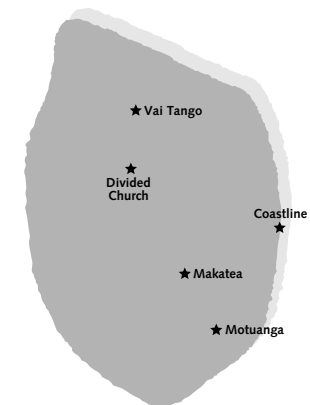


Ma'uke

Ma'uke is known as the 'garden island' of the Cooks, and it's not difficult to see why. It's one of the lushest and most verdant of all the islands, ringed by thick forests of casuarina, palm, banyan and barringtonia trees, and blanketed in richly coloured flowers and blossoming shrubs. A couple of hours' stroll can take you from the spick-and-span gardens and neatly tended front lawns of the main villages in the island's centre, along ancient *makatea* (raised, fossilised coral reef) pathways shaded by tangled forest and lofty palms, all the way to the deserted beaches and coves along the island's coast. Ma'uke's *makatea* is also honeycombed with caves and sinkholes, many filled with sparkling freshwater pools, cool and silent on a blazing hot tropical day. If you're looking for seclusion and solitude in the Cook Islands, Ma'uke is hard to top.

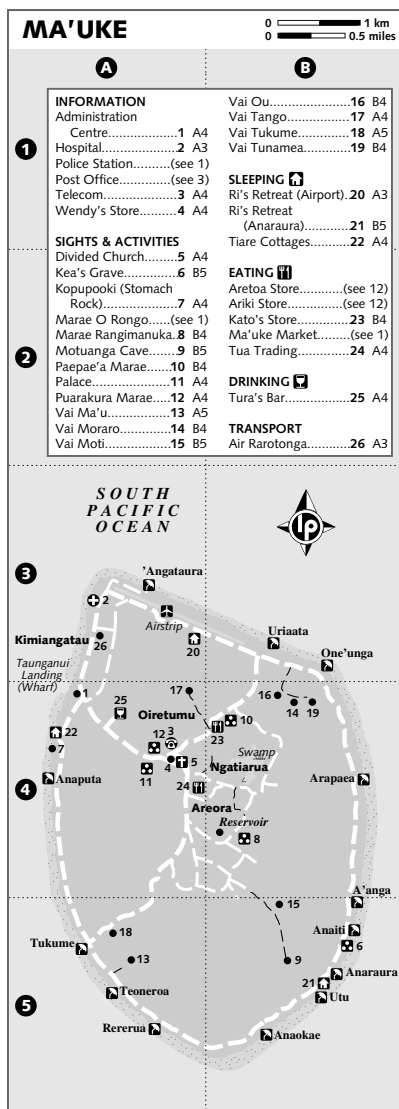
HIGHLIGHTS

- Delving into the depths of **Motuanga** (p125), the Cave of 100 Rooms
- Admiring the interior of Ma'uke's famous **Divided Church** (p128)
- Plunging into the crystal-clear water at **Vai Tango** (p126)
- Wandering along the ancient coral pathways across the **makatea**
- Drinking in the views along the island's spectacular **coastline**



■ POPULATION: 440

■ AREA: 18.4 SQ KM



HISTORY

Ma'uke's traditional name is 'Akatokamanava (Land Where My Heart Is at Rest). It was named by its legendary founder 'Uke, who (depending on which legend you read) either named the island after a long voyage from 'Avaiki (the land of the spirits) or, rather less poetically, from Ra'iatea in

the Society Islands. He is traditionally supposed to have landed, in the huge canoe Paipaimoana, at Arapaea on the eastern coast. 'Uke later renamed the island Ma-Uke (Land of 'Uke), but Ma'uke is still referred to as 'Akatokamanava in traditional songs and stories.

'Uke had two daughters, renowned for their beauty, and when the two famous Rarotongan settlers, Tangi'ia and Karika, came seeking these girls for marriage, they went to live on Rarotonga. 'Uke's four sons also went to other islands, so that 'Uke became a common ancestor for all the islands of the Southern Group.

Before the arrival of Christianity, Ma'uke was dominated by the island of 'Atiu. The people of 'Atiu would frequently descend on the island in murderous, cannibal raids; the 19th-century *ariki* (chief) Rongomatane, was particularly feared as a ruthless taker of slaves and eater of men. In 1823, when the first European, the missionary John Williams, arrived on Ma'uke, it was Rongomatane who arrived with him. Unsurprisingly, the Ma'ukeans were converted to Christianity with an ease and speed that astonished the missionaries.

Despite Christian influence, Ma'uke still remained subject to 'Atiu. When the British Protectorate of the Cook Islands was declared in 1888, it was an 'Atiuan chief, Ngamaru Ariki, who gave permission on behalf of Ma'uke. New Zealand officially ended 'Atiuan rule in the early 1900s.

THE CULTURE

Ma'uke's three *ariki* titles – Tararo, Teau and Samuela – are descended from three chiefs appointed by 'Atiuan conquerors in the 19th century (though Ma'ukeans generally don't like to be reminded of that). One of the few 'palaces' in the outer Cooks that really looks the part stands opposite Ariki Store in the centre of the island. It was built for Tararo Jane Ariki in 1982, but Tararo politics interrupted construction and it stands impressive but unfinished.

ENVIRONMENT

Like 'Atiu, Mangaia and Mitiaro, Ma'uke is a raised atoll with surrounding *makatea*. Inland from the *makatea*, which is densely forested with lush jungle, a band of swampland surrounds the flat, fertile plateau in

the island's centre. The middle of the island is only slightly higher than the surrounding *makatea*; Ma'uke is barely 30m above sea level at its highest point. The island is roughly half the size of Rarotonga – 18km round compared with the 32km of Rarotonga, and as on many of the smaller islands, there are no rivers, meaning Ma'ukeans have to rely on either underground wells or rain tubs for fresh water and irrigation. Like the other *makatea* islands, Ma'uke is best-known for its numerous limestone caves.

INFORMATION

Electricity operates on Ma'uke 24 hours a day. However, bringing a good torch (flashlight) is an excellent idea, especially if you want to check out any caves – the tour guides here are less organised than on other islands, and they might not have one to lend you.

You may also want to bring some provisions with you – the small village shops are considerably more expensive than those on Rarotonga, and their supplies are quite limited (fine if you're partial to tinned mackerel and three varieties of corned beef).

Administration Centre (near wharf) The mayor, island secretary (☎ 35200) and a 24-hour Kia Orana cardphone (☎ 35155) are here.

Hospital (☎ 35664; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri)

Police station (☎ 35086) Located between the Administration Centre and the wharf.

Post office (☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) In Ngatiarua village, in the centre of the island.

Telecom (☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) There's a 24-hour Kia Orana cardphone (☎ 35685) outside and a small Cyberpost for accessing the Internet (NZ\$10.50 per 30 minutes).

Wendy's Store (☎ 35102; Areora) This shop, near the Divided Church, is an ANZ agent and changes US dollars.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

If you'll be doing any walking on the island, you'll need mosquito repellent, and if you'll be doing any walking across the *makatea*, be sure to bring some sturdy shoes. Don't try to walk across the *makatea* in sandals or flip-flops (even if the locals do) – the rocks are liable to shift suddenly (with a sound strangely reminiscent of crockery shifting in the sink) and they really are painfully sharp – you could easily cut yourself very badly.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Caves & Walks

Like 'Atiu and Mangaia, Ma'uke is ringed by *makatea*, though compared with the other islands it's relatively flat and walking across it is generally much easier. Most of the caves are only a short walk from the coastal road, and can be reached via ancient coral roads through the jungle. The deep, clear freshwater pools in many of the island's caves are a definite highlight, thoroughly welcome after a long tramp through the tangled bush.

You'll need a guide to find most of the caves on Ma'uke. Unlike many other islands, the problem is not that you'll be trespassing on private land – it's just that some of the caves are extremely hard to find and it's easy to get lost in the bush.

Motuanga Cave is Ma'uke's most famous cave, a network of tunnels and caverns that begins deep inland, but is rumoured to extend all the way out to sea. The cave is traditionally known as the 'Cave of 100 Rooms', and was often used by islanders as a hiding place from 'Atiuan war parties. Nobody can remember the last person who reached all of Motuanga's 100 rooms; the rocks are slowly closing in and nowadays you can

JULIAN DASHWOOD

One of Ma'uke's most famous residents was the writer Julian Dashwood (1899–1971), a flamboyant English author who was known as 'Rakau' (wood) on the island. After spending his early years in Istanbul, South Africa and Malaya, Dashwood arrived in the Cook Islands in the 1930s, and worked in Manihiki and Mangaia before moving to Ma'uke, where he married a local woman and later ran the island store. Under the pseudonym of Julian Hillas, Dashwood wrote evocatively about his life and experiences in the Cook Islands in his books *South Seas Paradise* and *Today is Forever*, which is largely about Ma'uke. For a while in the 1960s he worked for the newly formed Cook Islands Government before giving up politics to return to writing. His grave can still be seen outside his old house (now derelict) near the airport – ask any local person to point it out.