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Vinalu[®]
'Luxembourg's first Online Wine Magazine'

**CHEERS TO A
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



*Fine gastronomy at Explora with
top Montsecano Pinot Noir*

*Renault Rafale/
Test drive*

*Vinalu Special Reports Rapa Nui &
Iorana at Nayara Hangarua Hotel*

VINALU SPECIAL REPORTS EASTER ISLAND / CHILE TOP NEW YEAR EDITION

THE UNFORGETTABLE RAPA NUI / CHILE
EXPLORATION

by Liliane Turmes, Helen Latour & Harry Montagnola

Iorana to Rapa Nui



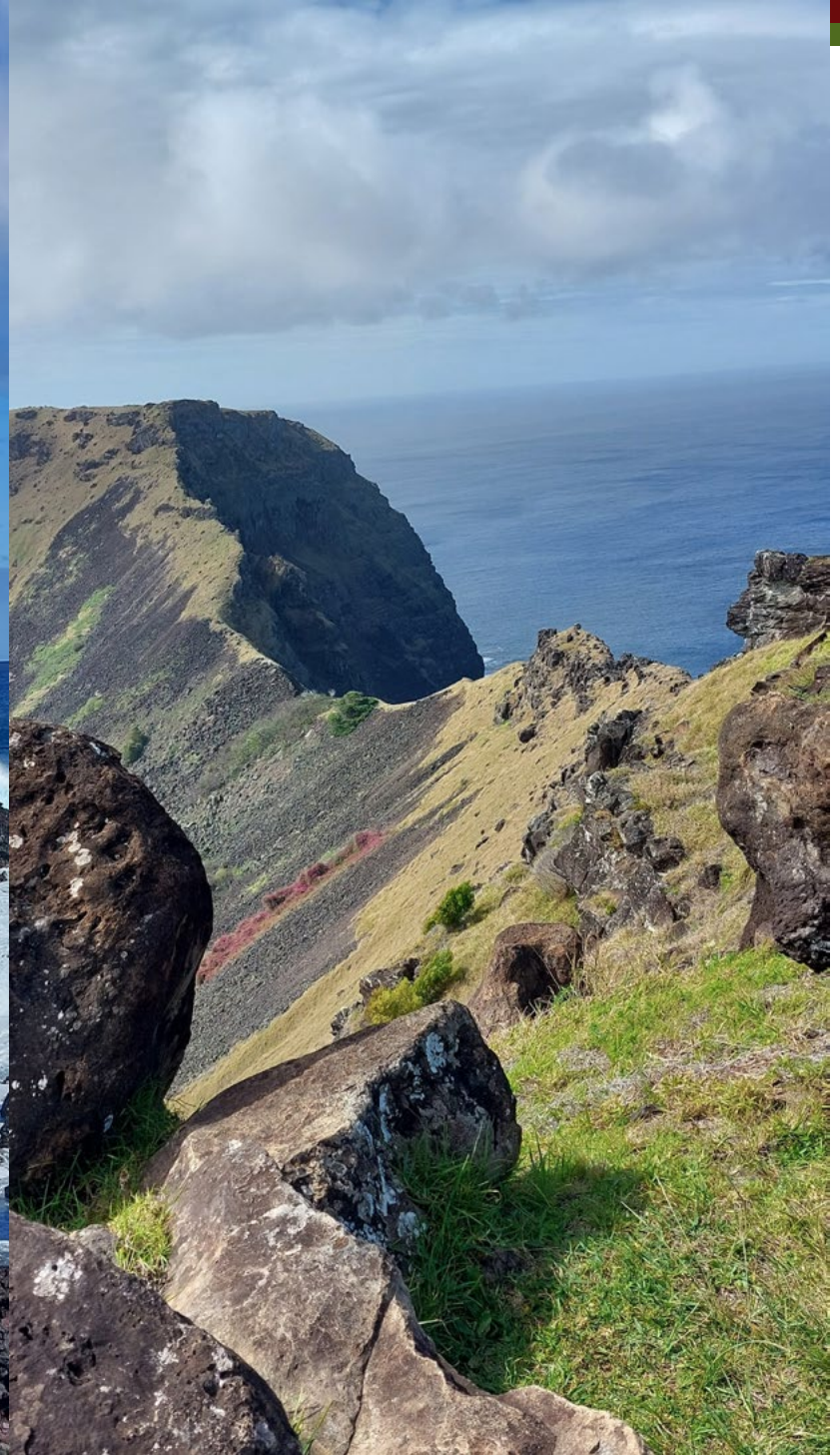
In the top 'New Year' edition of our special reports, we explore 'El Ombligo del mundo', the 'Navel of the world', captured with 'boca abierta' by Rapa Nui, the mysterious culture, the people and the magical power of the enigmatic giant moai statues.

Rapa Nui, the Polynesian name for Easter Island, with its capital Hanga Roa is the most isolated inhabited island on the planet, belonging to Chile, 5 flight hours from Santiago, mainland Chile and considered part of the Valparaiso region. Easter Island with its subtropical climate, with Antarctic winds and rain in the winter months of July and August is literally in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and belongs to the Polynesian Triangle, formed by the eruption of three volcanoes, giving it the triangle shape.

Thor Heyerdahl, the famous Norwegian anthropologist, who led his first archaeological expedition in his illustrious vessel Kon Tiki to Easter Island, in 1955, had the theory, that the island was settled from Latin America, but Rapa Nui, meaning the 'Large Rapa', named as such by seamen, who crossed this zone of the South Pacific long time before him, believed in its Polynesian origin, as for them it looked like Rapa Iti (Small Rapa), located 5000km to the West. Anyway, the current islanders are proud of their unique history and culture and they are keeping their traditions alive, adopting the name Rapa Nui for their island and for their culture. Easter Island is the name that has been given to the island by Dutch sailors, who rediscovered it by accident on Easter Sunday, on 5th April, 1722. In 1888 the island was declared Chilean territory.



... with high waves



... sharp cliffs



... soft hills



and 'free' horses



Briefing at the Ranu Raku trail



IORANA

After a very deep & a very close flight over the waters of the Pacific Ocean for the last miles, we must admit that we are quite happy when the plane touches the ground of the tiny Mataverí airport in Hanga Roa. 'IORANA', Welcome to Rapa Nui, with a big smile and with the traditional flower necklace!

We take a short rest in our hotel 'Nayara' Hanga Roa, situated in a beautiful parc, facing the Pacific, before getting a briefing about the trails on the island and being given a rainy and windy weather clothing pelerine to start the adventure in style the next morning for our long awaited exploration to the Rapa Nui National Park, with 'destino' Ahu Tongariki.

THE ROAD BOOK WITH...

A WIDE RANGE OF OVERWHELMING & FASCINATING CULTURAL SIGHTS ...

Even though you cannot get lost, when you follow the paths of the incredible trails, with a wide range of overwhelming cultural sights and sites on the 'Ruta Patrimonial' through the Rapa Nui National Park, considered by the Unesco as a 'World Heritage Site' (and the whole island even as a National Monument), it is recommended to join an organized tour, with a guide explaining the cultural significance of the archaeological sites.



On 'Comunidad Indigena' territory

Climbing many stairs



and passing huge moai heads





before reaching the fabulous 15

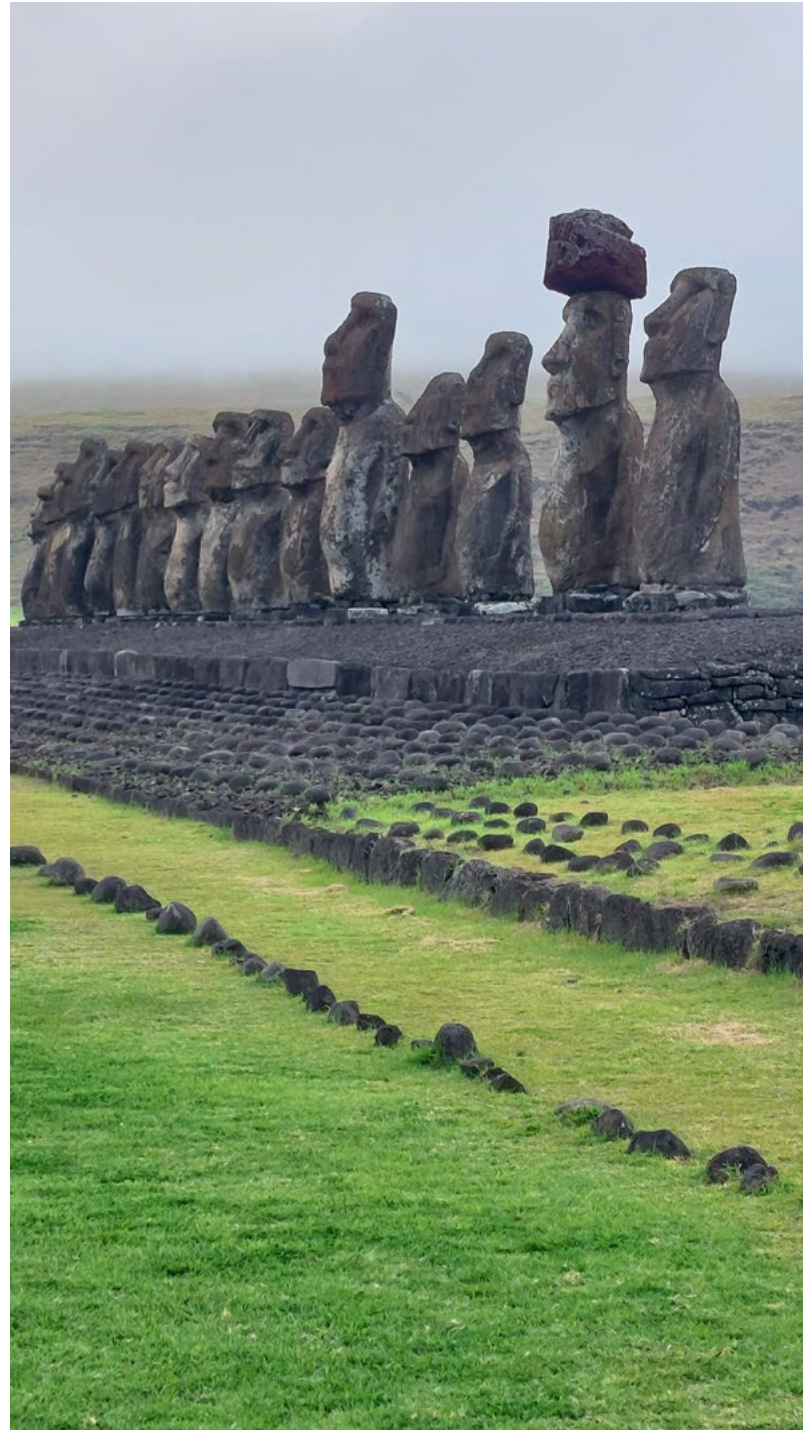


***THE MAGICAL ENCOUNTER
WITH THE ICONIC MOAIS &
THE SPIRIT OF MYSTICAL
BELIEVINGS...***

The Eastern Road on the Rano Raraku trail, leading to the Ahu Tongariki, with the 15 famous moais reerected on their ahus, the large ceremonial plateforms, after an earthquake producing a tsunami in 1960 threw them down, is without any doubt the most exiting trail. The iconic standing fabulous 15 are all put in a way to face sunset during the winter solstice in June! Fantastic! The moais, the giant monolithic stone statues, made of volcanic tuff, often buried up to their shoulders, so that only their huge heads are visible, were sculpted to pay homage to deceased ancestors and to allow their mana or spiritual energy to continue long after their death. And as they should also protect the living, their heads were turned inland to look over their people. In the past many statues were taken down from their ahus by humans, probably because of the lack of resources and as a result of wars between tribes. Rano Raraku was the center of the Rapa Nui megalithic art, where most of the moai in different styles, sizes and positions were carved and can still be admired today. An unforgettable picture!

STRIKING NATURAL SIGHTS...

Our excursion to the western part of the island leads us to the ceremonial village of Orongo, built into the slopes, with earth covered roofs, overlooking the Ocean and some islets, where the indigenous people celebrated the election of the birdman, the most important ceremony of the island. Orongo, with spectacular landscapes, on the edge of a volcano on one side and falling abruptly in the Ocean on the other side, is exposed to



... facing inland



Moai with hat, the prestigious pukao



Strong winds at the edge



*of the volcano
at Orongo*

strong winds and heavy rains. The accumulation of rain water inside the crater has formed a lagoon, one of the main sources of water for the population of Hanga Roa, until a few decades ago.

***ARTFUL & CREATIVE SIGHTS
AT THE EXQUISITE NAYARA
HOTEL...***

During our stay at 'Nayara' Hangaroa Hotel, an exquisite place and a member of the 'Leading hotels of the World', we meet the general manager Jorge Torres for an interview. And we learn about the hotel's 'Kainga' philosophy to respect and honor 'Mother Earth', meaning to protect and preserve the magic of Rapa Nui. And so, consequently, the hotel is working with politics of high sustainability, such as with water management, a careful movement of water resources, with green roofs, that help with the temperature control, with no compromising design in the beautiful nature and with a social commitment to work with national and local artisans. Renowned Chilean architects realized the amazing project of the artful and natural design of the hotel, in reusing 500 cypress logs, brought from the company's own forests in Puyehue in the 10th region in the South of Chile, in conserving them by building them, after a complex treatment, in the architecture of the hotel. And following the vision of consideration and the tradition of the island, all the rooms are blessed by a Shaman.



*The exquisite Nayara
Hangaroa hotel*





nestled in a beautiful parc



with a view over the Pacific Ocean

CULINARY SIGHTS IN KALOA RESTAURANT

We start our dinner along with Paulina and Sergio of the hotel's management at the elegant Kaloa restaurant with a fruity, fresh Rosé Reserva 2023 'Las Mulas', an organic wine of Miguel Torres of the Valle Central, with the full flavor of red berries and strawberries. A nice combination with the Tataki de atún y kana kana, cuts of fresh tuna and local fish, in tataki style, briefly seared, leaving the interior raw and served with leche de tigre.

And for an extra exotic touch to our dish, the chef Kymy Munoz Krause, the passionate young cook, tells us one of these adventurous stories gringos love to hear, about fishermen being in the deep dark Ocean for hours at night, catching huge tunas of more than 100 kg, to be then served in one of these fantastic dishes...wow! The main plate, the Ra Rape, a small indigenous type of lobster, freshly caught, put on top of a millefeuille, with layers of sweet purple potatoes and beetroot, covered with butter is absolutely delicious and the 'Loma Larga' Pinot Noir 2022, of the Valle de Casablanca underlines with its freshness and soft tannins of red currents the delicacy and fineness of the culinary creation.

And as Chileans love sweets, the chef knows of course how to seduce our palates with a rich selection of mouth-watering desserts, such as the papaya, mango and passionfruit icecream, coated with coconut flakes, the crema catalana 'façon Nayara', with pumpkin seeds and sweet potatoe and the traditional great banana cake.



The elegant Kaloa restaurant



Patricio serves the 'Las Mulas' Rosé



... with the fine tuna tataki



Chef Kymy preparing our menu



The delicate millefeuille with lobster





*A delicious icecream with
coconut flakes*



Crema catalana façon Nayara



Traditional Banana cake

A GASTRONOMICAL VISIT AT EXPLORA

Explora, with remoted, award winning heavenly lodges, with elegant functionality and sophisticated comfort, located in extraordinary places, is famous for exploring and deeply connecting with nature in South America's remotest corners for more than 25 years. In addition to outstanding journeys, Explora progressively acquired and protected territories of particular fragility and ecological value and founded the 'Conservation Reserves'. More about Explora's philosophy and projects in one of the next Vinalu editions on our stay and experience in Explora / 'Valle Sagrado' in Peru. In Rapa Nui, where the lodge blends into the beautiful landscape in a privileged and secluded place, surrounded by trees and prairies, with fantastic views over the Pacific Ocean, we have the pleasure of talking to the general manager Matias Alamo. He points out, that in Explora/ Easter Island, obviously the explorations, besides hiking and bicycle riding, are mainly focused on snorkeling and worldclass diving. And as people are exploring in the daytime, the fine gastronomy for lunch is in a buffet presentation, which is also the force of Explora. The classic, high class dinner, with local ingredients, is served à la carte.



surrounded by prairies

The award winning Explora lodge





*Interview with general manager
Matias Alamo*



*... near the pool with a far
reaching view over the Pacific*



Sophisticated interior design





Nikkei styled ceviche



Tuna gravlax



Pork ribs mashed with taro

THE FINE DINNER...

For our menu the chef Marco Guzman suggests the Nikkei styled ceviche of tuna fish, with 'leche de tigre', the spicy Peruvian marinade, mustard seeds and sweet purple potatoes, adding a creamy, nutty and earthy flavor to the juicy ceviche and a gravlax of tuna, with pickles of onions and carrots, with a piquante pineapple purée. We like the combination of the dried tuna's saltiness and the sweet, fruity acidity of the pineapple. And as Matias explains, for this gravlax recipe, the fish is dried like air dried ham, giving it a different texture, compared to the soft gravlax we are familiar with, when marinated with salt, sugar, lemon and aneth. A very tasty discovery.



Porotos with kana kana



Profiteroles stuffed with diplomat cream

***SERVED WITH TOP MONTSECANO
PINOT NOIR 2022***

And a perfect match with the top Montsecano Pinot Noir 2022 from Casablanca Valley, with a brilliant garnet red colour in the glass, a bouquet of ripe dark cherries and raspberries, with the full flavor of red and black fruits on the palate, with a complex structure, a fine minerality and a long velvety finish. An elegant wine. A great combination also with the platos de fondo' the guiso de porotos, the traditional bean stew with fish, the tender pork ribs, mashed with taro (manioc), coming with a honey, cinnamon sauce and with the dessert, profiteroles, stuffed with a delicate diplomate cream. Salud!



Served with an excellent Pinot Noir



from Bodega Montsecano

Renault Rafale E-TECH Full Hybrid 200 Esprit Alpine:

Powerful Elegance with Efficiency Potential

With a top speed of 445 km/h, the Caudron-Rafale aircraft zipped through the azure blue sky about 90 years ago, and the excellent pilot Hélène Boucher achieved the world speed record for women at the time with this plane. While the latest creation from Renault isn't quite as fast, it's an impressive showcase model. Our test vehicle in the matching sky blue confirmed most of the positive expectations.

The Rafale can aptly be described as Renault's renewed attempt to enter the fiercely competitive premium market, where Renault, like other French manufacturers, has struggled to find much success so far. Its graceful SUV-coupe shape, featuring a pleasingly sharp body design in powerful elegance, signals sportiness while still appealing to the average family. Its dimensions are comparable to those of the Espace, positioning the Rafale at the upper end of Renault's model range, and it has already been seen as the brand's new flagship.

Beneath the bodywork lies Renault's latest hybrid technology. The E-TECH Full Hybrid 200 is powered by a 1.2-liter three-cylinder gasoline engine driving the front wheels, supported by a 70-hp electric motor and an additional 34-hp electric generator that assists during starting and gear shifts. This results in a combined system output of 200 hp, and those who might think this isn't sufficient for the Rafale are sorely mistaken! In addition to accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in 8.9 seconds and a top speed of 180 km/h, this type of drivetrain offers particularly interesting fuel economy figures.



On our 1,300-kilometer test drive through the Thuringian Forest, the Rafale, built at the Palencia plant in Spain, impressed in every regard. Even during hours of full-throttle driving on German autobahns at 170–180 km/h, the consumption settled at just 4.9 l/100 km, provided the benefits of the full-hybrid system were effectively utilized. In the opinion of this writer, this hybrid technology represents one of the best options available to long-distance drivers at the moment especially for those who don't see spending their time hunting for charging stations as a way of life. Compared to the previous generation's hybrid systems, this technology is miles ahead. The small three-cylinder engine integrates almost silently into the cabin's background noise when needed, while also providing the reassuring feeling that you won't be stranded without charging stations (particularly in former East Germany areas). The interior is enhanced by several nice touches, including a flexible dimmable panoramic glass roof, blue fabric lining in the door pockets, and an Alcantara-trimmed "Alpine-A" emblem that glows and pulses at night. However, like other Renault models, the high-mounted gear selector for drive modes protrudes into the driver's field of view, partially blocking the display screen. The top-end Renault Rafale E-TECH Full Hybrid 200 Esprit Alpine costs €46,317 (including optional extras) in Luxembourg as of December 2024. However, there is also a Renault Rafale Techno starting at €42,545. Our thanks go to Renault Belgique-Luxembourg for providing the test vehicle.



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