

Easter Island

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Easter Island Latest News

A groundbreaking study suggests that the ancient Rongorongo script of Easter Island could be independently developed and predates the arrival of Europeans on the island.

About Easter Island

- It is a **Chilean dependency** in the eastern **Pacific Ocean**.
- It is the **easternmost outpost** of the **Polynesian island world**.
- **Named Rapa Nui by its earliest residents**, it is one of the **most isolated inhabited islands** in the world.
- It was **discovered by Europeans on Easter Sunday (1722)** by Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen. Hence the name "Easter Island".
- In between Roggeveen's arrival and its annexation to Chile, the **Rapanui population declined drastically** due to their **enslavement** on the South American mainland **by the Peruvians** and from the **smallpox and tuberculosis epidemics** on the island.

- Covering a total area of 163.6 sq.km, it is situated about 3,540 km to the west of Chile and about 1,900 km to the east of Pitcairn Island.
- It is a **small, triangular-shaped volcanic island**.
- It faces a **tropical rainforest climate**.
- The island comprises **three extinct volcanoes**, namely Terevaka, Poike, and Rano Kau.
- The island has **no permanent rivers** but **contains three crater lakes**, namely Rano Aroi, Rano Raraku, and Rano Kau.
- It is **known for its iconic Moai statues**, carved by the indigenous Rapa Nui people.
- **UNESCO** named Easter Island a **World Heritage Site** on March 22, 1996, and major parts of the island have been protected under the **Rapa Nui National Park**.

What are Moai Statues?

- Rapa Nui is famous for its **large statues** called moai.
- They are **shaped like large human heads** and **erected on stone pedestals**.
- They are famous for their **carved heads and “Pukao,” a hat-like covering made from a soft red stone**.
- Some moai stand 40 feet tall and weigh 75 tonnes.
- They were **carved in volcanic stone** at quarries and then moved to their current locations across the island.
- Scholars believe the **Rapa Nui people built** the moai between the **13th and the 16th centuries** and represented their revered ancestors.
- **Over 900 moai** have been found on the island to date.

What is Rongorongo?

- Rongorongo is a **writing system** that comprises **carved symbols, known as glyphs, on wooden tablets and artefacts** discovered in **Easter Island**.
- Rongorongo differs from other scripts in that it has **not yet been deciphered**.
- Rongorongo was **noted for the first time in 1864** when it was observed by **Europeans**.
- Rongorongo looks **very different from the European writing** systems. This has led some experts to believe it **may have developed locally by the inhabitants**.

Source: TOI

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