

## MOON HANDBOOKS TAHITI: INCLUDING THE COOK ISLANDS

by David Stanley

Avalon Travel Publishing, 2003; \$17.95; 432 pages  
ISBN 1-56691-412-4 / ISSN 1-544-0842

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

Anyone familiar with David Stanley's *South Pacific* (one of the Moon Handbooks series) will recognize similarities between its Easter Island coverage and that which is contained in this, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of his *Tahiti*. And it's apparent that he updates his information regularly (new references to land redistribution and the voyage of the *Hōkule'a*, for example). Or *some* of it, anyway. He lists Benito Rapahango as proprietor for Mahinatur, despite the fact that Benito died in September of 2002 (Mahinatur is still in operation, with Julio Lagos as proprietor, and is now located at Residencial O Tama Te Ra'a. Phone/fax: 100-220 /100-420; mahinatur@entelchile.net); he states that all the work at the Rano Raraku quarry stopped abruptly; he repeats the erroneous story of islanders being taken to the Peruvian guano mines (and that *all* learned men of the island were lost as a result); and he says that the winning swimmer in the Birdman competition became the Birdman for the next year. (Some of these same errors occur in his *South Pacific Handbook* but that's not too surprising since they obviously derive from the same copy.) He does refrain from making the same mistake that many of his contemporaries have made when they fail to explain that two of the island museum's *rongorongo* artifacts are replicas – though he tends to gloss over the museum generally, devoting only 50 words to it and the new Mulloy Library.

I do have it on good authority that the aforementioned errors will be corrected in not only the next edition of *Tahiti* but also *South Pacific*. And, to be fair, Stanley uses the more appropriate *nga'atu* instead of *titora* reeds and rightly complains about the loudness of the Toroko Disco when staying at the Hotel O'tai (though the solution to this is simple: ear-plugs). He properly admonishes people about disturbing bones found at various sites around the island and includes a new section on how to conduct oneself respectfully on the island (*vis-a-vis* the archaeological sites).

Some things have not been updated. For example, an ATM machine is *outside* the bank (it accepts Bank of Chile and MasterCard and was operational in October 2002), and the U.S. airport reciprocity (entry) tax is stated as \$61 when as of October 2003 it was \$100 (even a year ago it was up to \$91).

But don't be unduly distracted by this recitation, as they represent a fraction of the coverage that is otherwise clear, concise, and up-to-date. Stanley is refreshingly honest in describing the controversies involving land redistribution and inane development plans (e.g., the 5-star hotel and golf course) – “one special-interest group clawing against another; the world on a small scale”. And he offers extensive details about accommodations that are rarely available elsewhere. His Hanga Roa map is one of the most accurate to date and the two-page spread devoted to Easter Island Internet resources is invaluable.

Although I've focused on the Easter Island portion of the book in this review, it's important to note that about 95 percent of David Stanley's *Tahiti* is not about Easter Island. In fact, of the three main sections of the book, the bulk is contained in the sections on French Polynesia and the Cook Islands. The section on French Polynesia covers Tahiti, Mo'orea, Huahine, Ra'iatea and Taha'a, Bora Bora, Maupiti, Austral Islands, Tuamotu Islands, Gambier Islands, and Marquesas Islands); the section on the Cook Islands covers Rarotonga and the Southern and Northern Groups; and the section on Easter Island covers, well, Easter Island – but that's what you'd expect unless you are floridly intoxicated after visiting the fruit juice factory on Mo'orea.

In his very approachable style, Stanley provides loads of information on history, customs, holidays and events, arts and shopping, services, transportation, and lots of little trivia tidbits. His section “Tahiti in Literature” is a rare gem. Two dozen pages at the back of the book are devoted to a rudimentary glossary, a listing of basic Tahitian and French terms, suggested reading, Internet resources, and island facts (which doesn't include Easter Island and indeed any non-“permanently inhabited islands of French Polynesia and the Cook Islands”, alas). This makes *Tahiti* one of the best investments for the traveler to and from this region of the world.

One thing that has always impressed me about Stanley's guides is the fact that they're written by him as a traveler and not as a guidebook writer. He travels anonymously when researching his books and thus doesn't receive special treatment at hotels or restaurants. This makes it a lot easier for the reader to trust his opinions. And since Stanley emphasizes mid-priced accommodations and activities, you have a better appreciation of what it's really likely to cost.

Whether you're settled down, heading east, or heading west, with Tahiti at the center and Stanley's very centered information at your disposal, this book will help you find your way.



## MOON HANDBOOKS MICRONESIA (Sixth Edition)

by Neil M. Levy

Avalon Travel Publishing, Emeryville, CA, 2003. 316 pp.  
(B&W photos & illustrations, 72 maps, charts, annotated  
booklist, glossary, travel information and index.) US\$17.95,  
paper. ISBN 1-56691-508-2 and 1543-7019.

Review by Felicia R. Beardsley  
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Micronesia is a highly diverse region with thousands of islands scattered across some 4.5 million square miles of open water in the western Pacific. From the air, the region looks as if handfuls of pearls had been loosed from a string and haphazardly strewn across a velvety fabric of the deepest blue. As you begin your approach, however, these pearls start to take shape, revealing coral, volcanic and continental islands of varying shapes and sizes, some highly dissected with steep jungle terrain, others a thin ribbon of green hugging close to the water's surface. As both a cultural and geological paradise, Micronesia presents the inveterate trekker or novice trav-