

A. Go to Easter Island before it is totally transformed by the consumer society; and have no preconceived ideas, and read good authors (including Alfred Métraux)

Q. *What are you currently reading?*

A. Apart from scientific publications, anything that enables me to escape my professional preoccupations: poetry, detective novels, gardening magazines, etc.

Q. *Date and place of birth?*

A. 14 March 1950 at Le Raincy, in the suburbs of Paris, France.

REVIEWS

Frommer's Chile and Easter Island, 1st edition

by Stephan Küffner and Kristina Schreck
Wiley Publishing, 2007, ISBN 978-0-470-12816-9, US\$22.99

Moon Handbooks Chile, including **Easter Island, 2nd edition**

by Wayne Bernhardson
Avalon Travel Publishing, 2007
ISBN 978-1-56691-754-4; US\$22.95

Reviews by Shawn McLaughlin

THE RELEASE OF FROMMER'S first edition of *Chile and Easter Island*, and a second edition of *Moon Handbooks Chile, including Easter Island*, by Wayne Bernhardson offer readers coverage of Chile and Easter Island, though in keeping with many such guidebooks – Lonely Planet among them – there is an inadequate and disproportionate percentage of space devoted to Easter Island despite the fact that “Easter Island” shares half the books’ title. As for *Frommer's* coverage, 12.5 pages out of 483 are devoted to Easter Island, only 2.6%. Compare this with *Moon Handbooks Chile and Easter Island* at 3% and *Lonely Planet's Chile and Easter Island* at 3.7% and it doesn't seem too out of line. However, there's more to coverage than numbers of pages. Despite the absence of “Easter Island” in the title of *Moon Handbooks South Pacific* or *Insight's Chile*, the number of pages devoted to Easter Island in these works is much more generous. Even looking at more than half a dozen major recent guidebooks by number of pages shows that *Frommer's* is below the 17.4 page average.

As a new entry in guidebooks with Easter Island coverage I'm inclined to be forgiving, except it appears the authors of *Frommer's* failed to learn from earlier and better works on the subject, such by David Stanley or Wayne Bernhardson – authors who seem to have a handle on what Easter Island is *about*, not just what it is to visit the place. Thus, what is particularly damning about this first *Frommer's* edition is the relative absence of anything about the

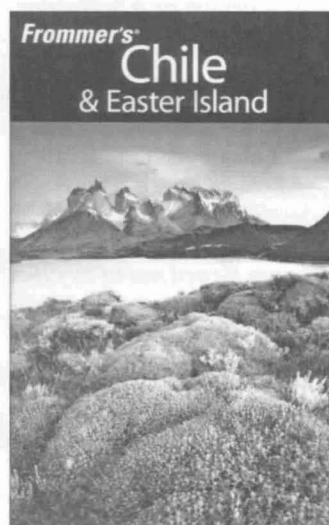
people of Easter Island; it is informational about a visit, but little more. Still, the text is reasonably well written and informative and appears to be fairly up-to-date, except for a few gaffes (they pluralize some Rapanui words like “*moai*” by erroneously using an “s”; they make the same statement many authors make about Ahu Akivi being the “only *ahu* facing out to sea”; there is an inane reference to the Te Pito te Kura stone as being magnetic, which is sensational at best because much of the geology of island has magnetic properties; and they employ the usual blather about the stonework at Vinapu giving rise to theories about South American connections to Easter Island – without explaining why such theories are not only incorrect, but have been abandoned.

The authors wisely recommend that visitors rent a vehicle to get the most out of the island rather than relying solely on local guide services, though they appropriately heap high praise on Ramon Edmunds and Josie Nahoe Mulloy of Haumaka Archaeological Tours – and they rightfully observe that even four days is barely enough time to see what the island has to offer. As with other similar guidebooks, this one divides accommodations by price, though they do not divide dining this way, despite the fact that there are big differences from, say, Merahi Ra'a and Te Moana. As is typical with many tour books about Easter Island, they rave about La Taverne du Pêcheur probably because it has become chic to do so rather than acknowledge its pricey food, pathetically slow service and its needlessly surly owner. The book also subdivides the island into sections, with routine if woefully brief information as to what's available to see in these regions, and, with only a

single page devoted to rudimentary maps of the island and Hanga Roa, one hopes the visitor will have other resources to turn to before planning a trip to the island. There is brief mention of the Biblioteca William Mulloy, the Museo Antropológico P. Sebastián Englert, and outdoor activities like horseback riding and scuba/snorkeling, though the statement that, because vehicular access to places like Terevaka has been prohibited, “some locals

still sneak up” to Terevaka “in a 4x4” is irresponsible to mention, as if it were a tacit encouragement to violate the prohibition.

This first venture by *Frommer's* barely meets the minimum standards for coverage of Easter Island, despite such high billing in its title. The shallow depth of information contained in this guidebook will ultimately make for a



disappointing visit by anyone solely relying on it for a visit to our favorite little island.

As for the second edition of *Moon Handbooks Chile* by Bernhardson, it is virtually identical to its first edition. This isn't surprising since Wayne Bernhardson wrote both. What *is* surprising is the relative lack of updating in the second edition. To be fair, the Easter Island portion of either edition represents only about 20 pages out of more than 600 for the each whole book but, with the change in title for the second edition – "*Including Easter Island*" – I would have expected more current information. In the first edition, Easter Island was a dedicated chapter near the back of the book; in this edition, despite the book's title change, Easter Island is actually part of two sub-sections in a chapter devoted to "Chilean Pacific Islands". If Easter Island is important enough to include in the *title* of the revised edition, why weren't there more comprehensive updates in the chapter about the island itself?

At the same time, one wouldn't expect the major sections to need significant revisions since 2002, so much is virtually the same. Still, the section on environmental issues, while discussing concerns about population and resource utilization, is the same in both editions even though these problems have grown worse over the past five years. And this has some bearing on erroneous population and tourism numbers (see below) unintentionally creating the impression that the status quo on Easter Island hasn't changed much when in fact it has – and importantly so. In a similar vein, while there is detailed coverage of the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert (including an erroneous reference to *Rongorongo* tablets being there when they are only copies), there's only a sentence devoted to the Biblioteca William Mulloy and no mention of the new exhibition hall on the Museum grounds.

The resources and Web sites sections are virtually identical in both editions, and this is odd because there have been numerous books published on Easter Island and more Web sites have emerged in the past five years from a variety of sources, including the Easter Island Foundation. And, with the exception of a reference to the EIF where the Vai A Heva store is mentioned, the URL for the EIF isn't there or listed with other Web sites but it *does* appear in a paragraph about the *Rapa Nui Journal*.

The 2002 edition had an extensive and very useful two-page spread devoted to a "Rapa Nui Bookshelf" but it is missing from the 2007 edition. There are 56 books and 31 Web sites in the general resources section, but not one book (and only one URL) about Easter Island is featured.

There *are* updates to the entertainment section (including new pubs), the rental car section, diving shop service prices, 'Orongo admission fees, banking and laundry services, and the new Pantu horseback and camping excursions. Although Internet access, including WiFi, has gained considerable currency on Easter Island in recent years, there is very little coverage about it and this is unfortunate because the Internet is now more useful than ever,

whether in planning a trip or conducting communications while on the island.

Restaurant listings are fairly up to date and while there is no need to revise the "Defending the Moai" box, the text in the "Bug Alert" box about Dengue Fever is identical to its 2002 counterpart despite some recent developments on the subject which travelers might want to know about.

The section on accommodations has undergone an update, with e-mail and/or Web addresses provided where available, along with pricing (broken down by classifications like "Camping", "US\$25-50", "US\$100-150", etc.). But the age-old complaint about hotels in proximity to the loud Toroko disco is raised once again (despite the fact that ear plugs deftly handle the problem), yet no such comment is made about the proximity of the Hotel Manutara or the Residencial Vinapu to the equally nearby Piditi Disco.

Most erroneous of all is the section covering facts and figures on tourism itself. Both books mention an annual arrival of 20,000 tourists to the island—true in 2002 but not in 2007 (around 46,000 tourists visited the island last year). Later in the 2007 edition, the number changes to 24,000, which is still off considerably, but both books say tourism has increased by 20% over the past decade, and ultimately this cannot be true when the correct numbers are used. (Tourism increased by 20% between 1992 and 2002 but it increased 115% between 2002 and 2007 and thus approximately 135% over the past 15 years.) Do these errors *really* make a difference? Perhaps not, except in enabling tourists to understand the impact of their presence and by extension quite possibly doing something about it by being more eco-friendly. There's more to Easter Island than the *moai* and other antiquities: there's a living, breathing culture that is in danger of the same kind of resource depletion that assisted in its undoing centuries ago.

For all my criticism of the chapter on Easter Island, it represents only about 3% of the entire work which otherwise has extensive coverage of Chile. I am *not* drawing any inferences about the rest of the book as it may pertain or compare to the Easter Island coverage. And while I understand that, with a book of this depth, devoting a lot of pages to Easter Island may not be sound use of space, I reiterate that inserting *Including Easter Island* into the book's title implies more coverage than actually appears.

I would be more inclined to recommend the recent Lonely Planet's *Chile & Easter Island* by Charlotte Beech, *et al.* (who, it would appear, picked up where Bernhardson left off when he was with Lonely Planet). The Lonely Planet guide was published in 2006 but its coverage is no less up to date than this latest contribution by Moon Handbooks.

If you want a tour book on Chile, you aren't likely to be disappointed in either Lonely Planet or Moon Handbooks – but, if Easter Island is an important part of your Chile experience, you may want to look elsewhere rather than for the "latest" by publication date; the latest may quite simply not be the most up-to-date.