

EASTER ISLAND EAR SCANDAL



An overseas territory of Chile, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), has a great attraction that lures numerous tourists - the world-famous Moai stone statues. There are nearly 900 Moai statues on the Easter Island and they are believed to be 1,000 years old. Some of the statues are more than 10m tall and weighing more than 80 tons. The statues are situated in Rapa Nui National Park, which is a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1995. The Island is located in the southeastern Pacific Ocean and it carries its name thanks to a Dutch explorer [Jacob Roggeveen](#) who found it on the Easter Sunday [1722](#)

Lately a Finnish tourist has caused uproar by trying to steal a piece of an earlobe of one of the statues. He was spotted by a native Rapa Nui woman and thanks to her cooperation the police were able to detain him. She saw a tattooed man tore off a statue's earlobe, which then fell and broke into pieces. The Finnish tourist Marko Kulju could be charged with seven years in prison and a fine of \$19,100 if convicted of stealing. He has apologized in a Chilean newspaper but the Mayor of the only town on the Easter Island, Edmunds Paoa, wants a biblical justice - eye for eye, tooth for tooth, ear for ear. "If an ear is cut off, then an ear gets cut," Mr. Paoa said.

This kind of vandalism does not happen often but time to time it happens. According to the government official Liliana Castro, there are sites of great archaeological value everywhere on the island and the park guards cannot prevent all such incidents. The earlobe has broken in 20-30cm pieces. Now the Island's authorities inspect the Polynesian statue to find out whether it can be repaired.

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