

MAGIC. . . Mysterious And Enchanting Quality

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Aitutaki

Cook Islands Casts Its Spell



eLocal Editor Mykeljon finds a breathtaking holiday spot that is easily accessible, no poisonous snakes or language problems, uses Kiwi \$\$ and is affordable!

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With the thought of winter settling in after such a great Kiwi summer I wanted to find a spot for Franklin's eco-tourist travelers that would be warm, friendly, relaxing, budget specific and nothing short of 'magic'. This I know was a tall order to satisfy however I sincerely believe you must put this captivating spot on your to do list! Aitutaki is synonymous to 'magic' and is indeed the jewel of the Cook Islands crown.

Aitutaki Island is a Pacific treasure loaded with goodies and is a 45 minute flight north of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands (3.5 hrs flight north east from Auckland). What do you pack? That's simple. . . your togs, sun-block, sandals, a couple of T shirts, insect repellent, a camera and a book to read (in case you just can't stand relaxing with cocktail in hand anymore). Oh and if you are looking for exclusive dream spot to get married don't forget your garter!

With a knapsack packed I am outta here! Having no real expectations and not visiting the Cook Islands before I really did not know what to look forward to. First stop, Rarotonga. Even at 3am (arrival time) it was a delicious 20 degrees. Greeted with aromatic flower leis and a traditional ukulele songster, you knew

you had landed in the Pacific Islands. Now, Rarotonga is really easy to get around, it's either clockwise or anti clockwise and on a scooter it takes you about 45min to circumnavigate. To get a scooter you have to get a Cook Islands drivers license – this is an easy process and is only a \$15 cost. But then, go hire a scooter and go wild!

Catch the 10am flight to Aitutaki and 45 minutes later you are peering out of the window looking at the most stunning coral atoll you could imagine. This is what you see on the movies! Come to think of it this is where the reality TV series Survivor and Shipwrecked were shot (to coin a good ol' English term 'it's right wicked').

We were met by Manarangi Tutai Ariki, the Queen of Aitutaki courtesy of relative Mata Arnold (Brighthouse Design Pukekohe) an original Aitutakian. To be honest I wondered if I had to bow or bring gifts from a faraway land... but no, Tutai as she is known informally is part of the very soul of Aitutaki and her heart beats in rhythm with her people. I was very taken by her aura and presence and you will read more about Aitutaki's Queen.

