



## Cook Islands - The Inside Story

**We visit three very different South Pacific islands.**

**We learn about their history, both natural and cultural. We spot unique birds and snorkel among beautiful fishes. We hike on lush green mountains and through fossil coral reef.**

**We hear the stories around a museum collection. We witness vibrant dance and feel the drum beats. We experience both traditional and contemporary life in the Cook Islands, and we get to know Cook Islanders in conversation beyond tourism.**



### Our Tour Leader



Judith Kunzlé is from Switzerland, has lived in Rarotonga for almost 30 years, and knows many inside stories of the Cook Islands.

She is an internationally recognized artist, and has illustrated animals and plants for the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust. She also worked on expedition cruise ships, the World Discoverer and the National Geographic Endeavour, as the ship's artist in the South Pacific.

Our tour is based on Judith's insight and her artist's eye,

combined with her passion for nature and the environment – and her many local friends.

Judith's program is packed with action and participation, and balanced with being in beautiful places, taking it all in. She will be joined by local guides on each island who share their views and experiences of life in "The Cooks".

We invite our top clients, who are experienced and experimental travelers, to join Judith to get to know and enjoy her three favourite islands, Rarotonga, Atiu and Aitutaki, their geological history, nature and their people.

### The Highlights:

- Three different South Pacific islands: a high island, a raised island and an atoll
- Aitutaki Lagoon
- Rarotonga mountains with pristine rain forest
- Atiu's makatea landscape
- Rare, native and endemic birds

- Cook Islanders in conversation beyond tourism
- Beautiful beaches
- Diverse, great food
- Polynesian dancing and drumming
- The endemic Atiu Swiftlet echo-locate deep inside a cave
- Colorful reef fishes and corals
- Walks through beautiful natural and cultural landscapes
- Local guides sharing inside information about history and contemporary life in the Cook Islands

### Language and Fitness

Cook Islanders speak English and Cook Islands Maori. This tour is conducted in English.

Average fitness is required. However, there are alternatives for the more strenuous walks.

# Tour Itinerary

## Day 1: Sunday, Rarotonga

We land early Sunday morning on Rarotonga, the capital of the Cook Islands, and are welcomed at the airport with flower garlands, before we transfer to our beachfront hotel, Moana Sands. Our tour leader Judith meets you at the hotel and assists with the check-in. A tropical breakfast is waiting for us, and midmorning there is the option to join a traditional church service, with the singing of beautiful Polynesian hymns.

Lunch is at the nearby botanical garden cafe, in the shade of big trees, while Judith gives an introduction to our tour and the Cook Islands, an independent nation of 15 islands spread over a vast expanse of South Pacific ocean. We will visit Rarotonga, Atiu and Aitutaki, three islands at different stages in the geological history of volcanic islands, with diverse habitats, wildlife and Polynesian cultures. What all the Cook Islands have in common is their warm and relaxed people, witty and welcoming, always ready to see the fun and funny side of life.

The afternoon is free to swim, snorkel, relax, or join Judith for a walk. We walk on the beach to dinner, in one of our carefully selected restaurants with fresh local cuisine.

## Day 2: Monday, Rarotonga

To get oriented, we hop on George Williams' bus for a Round Rarotonga Discovery Tour. George explains how people live on Rarotonga, and what they do, how politics here work, what the main foods are and where they are grown, when and where Cook Islanders departed to discover New Zealand, why there are graves in the gardens of most houses, and much more.

We return to our hotel for lunch and siesta, and in the afternoon, we put on our hiking boots and get ready for a walk in the lush green inland mountains of Rarotonga, with our local guide Edwin. We hike 1 hr up, to a place called "Bird Ridge", where we hope to see native birds like the elusive endemic Rarotonga Starling, the Rarotonga Fruitdove (right), the native Pacific Pigeon (left). We also hope to see Flying foxes (center). There is the option to stay at the hotel and enjoy the beach and the lagoon.

For dinner, we have invited two guests to our table, local professionals, who will share stories with us and give us unique insights into life in the Cook Islands.



## Day 3: Tuesday, Rarotonga

For the hikers in our group it's an early start today to beat the heat. Before 8am, we pack a snack and meet our local guide Edwin to hike up to the Needle, a striking rock formation in the center of the island, which was used as a landmark for boats to enter the harbor. The hike leads 1½ hrs up over a network of roots, but the ascent is shaded and the views from the top are all worth it.



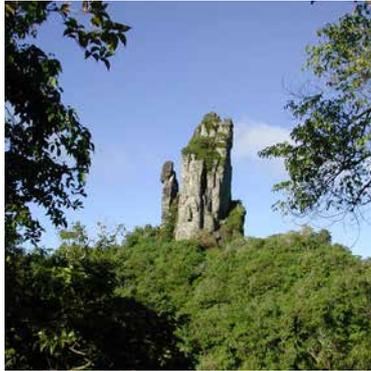
Photo by Ewan Smith



Photos by Gerald McCormack



The inland of Rarotonga still has one of the best preserved native forests in Eastern Polynesia, with many endemic plant species, which Edwin and Judith will point out. At the base of the Needle we munch our snack, looking down to the harbor on the north coast, and to the wide fringing reef and lagoon on the south coast, while Tropic Birds circle above us. We return the same way. On the way home, we're stopping at "The Mooring" for a very fresh fish sandwich with salad for lunch.



Photos by Gerald McCormack

For those of us who would like to skip this hike and do something else, there are several other options: a 4-wheel drive safari to the mountains, a history tour on bicycles, and more.

There will be time for a swim before we transfer for drinks and dinner to the Shipwreck Hut on Aro'a beach on the sunset coast. We mix and mingle with locals and visitors while musicians play all our favorite oldies. We may dance in the sand...

#### Day 4: Wednesday, Rarotonga

This morning we are visiting the Cook Islands Library & Museum, where Jean Mason, manager and curator, is giving us a guided tour of the museum's collection, and its many stories. At noon we walk, together with Jean, to "The Café" for lunch and the best coffee on the island.

In the afternoon, we meet Edwin for a 2-hrs easy walk in Takuvaine valley, a historically cultivated agricultural valley. Our water shoes are perfect for this walk with two stream crossings. Edwin guides us on manicured trails around terraced taro plantations, talking about traditional cultivation and explaining how land ownership works for planting in this valley. Taro is the most treasured Polynesian staple, and around the taro paddies there are also several types of bananas, including the Mountain Banana with its upright fruit bunches.

Tonight's dinner is at the elegant Tamarind House, in a historic colonial mansion. This is the prime location for official government receptions, weddings, reunions and local business and family events. We have invited another local couple for dinner, business people, who will share insights into the pearl farming, and island life in Manihiki, one of the northern Cook Islands.

#### Day 5: Thursday, Rarotonga

Today we start early again to hike up Raemaru, a flat-topped mountain on the western side of the island. The hike is steep, but not difficult, and the views down to the coast and inland to the mountains are beautiful. We hike about 2½ hrs return. After lunch and siesta, we explore another great snorkeling area, Tiki'oki, which is part of a marine protected area.

For dinner, we visit the lively Muri Night Market.



### Day 6: Friday, Rarotonga - Atiu

This morning, we pack our bags and transfer to the airport to fly to Atiu island. After 50 min, we see that Atiu is a “raised island” and sits above sea-level like a cookie on a baking sheet, with scalloped edges of secluded beaches. This island is truly off the beaten path of tourism, a hidden gem. We transfer by “Atiu Taxi”, trucks, to the Atiu Villas, six bungalows sitting in a beautiful tropical garden, with a pool. We meet at Kura’s Kitchen, the restaurant, for lunch.



After a siesta we go on an easy 2-hrs loop walk from the volcanic center of the island down to the cultivated swamps and Lake Teroto. We walk through the belt of makatea, fossilized coral, with lush native forest and have a look at the very rugged coastline of Vai Piake on the west coast, before hiking back up to the Atiu Villas. Or, we enjoy the garden and the pool. We meet at 7pm at the bar for drinks before dinner.

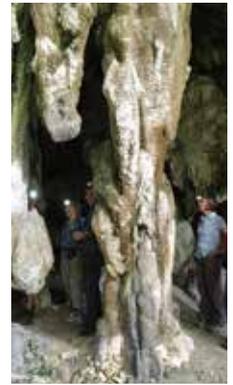


### Day 7: Saturday, Atiu

After breakfast with freshly brewed Atiu Island Coffee with coconut cream, we board Marshall’s truck for an Atiu History tour. We hear about big community projects like the restoration of the church, hear about telecommunications on this island and see coffee plantations before heading down to the usually wild and windy east coast. We follow the road through beautiful forest to the south coast and explore secluded coves on the way.

After lunch at the Atiu Villas, we put on our hiking boots and join Marshall for a walk over very rugged makatea, fossil coral, to the Anatakitaki cave, where an endemic bird, the Atiu Swiftlet, nests. It echo-locates with audible clicks in complete darkness, around stalactites, to find its nest in a niche on a cave wall. Both the track and the cave require good shoes, good fitness and coordination. As an alternative, there are Atiu Villas’ garden and pool to enjoy.

Tonight is Island Night at the Atiu Villas, a local dinner accompanied by singing, followed by a dance performance by one of Atiu’s schools. The dancers are children from toddlers to teenagers, and their parents, aunties and uncles are the musicians.



### Day 8: Sunday, Atiu

We have several options for Sunday morning activities on Atiu. If you would like to visit one of Atiu’s churches and hear the beautiful singing of Polynesian hymns, you will be welcomed by the congregation. Or you may want to climb with our guide Marshall into an ancient burial cave. The third option is to join Judith for one of Atiu’s beautiful walks.

Atiu is also called the island of birds. There aren’t many landbirds on such a remote island, and all of them are rare, and most endemic. To have closer look, we join Birdman George for his Eco Tour. He calls in Rimatara Lorikeets and endangered Rarotonga



Flycatchers. We also learn about agriculture and forestry projects that affected Atiu's biodiversity, and about traditional herbal medicine. We visit the place where Captain Cook's men came ashore in 1777, and end our day with a beautiful and tasty local picnic dinner, including a fresh fruit platter served on fern leaves, on stunning Taungaroro beach.



Photo by Gerald McCormack

**Day 9: Monday, Atiu - Aitutaki**

We're packing up today and ride Atiu style, in and on trucks, to the airport, where we say farewell to our hosts and tour guides - they will all be there.

We are flying 40 min, to beautiful Aitutaki, and as our plane approaches the atoll, we get a great view of the triangular, turquoise lagoon, ringed by many small reef islets. We are welcomed by the Aitutaki Village team, and check into bungalows by the lagoon.

After lunch and siesta, Nane, our local guide, bundles us into her van for a bit of exploring. We have a peek inside a local grocery store, before we are dropped off to hike up Mauna Pu, at 125m/410', the highest point on Aitutaki. Nane knows where we can see this island's very special bird, the endangered Blue Lorikeet, before we return back to our hotel and get ready for a special dinner at the wonderful Koru Café, served family style.



**Day 10: Tuesday, Aitutaki**

Aitutaki lagoon is breath-taking, a must-see, and we are going to experience it today. We pack swimsuits and sun protection, and put on our water shoes. Teking is our captain for the lagoon expedition and before we board his boat, we select snorkel gear. Off we go, into The Great Turquoise, heading to the southern-most motu (islet).



We make our own footsteps in the sand on Motu Maina, while Red-tailed Tropicbirds are doing dramatic aerial displays in the cobalt blue sky. The sea bird population is stable here, despite people visiting this motu, because they have learned that the Aitutakians and their guests will not bother them.



After lunch we board our boat again and go all the way across the lagoon, stopping once or twice for great snorkeling over colorful corals in the company of many different reef fishes. We visit Tapuaetai, or One-Foot-Island, the most beautiful of Aitutaki's reef islets. Teking delivers us by boat right to the Aitutaki Village.

Tonight is Island Night: a delicious island buffet of many local delicacies to choose from, and Aitutaki's best dancers perform traditional drum dances and graceful action songs.

### Day 11: Wednesday, Aitutaki

Because we are eating so well, we are going to walk it off while exploring beautiful Aitutaki. Today we're doing a loop-walk, hiking up the hills of the main islet with great views over the lagoon, and down the other side to an ecologically important area, where no people, but lots of crabs, live. We're also going to visit Aitutaki Marine Resources, where the colorful, but now rare, local clams are bred to be put back into the lagoon.

There is time to go for a paddle and swim, before we go to dinner at Tupuna's, a tucked away gem of a restaurant. We're eating at all the best places of the Cook Islands, and at Tupuna's, it's fine dining with our toes in cool white sand.

### Day 12: Thursday, Aitutaki

We board Nane's minibus and she takes us on a tour around the main villages of Aitutaki. We visit downtown Arutanga, with bank and government administration, see the very first church built in the Cook Islands, then drive up to the hospital, telecommunications and the schools. Nane knows her island well, and shares stories that give us a good idea what life is like here – and it's not only about that gorgeous lagoon!

For contrast, we explore a little known, uninhabited area on a loop-walk to the south coast, with a different perspective of the lagoon. We return in time to enjoy coffee and sinful desserts at the Koru Café, and go for a swim.

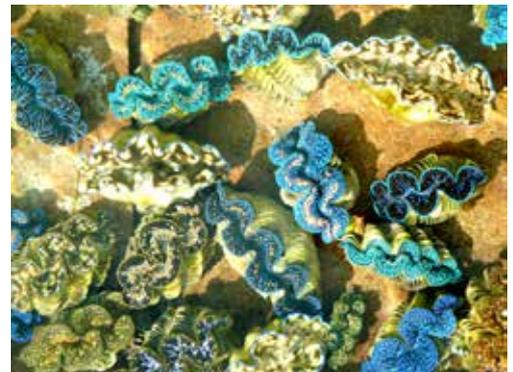
Tonight's options for dinner are: an Island Night with fire dancers or the Boatshed Bar & Grill, where the locals meet.

### Day 13: Friday, Aitutaki - Rarotonga

It's the last day of our tour and we pack our bags to fly 45 min back to Rarotonga. After Aitutaki and Atiu, the capital island of the Cook Islands will feel like a metropolis! We check in to day-rooms of The Islander hotel, freshen up and dress for town, because we're off to Avarua, to have lunch at the Cook Islands' most famous bar and restaurant, Trader Jack's, overlooking the beautiful Avarua harbor.

We have a free afternoon in town today, and if you need directions, Judith is happy to help you find your way.

We meet for our farewell dinner at The Islander, before going to the airport at 8:30pm for Air New Zealand flight NZ18, departing at 11:00 for Los Angeles.





## Dates

15 - 27 January 2017

14 - 26 January 2018

## Group size

Maximum group size 11

Minimum group size 8

## Pricing for 2017/18

Twin share, per person  
(ex Rarotonga):

**Early Booking: NZD5563**

(\***EUR3649, USD4068**)

valid until 31 October 2016

Regular: NZD6063

(\***EUR3977, USD4433**)

Single Supplement for Rarotonga  
and Aitutaki, shared room in Atiu:  
NZD1361 (\***EUR893, USD995**)

Single Supplement for single  
room on all three islands:  
NZD1662 (\***EUR1090, USD1216**)

For single guests who prefer to  
share, we will try to find a suit-  
able room mate to share, but  
if this is not possible, a single  
supplement will apply.

It may not be possible to accom-  
modate in a single room at Atiu  
Villas, due to limited rooms\*, and  
the single option may be a single  
room at Atiu B&B, a nearby and  
very tidy property run by one of  
our guides.

\*Pricing will be processed based  
on New Zealand Dollars (NZD).  
EUR/USD rates are an indica-  
tion only, with exchange rate of  
September 2016. EUR/USD prices  
may change by date of payment.

For booking arrangements,  
deposits, payment deadlines  
and cancellation charges, please  
inquire at [Events@dmck.co.ck](mailto:Events@dmck.co.ck).

## Keywords:

Tropical South Pacific Islands,  
nature, culture, traditional dance,  
walking, hiking, swimming,  
snorkeling, biodiversity, rare  
birds, tropical fish, geology,  
knowledgeable guides, good  
food.

## Inclusions:

- 13 nights twin share  
accommodation with private  
facilities
- Meals included: 13 Breakfasts,  
4 Lunches, 4 Dinners
- Transfers and tours as listed  
in itinerary, including all airport  
transfers
- Domestic flights within the  
Cook Islands
- Professional tour leader  
assisted by local tour guides

## Exclusions:

- International airfares to and  
from Rarotonga and taxes to  
start/finish of tour
- Passport and Visa expenses
- Heavy or excess baggage
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses:  
drinks, tips, laundry, telephone,  
optional tours

## Accommodation:

Moana Sands Beachfront Hotel  
(6 nights)

Atiu Villas, \*six self-contained  
bungalows in a beautiful garden  
(3 nights)

Aitutaki Village (4 nights)

## Booking this tour

Please mail us at [Events@dmck.co.ck](mailto:Events@dmck.co.ck)  
to book and pay the deposit  
of EUR350, USD390 per person.

For **Early Bookings**, your deposit  
needs to be paid no later than  
31 October 2016. If your deposit  
arrives after this date, the regular  
tour price will apply.

After your booking and deposit,  
you will receive a confirmation by  
email. As soon as at least 8 partici-  
pants have booked, we will confirm  
the tour, and send you a medical  
questionnaire and information  
about international flights to and  
from the Cook Islands.

You can book your own flights, or  
let us book the international flights  
for you.

*Please do not book flights until the  
tour is confirmed.*

If you would like to arrive before,  
or stay a few days after, the tour,  
we would be happy to suggest and  
book accommodation for you.

**You will need to arrange for your  
travel insurance, which is manda-  
tory.**

After your travel itinerary and  
bookings are confirmed, we will  
send you an invoice for the balance  
of the tour payment.

After the payment is completed,  
we will send your final tour docu-  
ments and final travel information.

## Smaller groups

The minimum number of passen-  
gers to operate at the price listed  
in the itinerary is 8. If the minimum  
number is not reached, we may  
still offer to operate this tour with a  
surcharge, and booked guests may  
decide to continue or not.



## Tour Information Requirements Packing Tips

- The weight limit for inter-islands flights is 15kg/33lb.
- Average fitness is required for this tour, and those who are fit will enjoy the walks and hikes.
- There are alternatives to the more strenuous activities.
- Good walking shoes are required, because we are off the beaten track. We will walk on uneven ground and get in and out of vehicles.
- **Solid water shoes are required for all participants.** We will walk on coral and cross streams, and on rainy days, you will be most comfortable in water shoes (like Teva, Reef, Solomon, etc).
- Sun protection SPF 30+, hats, sunglasses and rain gear are essential. January is summer in the southern hemisphere, it will be warm, and it will most likely also rain a few times.
- Mosquito repellent
- Clothing: light-weight long sleeved shirts and pants are the best protection against sun and mosquitoes. Shorts are fine during the day, but some restaurants appreciate long pants.
- We will all need a day-pack and a recyclable water bottle.

- To keep the luggage dry in transfers, pack a large rubbish bag. Keep phones, cameras and other small items in zip-lock bags.
- Optional: binoculars, walking sticks
- Please bring your prescription drugs and spare glasses, because supply will be limited, especially on the outer islands.
- Dietary restrictions: If you have allergies, make sure you pack snacks and food alternatives, and/or an Epi-pen. On Aitutaki and Atiu the choice of foods will be limited.



- Adapter/converter for Cook Islands/New Zealand power outlets of 230/240 volts (50 hertz). European appliances for 220v work without converter, but need an adapter to fit into power outlets.



## Links:

- Official Cook Islands Tourism website:  
<http://paradiseincookislands.com>
- Discover Cook Islands:  
<http://www.discovercookislands.com>
- Moana Sands Beachfront Hotel, Rarotonga:  
<http://moanasands.co.ck>
- Atiu Villas:  
<http://www.atiu villas.com>
- Aitutaki Village hotel:  
<http://www.samadebeach.com>