particularly powerful as you are there, watching the cliffs of the extinct volcano, the ceremonial village and while overlooking the gorgeous seabird islands known as the motus.



Henderson Petrel - a highly endangered seabird.

The Motus – There are three small islands that Orongo overlooks, and these are known as motus in Rapa Nui. The nearest is motu is Motu Kau Kau, a tall sea stack; then Motu Iti, and Motu Nui. Nui means large, iti means small; and it is on the larger island that many seabirds breed. It is treacherous to land on the island, and not possible without special permits. However, what we will do is go there on a boat and circumnavigate the island to see the breeding seabirds flying over. This is particularly fantastic in the late

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afternoon when more and more seabirds congregate on the islands. A few years back I was here and did one of the first surveys of the birds of the motus. The available information at that time was that there were few if any remaining seabirds here, that in fact many had been extirpated. The truth was quite the opposite, many seabirds remain and the diversity is great. At that time I confirmed that the Phoenix Petrel is found here, and discovered this as a site of occurrence of the endangered Henderson Petrel. The more common petrels which are here are the Kermadec and Herald petrels. Along side these birds we may see Christmas Shearwaters, Grey Noddy, Brown Noddy, Great Frigatebird, Masked Booby, White and Red-tailed tropicbirds and perhaps a surprise or two! A few years ago it was confirmed that Murphy's Petrel also breeds on Rapa Nui, and in 2013 Pedro Lazo and I confirmed that Black-winged Petrel were attempting to nest in the motus, meaning there are 6 species of breeding *Pterodroma* petrel here!!! Where else on earth can you see 5 breeding gadfly petrels? It is quite astounding for a place where the seabirds were thought to be gone.



A petrel chase - Herald Petrel after a Kermadec Petrel.



About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is a tour of Easter Island with a focus on the history and archaeology as well as the birds. Easter Island is not well known for its birding, and we certainly are paving the way to putting it on the map as a must see seabirding destination (Alvaro was the first guide to offer a birding oriented tour on Easter Island). However, the birds are the “icing” on what is really the star of the show here, the island, its culture, history and the amazing Moai. Although we are likely to see practically all of the birds to be found on the island, much of the time we will be visiting archaeological sites which make Rapa Nui like no other place on earth. So the pacing will definitely be relaxed, almost a “tourist pace” although we shall be squeezing in at least one evening boat trip to satisfy our birding urges. There are no real early morning wake ups on this trip, and it certainly will not be tiring but relaxing and extremely educational. Although Rapa Nui is a volcanic island with many hills and extinct volcanic cones, we will be mostly on level ground. Keep in mind that some of the ground can be uneven due to the nature of lava rock. We may choose to visit some of the famous caves on the islands, actually old lava tubes, and these may be a bit more slick and with more difficult footing. These visits will be short, and you are free to remain above ground and take in the sun and the ocean breezes instead.

The tour includes a boat trip to the Motus, which is of course optional if you choose to remain either on shore or back at the hotel. This is not a long trip, and the motus are not far from the main island; although if windy it can be a bit of a wet although warm trip. We shall go there on a larger fiberglass fishing boat with outboard motors; these boats tend to have an awning to keep the sun exposure down, but they are not covered boats. Although we are not heading out into the ocean per se, and will be by land at all times, the swell here has little to nothing to stop it as Easter Island is all by itself in the middle of the Pacific. As such, there may be a bit of up and down on the boat. We do not expect storms at this time of year, but boat trips will be cancelled if the sea conditions become rough. The boat trip will take approximately 2 – 3 hours, maybe a little more.

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Motus - from Orongo.

Itinerary for Easter Island – Birding the Navel of the World

March 3, 2021 (Day 1) – Arrival in Santiago. Most of you will be finishing the Birds and Wine tour. If not, please plan on being in Santiago by noon or early afternoon; we shall be meeting up for dinner. You may want to rest up after a long day of travel, and do ask us if you would like to arrive a day earlier for even more rest and to allow for any unforeseen situations such as lost luggage. Night in Santiago.

March 4, 2021 (Day 2) – Fly to Rapa Nui. The flight to Rapa Nui takes over five hours, the island is over 2000 miles from mainland Chile, it is truly an incredibly isolated place. Once we arrive we will be greeted by our local guide Josie Nahoe, we will get settled in our hotel and in the afternoon we shall visit our first Moai. Night in Hanga Roa.

March 5, 2021 (Day 3) - Archaeological sites. Josie and Ricardo will plan a route today which will lead us through some of the amazing archaeological sites of Rapa Nui. We will see a bird or two as we go, but this day will be devoted mainly to seeing the Moai and learning the history of the island and its people. In the afternoon we shall take a short boat out to the motus in the evening to see our first petrels! Night in Hanga Roa.

March 6, 2021 (Day 4) – More culture and archaeology. We will continue today visiting various sites of interest, likely focusing on the north end of the island with Rano

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Raraku and Ahu Akiviri. In the afternoon if we are weathered out on day 3 we can try again for the seabirds this afternoon. Night in Hanga Roa.

March 7, 2021 (Day 5) – Museum, shopping, and departure. This morning we will visit the great archaeological museum, as well as have some time for shopping for souvenirs. Our departure for Santiago will be in the early afternoon arriving in the evening.



Moai at Rano Raraku

Your Guides

Josie Nahoe Mulloy was born in the United States but returned home some while in her 20s. She is Rapa Nui, and grand-daughter of William Mulloy, the archaeologist who restored some of the most important sites on the island in the 50s to 70s. Her connection to the island, knowledge of the archaeology and background story to some of the archaeologists themselves makes for a fascinating perspective. Being from the US, she also is able to bridge languages and cultures in a way that few people can. It is absolutely a treat to be out on the island with Josie as your guide!

Ricardo Matus is a naturalist born and raised in Punta Arenas, Chile, on the shores of the Straits of Magellan. As a youngster, Ricardo became interested in birds and marine mammals and started reading about them and examining the skin collection at the Instituto de la Patagonia (a research center now part of the local university). He is widely

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regarded as the expert on the birds of Patagonian Chile! Ricardo participates in research and conservation projects locally in the southern extreme of Patagonia. Most recently, his work has focused on the breeding biology and conservation of the Ruddy-headed Goose as well as the wintering ecology and banding of Red Knots at Bahia Lomas. As an artist he paints birds in watercolors and has illustrated scientific papers and a book on the birds of southernmost Chile (*Aves de Magallanes*). He has been guiding in Patagonia for over 20 years. Ricardo lives still in Punta Arenas with his wife, Olivia, and their sons, Alonso and Antonio.

Financial Information

FEE: \$2100 from Santiago (flight to Easter Island not included, see below).

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Nov. 3, 2020

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$390

LIMIT: 12 (minimum of 6). We may be able to run the trip with fewer than 6, but may have to charge a slight small group surcharge.

NOTE – The flight to Easter Island from Santiago is not included. As of Oct 2019, the flight costs approximately \$800, although pricing varies. At times it can be cheaper if bought as part of the international ticket from the US if you are flying LATAM.

Additional Information

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid three months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Chile. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Chilean consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or phone or e-mail Alvaro's Adventures and we can look this up. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: If you are not participating on the Birds and Wine trip, please plan to arrive in Santiago by early afternoon on March 3, 2021. Only LATAM flies to Easter Island, with a daily flight from Santiago; you will need to be booked on the morning flight to Easter Island on March 4, 2021. Return flight should be on March 7, 2021. You may choose to extend your stay on Easter Island, something that we can help arrange for. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently

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subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$2100 for one person in double occupancy from Santiago. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 4, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on Day 5, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the two tour leaders.

The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Chile, or the flight from Santiago to Easter Island, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$390. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by Nov 3, 2020. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: This is a non-smoking tour.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to

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tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

Alvaro's Adventures's is a Registered Seller of Travel in the State of California (CST # 2105497). Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. This ensures your right to a prompt refund: Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where the passenger is not at fault and has not canceled in violation of any terms and conditions previously clearly and conspicuously disclosed and agreed to by the passenger, all sums paid to the seller of travel for services not provided will be promptly paid to the passenger, unless the passenger advises the seller of travel in writing, after cancellation. This provision does not apply where the seller of travel has remitted the payment to another registered wholesale seller of travel or a carrier, without obtaining a refund, and where the wholesaler or provider defaults in providing the agreed-upon transportation or service. In this situation, the seller of travel must provide the passenger with a written statement accompanied by bank records establishing the disbursement of the payment, and if disbursed to a wholesale seller of travel, proof of current registration of that wholesaler.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the

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registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

4/20 AJ