**Selling TRAVEL**

**Cook Islands**

***By Anna Selby  |  May 2015  |  6 minute read***

[PERFECT 10](http://www.sellingtravel.co.uk/cook-islands#Perfect10) [SELLING POINT](http://www.sellingtravel.co.uk/cook-islands#SellingPoint) [WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY](http://www.sellingtravel.co.uk/cook-islands#WhatTheExpertsSay) [WHAT'S NEW](http://www.sellingtravel.co.uk/cook-islands#WhatsNew) [WHERE TO BOOK IT](http://www.sellingtravel.co.uk/cook-islands#WhereToBookIt)

Comprised of 15 near-perfect islands scattered like precious jewels across a swathe of the South Pacific, the Cook Islands’ key draws include perfect beaches, rugged mountainous interiors, coral atolls, authentic Polynesian culture, snorkelling in crystal-clear lagoons and diving out beyond the reef. The Cooks are great for a two-cent re trip, too, combined with New Zealand or Tahiti, Fiji or Samoa.

*“A cruise to the Cook Islands can be a cheaper alternative to a land-based holiday. My favourite place is Aitutaki where the water is impossibly clear to 200ft depths – perfect for divers”*

ELAINE GILLIARD, UK MARKETING MANAGER, PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES

***Perfect 10***

**1 Island idylls:** There are 15 in total, scattered over an area the size of India, all with pure white coral sands, fringed with palm trees

**2 Diving and snorkelling:** Abundant marine life and coral reefs and protected lagoons make for safe and stunning snorkelling and diving

**3 Accommodation:** The Cook Islands have a wide range of hotels from five-star resorts to hostels and homestays

**4 Polynesian culture:** Visitors can delve into this fascinating and ancient culture at the [Highland Paradise cultural centre in Rarotonga](http://www.highlandparadise.co.ck/), and on every village street

**5 Entertainment:** The Cook Islands claim to have the best dancers and musicians in the South Pacific and visitors can see great shows all over the islands

**6 Aitutaki:** The second of the Cook Islands has arguably the most beautiful lagoon on the planet

**7 Climate:** Temperate, warm weather is all year round

**8 Unique wildlife:** Including an echo-locating swift that lives in caves

**9 Black pearls:** These beautiful and unusual gems cost a fraction of the price than they would in Tahiti

**10 Sports and activities:** the mountainous interior and great for trekking and biking and watersports abound in the clear and warm sea

***Selling point***

The Cook Islands’ fascinating Polynesian culture is at the centre of the BBC drama series, [Tatau](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4122348/), that was filmed on location in the Cook Islands. The series highlights the beauty of the Cook Islands, from turquoise lagoons to unique culture, including the myths and symbolism of the Rarotongan Maoris.

***What the experts say***

*“We have around 3,000 passengers from the UK every year. This year is going to be particularly good because of the Independence celebrations. “We are pressing ahead with online training and doing regular road shows, recently visiting London, Preston (where the winner won a trip to the Cooks), Glasgow and Brighton.”*

IAN GRIFFITHS, UK DIRECTOR, COOK ISLANDS TOURISM

*“The Cooks’ third island, Atiu, is home to 11 native bird species that flourish in its isolated forests. We’d recommend taking a tour with Birdman George, a colourful local character – the birds literally eat out of his hand.”*

ELLEN CROSS, AUSTRALASIA EXPERT, COX & KINGS

***What’s new***

**Airlines:** In early 2016 [Air New Zealand](http://www.airnewzealand.co.uk/) will put a Boeing 777 on the route between Los Angeles and Rarotonga (which will link to the flight leaving from Heathrow). This means more airline seats from the northern hemisphere into the Cooks, with a bigger Premium Economy cabin.

[Virgin Australia](http://www.virginaustralia.com/) is now operating up to five times a week between Auckland and Rarotonga. Using the 176-seat Boeing 737-800 aircraft, the flight takes around four hours. Business class has been introduced on the route and features luxury leather seating, menus designed by resident chef Luke Mangan with premium drinks and comfort packs with bedding and amenity kits.

**Accommodation:** The new four-and-a-half-star [Nautilus Resort](http://www.nautilusresortrarotonga.com/) on Rarotonga’s Muri Beach has a spa, water sports, beachfront restaurant and each room has its own saltwater plunge pool. Special wedding and honeymoon packages are available. There are five wedding packages in all price ranges, including one featuring a ceremony on a tiny deserted island specially reserved for the couple and their guests.

***Where to book it***

A 13-day package to the Cook Islands with [Cox & Kings](http://www.coxandkings.co.uk/) includes Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Atiu, plus transfers, accommodation with breakfast and a guided tour of each island, is priced from £3295pp.

A seven-night holiday to the Cook Islands with [Austravel](http://www.austravel.com/) is priced from £1,849pp. The offer includes a week at the three-star-plus Sunset Resort Raratonga on a B&B basis and transfers and return flights from Heathrow with Air New Zealand.

[Paul Gauguin Cruises](http://www.pgcruises.com/) runs an 11-night Cook & Society Islands cruise (departing December 5 in 2015), priced from £3076pp.