

Our Top 15 Things to Do on Rarotonga

- *In no particular order*

① Punanga Nui Market

Head here on Saturday morning for fresh fruit and vegetables, fish and seafood, barbecued snacks, and stalls selling fresh bread and traditional Polynesian food. There's also handicrafts, colourful clothing and black pearls, so you're sure to pick up a souvenir or two! While you're there pop into **Michele's Café** that specialises in Fresh Yellow Fin Tuna Sashimi with the special sauce, Carpaccio with mint, ginger & capers, Ika Mata (rawfish) done Rarotongan style & Tahitian-Chinese style, Panfried Fish, Steak Frites & blue vein cheese sauce, and its famous Vietnamese Iced Coffee.

② Trader - Jacks

No trip to Raro is complete without a visit to Trader Jacks, one of Rarotonga's iconic watering holes and with panoramic sea views and good food, it's also a great place to eat. The front bar has top-notch pizzas, while the restaurant is more stylish and classy with meals including excellent sashimi and smoked marlin fish cakes. There's usually a live band on Friday and Saturday nights. Gentleman Jack himself can often be found propping up the bar!

③ Raro Safari Tours

Definitely one of Raro's most entertaining excursions are these three-hour expeditions around the island's rugged mountains, inland valleys and historical points of interest in safari-style jeeps. A fresh-fish beach barbecue lunch is included on the morning departures, and costs include pick-up from your accommodation. This is a great way to enjoy the road less travelled by tourists and make some new friends along the way.

④ Progressive Dinner To Local Homes

Eat your way around the island during this progressive dinner held in locals' houses. The relaxed, easygoing occasions run to three courses across four to five hours and include live music and visits to gardens and plantations. It's a great way to meet the locals and tuck into dishes including ika mata and pawpaw salad. Booking ahead is essential.

5 Lagoon Cruise

The team at Captain Tama's have been offering their Muri Lagoon cruise since 1992 so they know all about what makes for a fun time. This fun-filled tour takes you on a journey around calm and tranquil lagoon waters aboard a glass bottom boat. You'll get the chance to experience up close & personal, the marine life of Muri Beach without getting wet. Then there's time aplenty to snorkel and swim amongst the tropical fish before enjoying a mouth-watering lunch. Then sit back, relax and be entertained by the crew!

6 Orientation & Sites Tour

Ideal for first time travellers to the Cook Islands. Get the most out of your holiday with this introductory tour offered by **Cook Islands Tours**. As well as visiting important historical sites and places of interest around the island, you'll gain first hand knowledge on places to see, things to do, cultural highlights and tourist services to take advantage of during your stay. The tour includes a light tropical lunch at a private beach spot where you'll learn a little about Cook Island Black Pearls. A must for first time travellers

7 Tamarind House

The most elegant place to dine on Rarotonga is this colonial building on the island's North shore. Book a table on the grand verandah and enjoy the cool evening breeze with an inspired fusion of European, Asian and Pacific flavours. Try the Island Fish Curry or the excellent Blackened Fish (usually tuna) with breadfruit chips and steamed rukau (local spinach).

8 Fruits Of Rarotonga

Homemade jams and tropical flavoured chutneys are divine at this little shop opposite Tikioki Beach, but it's good for smoothies, cakes and fruit juices too, and the snorkelling in the lagoon opposite the café is sensational !

9 The Hula Bar

The latest craze on Raro is the Hula Bar on the beach at the **Islander Hotel**. It offers an all-day program from 11am to 11pm featuring leading alcohol brands at \$3.50 beers, spirits, wines and soft drinks. Rarotonga's party buses all stop at the Hula Bar allowing partygoers to dance on the sand under the stars before the final stop at the Rehab Nightclub at downtown Avarua

10 Raro Reef Sub

Explore the outer reef on Raro's very own yellow submarine. Descend into the semi-submersible's underwater-viewing area to spy on shape-shifting shoals of giant trevally and the rusting hulk of the 1916 shipwreck of the SS Maitai. If you're lucky you might see turtles and eagle rays, and humpback whales are sometimes sighted from July to October.

11 Island Nights

This is a great way to experience the vibrant local culture. The major hotels put on an Island night at least once a week. Don't miss your chance to enjoy the islands best value for money island night at **The Islander Hotel**. It happens every Tuesday. The buffet feast features Spit Roast Pork plus top island delicacies finished with delectable desserts including 'Bombe Alaska'. Power & energy climaxes with a dynamic cultural performance by the leading adult cultural dance troupe on Rarotonga - 'Akirata Dance Troupe' - presenting traditional performances fused with modern choreography & brilliant - bold costumes inspired by the stunning landscapes of the outer islands; and the legendary fire knife dance. And it's only \$49 per adult

12 Matutu Brewery

Pop in to meet the guys behind Raro's very own craft brewery. Regular beers - also sold around the island - are Mai Lager and Kiva Pale Ale. Seasonal limited-run brews are also sometimes conjured up, and often available at the tiny brewery. Join a tour and tasting session, and don't leave the island without buying a Matutu T-shirt.

13 Pa's Mountain Walk

A guided trek over the cross-island track is run by the dreadlocked Pa Teuraa. He's also a herbalist, botanist and traditional healer. Pa's cross-island walk runs on Monday to Friday (weather permitting), and he conducts nature walks on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A light lunch is included on both excursions and you'll need moderate fitness for the cross-island walk. Note that on some treks, Pa's nephew leads the activity in place of Pa.

14 Head to the Beach

Rarotonga has some stunning beaches. The best beaches for swimming and snorkelling are generally on the South and S.E coast. The pretty Muri Beach offers safe swimming in a shallow sandy bottom lagoon with great snorkelling amid sea cucumber, coral formations and colourful fish as you edge closer to the reef. Titikaveka Beach is a gorgeous palm fringed beach of soft white sand offering sensational swimming at all tides. The stunning sugar-white Aroa Beach on the South Coast offers good swimming and snorkelling in a marine reserve. Whilst the beaches generally on the North and West coasts have no lagoons for swimming, they make good beaches for strolling and beachcombing.

15 Maire Nui Botanical Gardens

Located on the South Coast of the island, these lush gardens contain many local plants & flowers that are not only beautiful and colourful but are of medicinal uses as well. The on-site café is great too and be sure to taste the cheesecake, claimed to be the best in Rarotonga !!