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Book Review: The Complete Guide to Easter Island, 2nd Ed.

Georgia Lee

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Book Review: The Complete Guide to Easter Island, 2nd Ed.

Cover Page Footnote

The Complete Guide to Easter Island 2nd edition by Shawn McLaughlin Los Osos, the Easter Island Foundation, 2007 ISBN 978-1-880636-25-1 US \$25 Review by Georgia Lee

The Complete Guide to Easter Island 2nd edition

by Shawn McLaughlin

Los Osos, the Easter Island Foundation, 2007
ISBN 978-1-880636-25-1 US\$25

Review by Georgia Lee

AFTER READING THE TWO GUIDEBOOK reviews by McLaughlin (see above), those heading to the island might throw up their hands in despair! What to do? Well, dear readers, stress no more. The best, recently updated (2nd Edition) guide, one that is wholly dedicated to Rapa Nui, is in print. It is all you need for your trip to our favorite island.

The Complete Guide has “everything you wanted to know about Rapa Nui but were afraid to ask”. In this indispensable resource, you will find sections on the latest scientific and tourist information, history, legends, conservation, island theories, antiquities, population, conservation, and culture... not to mention accommodations and shopping, vehicle rental, entertainment, and island sights. The softcover book contains 350 pages, and is 6x9 inches and has a large fold-out map of the island showing roads and sites plus a detailed map of Hangaroa village showing hotels and restaurants, etc. Also, there are specific maps of the most popular sites, numerous drawings and black/white photographs; plus a new 16-page color section. Under “Sights”, the reader can find a list of all major sights and how to reach them; a bit about them including the distances from town to site; and whether or not one can reach it easily, or not.

McLaughlin deals with the hotels by categories: Budget; Moderate; Higher End; and Very Expensive. This is wise because rates fluctuate not just by seasons but also by how many tourists are on the island. He lists many places to eat, and highlights of some of them. There is a section on shopping and souvenirs and even information for those arriving to the island by private sailboat!

Appendices include the Rapanui Language, with extensive word lists; an Easter Island Glossary and Chronology; and a full Bibliography. There is a list of Easter Island artifacts in museums around the world, and a section about dating methods used by scientists; and excerpts from the logs of early explorers who landed on the island.

The Resources section is an amazing compilation of books, monographs, articles, news and popular media, and web pages that deal with the island specifically, as well as lists of museums containing Easter Island artifacts; tourist resources; maps; and even videos about the island. To list all the types of information in this guidebook would make this the longest review in RNJ, but I hope this gives our readers an idea of its wide-reaching scope.

The playwright, Edward Albee, wrote (in the *NY Times*) about *The Complete Guide*: “It is the one guide book you will need.” Amen to THAT. This is the guidebook

you will need for visiting Easter Island. Even if you aren't planning a trip to the island, it makes a wonderful resource to keep handy because so much information is packed between its covers. It sits on my desk, ready at hand, at all times.



Inventing 'Easter Island'

by Beverly Haun

University of Toronto Press, 2008
Soft cover; ISBN 978-0802093530 US\$35
Hard cover; ISBN 978-0802098887 US\$85
illustrated

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

IN REVIEWING *Inventing 'Easter Island'*, I found myself caught on the horns of a dilemma because, on the one hand (horn?) this is an interesting, scholarly work of profound implications that should inspire much discussion about what Easter Island was once, what it has become, and what it may evolve into. But within the book's erudite language and well-intentioned message there is an undeniable bias that punctures the equilibrium of its objectivity. This is evident from the beginning when Haun, in her preface, justly takes to task a Canadian artist who committed unpardonable sins on the island by re-arranging rocks and disturbing potentially archaeologically significant sites in order to create “landscape art”. This abomination was compounded by the fact that he smuggled film off the island and some of his images were published in a Canadian magazine whose editors obviously have no dignity nor shame in glorifying how the artist sneered at the “primitive” nature of the Easter Islanders who objected to this desecration. And it is here that we begin to apprehend Haun's equation of what this Canadian did with what she calls the “Euro-American culture” that has by her reckoning re-invented the Easter Island cultural milieu and not necessarily in a positive way.

But is it entirely fair to equate what this artist did with what early European explorers did? Are these two types of parties equally liable? Despite Haun's “resistance to the historical accounts”, I say no. If the histories tell us anything, if social and cultural evolution has any validity, it is that for the most part we *have* learned from the past, we *are* different. Some of us are, anyway. James Cook comes to mind. And in one particular way what this artist did was worse than what many of the European explorers did *because he knew better*; he had the product of centuries of knowledge about this island and yet he admitted to deliberately ignoring both sensitivities and the law. We may thus rightfully ask if the first Europeans knew better, a question we do not have to ask of this Canadian artist. Nor can we ignore the possibility that what we know of the past is the result of records made not always by the responsible parties but by their underlings or from faulty memories recalled