



Cost savings cook islands

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Yes, after 13 years of travel, and 100 countries, I'm calling it: the Cook Islands is the most beautiful place on the planet. And yes, that's including the Maldives and Bora Bora – Aitutaki blows them both out of the water!

On Rarotonga and Aitutaki – the two main islands in the Cook Islands – you'll find beautiful white-sand beaches, bordered by turquoise waters and swaying palm trees. Lagoon cruises sweep you out into perfection, where you'll snorkel with fish, eat lunch on a deserted island, and take so many photos you'll be in danger of running out of storage on your phone.

But it's not just the beauty that makes the Cook Islands worth visiting; there are so many reasons why I think you should plan a trip here! For starters, it's easy to travel around the island, whether by rental car, bicycle, tour, or even on foot. It's a very safe nation, too, so you don't have to worry about running into danger – I spent two weeks there as a solo woman and felt nothing but welcomed.

In a world of overtourism, the Cook Islands still remains relatively untouched. It's not that you'll be the only tourist on the islands or anything, but that you'll never feel like you're surrounded by nothing but visitors. An added bonus of this is that the Cook Islands locals aren't beaten down and exhausted by tourism; they don't resent you being in their home!

Speaking of which, the Cook Islands locals are so friendly. It felt like every time I decided to go for a walk, I'd have somebody pulling up on a scooter when they spotted me, then offering me a lift.

If you love to explore the underwater world as much as the above-ground one, you're going to be so impressed with the marine life here! From vibrant coral to friendly turtles to a gigantic clam the size of your torso, taking a snorkelling or dive trip here is likely to be one of your best.

You can absolutely visit the Cook Islands on a budget. But not only that, it's actually really easy to do so – yes, even in 2024, when prices worldwide are skyrocketing.

Let's talk first about how to get to the Cook Islands. If you're not currently based in Oceania, this is likely to be your biggest issue when it comes to reaching paradise.

Australia: Jetstar started operating regular flights (five days a week) between Sydney and Rarotonga in 2023, so Australians are now able to travel to the Cook Islands with ease. Prices remain pretty similar throughout the year, usually between 800 and 1000 AUD for a return ticket.

New Zealand: Flights to and from Rarotonga and Auckland run every day of the week. Flight prices obviously

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vary wildly throughout the year, depending on whether you'll be visiting in high season (April & November) or low season (December & March). In general, you can expect a return flight to cost around 750 NZD per person in the quieter season to 1000 NZD when travel is at its busiest.

Tahiti: If you're going to be island-hopping the South Pacific, you can fly direct between Tahiti and Rarotonga every Wednesday and Friday with Air Tahiti and Air Rarotonga. Prices are around 800 AUD in the low season and 1000 AUD in the high season.

If you're looking at those somewhat-irregularly running flights and wondering how long to spend on the Cook Islands, I recommend between seven and 10 nights; you'll want a minimum of four days on Rarotonga and three days on Aitutaki.

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