

Easter Island mystery

Easter Island has a mystery. How and why did its inhabitants carve and transport the massive statues which surround the island?

Easter Island is a triangular volcanic island in the Pacific Ocean, over 3600 kilometres from Tahiti or Chile. It is one of the most isolated places on Earth. It is famous for the 800 giant stone statues that dot the coastline. The early explorers discovered the island on Easter Day in 1722, and named it Easter Island.

Where did Easter Islanders come from? Some say the people who built the statues were from South America where there is similar stonework. Others have suggested that Easter Islanders are the last people of a lost continent, or even part of an alien invasion.

Pacific Islanders (Polynesians) came to the island about 1500 years ago.

As the population grew to more than 10 000 the land could not support so many people. (In 2002 the population was about 3500.) Food and materials became scarce, and the palm forests were destroyed—cleared for farming and to move the huge statues to coastal locations.

Although called 'Easter Island heads', they are kneeling figures with their hands over their stomach. A few statues have become buried up to their necks by shifting soils.

