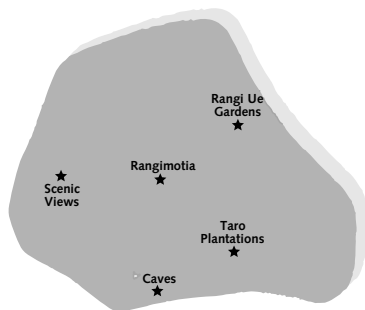


Mangaia

The ancient island of Mangaia is thought to be the oldest island in the South Pacific, and it's a place where you can certainly feel the centuries stretching back. Vast circular towers of *makatea* (raised, fossilised coral reef) ring the island's fertile central valleys, in some places dropping down in sheer 60m cliffs, and there are several scenic lookouts where you can admire uninterrupted views across to the highest peak on the island, Rangimotia. It's a proud and mysterious island, renowned for its unique culture and sense of independence, and there are many ancient *marae* (ancient meeting grounds) to discover, as well as some of the finest Missionary-era churches in the Cook Islands. But like the other islands of the Southern Group, Mangaia is most famous for its dramatic cave systems, especially the massive burial chamber of Te Rua Rere and the labyrinthine Tuatini Caves. It's also rumoured to be a haunted island – the spirits of ancient ancestors are believed to walk aboard on the island once the sun sets, and many locals won't venture into the murky *makatea* after dark.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Descending into the depths of Mangaia's many **caves** (p139)
- Trekking through the lush **taro plantations** (p141) in the island's centre
- Surveying the scene from the **scenic views** (p139) at the top of the *makatea*
- Seeking out the elusive **Mangaian kingfisher** (p139)
- Climbing up to the island's highest point at **Rangimotia** (p139)
- Strolling around the clifftop gardens at **Rangi Ue** (p141)
- Joining in with the *mama* (older ladies) to make some **pupu 'ei** (p143)



■ POPULATION: 780

■ AREA: 51.8 SQ KM

HISTORY

The Mangaiaans have an unusual legend of their early history. Most Polynesian islands have some sort of legend about a great ancestor arriving on a fantastic canoe, but not the Mangaiaans. Nobody sailed from anywhere to become Mangaia's first settler. Rangi, Mokoiro and Akataura, the three sons of the god Rongo, father of Mangaia, simply lifted the island up from the deep, becoming its first settlers and the ancestors of the Nga Ariki tribe.

The traditional name of the island was A'u A'u (literally 'terraced' – named for the 'steps' of the *makatea*), short for A'u A'u Nui o Rongo ki te Ao Marama (Big Terraced Land of Rongo in the World of Daylight). See p35 for how Rongo became Mangaia's premier deity.

The island's current name is comparatively new; it is short for a name bestowed by Tamaeu, an Aitutakian who arrived on Mangaia in 1775. Mangaia means 'Peace' or 'Temporal Power' – the name relates to 42 battles between the island's various groups and the peace that was finally established when one leader eventually achieved *mangaia* (power) over the whole island.

Two years later, James Cook claimed the European discovery of Mangaia during his second Pacific voyage. He arrived on 29 March 1777, but the Mangaiaans gave him a frosty welcome, so Cook sailed north to find a friendlier greeting at 'Atiu.

Uniquely in the Cook Islands, cannibalism had already been outlawed by the time the missionaries turned up in 1823. The great Mangaian chief Mautara had banned the practice almost a century before: since most Mangaiaans were related in some way, either by blood or marriage, Mautara decided that family harmony was probably not best served by the custom of serving up your siblings for dinner.

Nevertheless, the missionaries were not given the warmest of receptions when they first arrived. The pioneering missionary John Williams stumbled across the island in 1823 while he was searching for Rarotonga. He attempted to set Polynesian missionaries ashore, but the Mangaiaans attacked them, so Williams promptly dropped the idea and sailed off again. A couple of missionaries from Tahaa (in present-day French Polynesia) landed in 1824, and although they

were fairly inept, their successor, the Rarotongan preacher Maretu, eventually had more success. Maretu's book *Cannibals & Converts* describes Mangaia's conversion to Christianity.

Like many of the outer islands, Mangaia is struggling with an ongoing population decline. Since the mid-1970s the population of the island, stable for some time at around 2000, has fallen to almost a third of that, and so far the trend shows no sign of reversing.

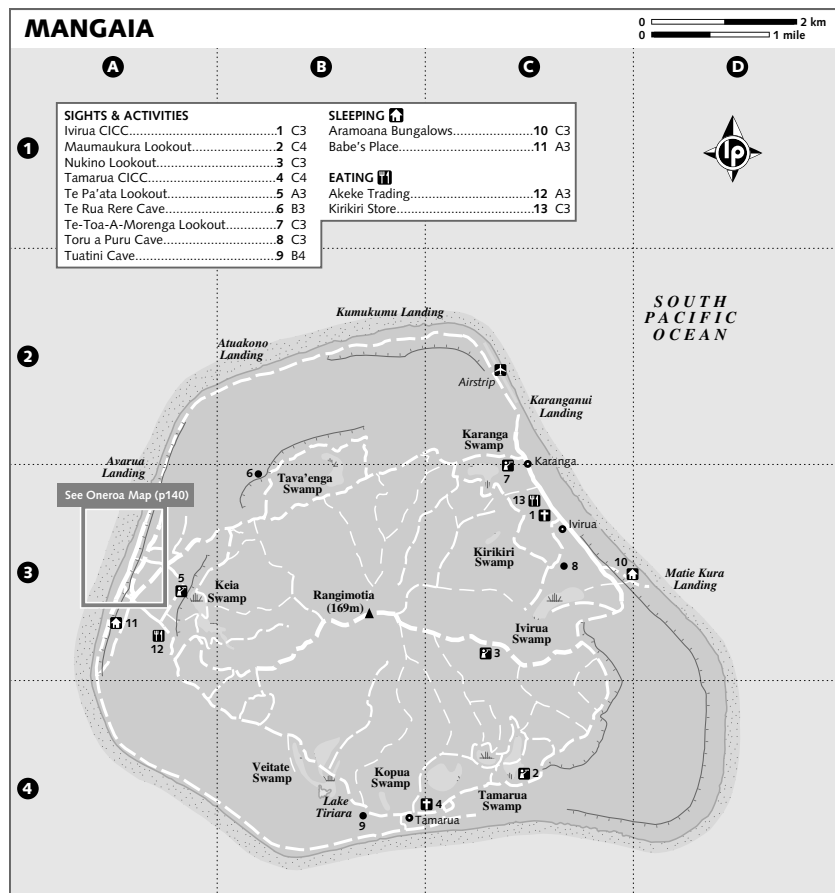
THE CULTURE

Mangaia has just one *ariki* (high chief), the queen Numangatini Nooroa Ariki, who lives in New Zealand. The island's six traditional districts are ruled by *kavana* (governors or district chiefs), while the 30-odd *kairanganuku* (subchiefs) are the people who actually own the land, not the *ariki*. A Mangaian saying sums it up: 'You are my king; you own nothing'.

Mangaiaans have a reputation for stubbornness, independence and self-sufficiency, traits that were no doubt accentuated by the island's geographical distance from the rest of the Southern Group. They're also sometimes referred to as 'The British of the Cook Islands' – a title that's not always meant as a compliment, and which clearly derives from their haughty reputation.

Mangaiaans still identify strongly with whichever of the six districts their family came from. Whether it's sporting events or dance competitions, the people divide down district lines. Each district is also divided into tribal areas; as you walk through the inland *makatea* you'll often see short stone walls marking ancient tribal boundaries. Like Mitiaro, Mangaia was never surveyed and there's no land court – disputes are settled by family agreement or, as a last resort, the *ariki*.

As a result of the Bible being preached here by Rarotongans, the Mangaian language is now almost identical to Rarotongan. It's believed that older Mangaiaans spoke a very different language – more similar to New Zealand Maori (particularly as spoken in the Taranaki region in New Zealand) than to Rarotongan. Some differences do remain; the most common greeting in Mangaian is *tangi ke*, rather than the Rarotongan *kia orana*.



ENVIRONMENT

Mangaia's *makatea* is undoubtedly the most dramatic of any of the islands of the Southern Group, rising rapidly from the coast and in most places dropping as a sheer wall into the inner valleys. The deep central basin inside the *makatea* would once have contained volcanic mountains similar to those found on Rarotonga, but these disappeared long ago, and the area is now taken up by crop plantations and *taro* fields. Some of the cuttings leading inland through the *makatea* are quite spectacular, especially the ones behind the villages of Ivirua and Oneroa.

All the streams and rivers running down from the central hills flow into a dead end caused by the inner cliff of the *makatea*, fil-

tering through it and emerging as a number of small freshwater springs at or near the seashore.

Much of the island's mountainous central area is planted with Caribbean pine trees, which prevent erosion. The trees, which were planted as a New Zealand aid project, were initially expected to become an important timber crop for the island, but with after the dismissal of the majority of Mangaia's forestry staff following the 1996 economic crisis, the trees were left unpruned and unthinned. Now, it wouldn't be economical to harvest the trees, although many locals think they spoil the native landscape and wish they'd disappear.

INFORMATION

Electricity operates on Mangaia 24 hours a day. The police station is in the rear section of the tourism office. The post office is in the Telecom building.

Babe's Store (Map p140; ☎ 34092; Oneroa) The island's ANZ agent; you can get credit-card cash advances here, and cash NZ travellers cheques.

Hospital (Map p140; ☎ 34027; Temakatea) Staffed 24 hours for emergencies.

Telecom (Map p140; ☎ 34680; 📠 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) On the hill above Oneroa, in Temakatea, near the hospital. You can make long-distance phone calls, and send and receive faxes. There's a 24-hour public phone (☎ 34000) you can use with your Kia Orana card and a small Cyberpost for getting online (NZ\$10.50 per hour).

Tourism office (Map p140; ☎ 34289) In the Administration Centre at the bottom of the Temakatea road cutting.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Island Walks

Mangaia has some of the most dramatic natural scenery in the Cook Islands. The *makatea* ring around the island's edge is much higher (and much older) than on the other islands of the Southern Group, and at various points the towering *makatea* cliffs offer stunning views across the central inland valleys. A network of roads and rough dirt tracks criss-cross the island, joining the main coast road with the interior plantations; they're all great for walking, but the distances are long and it's not hard to get lost, so take care.

The best lookouts are in the process of being properly cleared by the tourist office. Two of the finest views can be seen from the **Te Pa'ata lookout** (Map p138), just inland from Oneroa near the old Tapatī battlefield and the Keia *taro* gardens, and the **Nukino lookout** (Map p138), on the dirt road down toward the east coast from Rangimotia. Other excellent spots are the **Te-Toa-A-Morenga lookout** (Map p138) just inland from Ivirua and the **Maumaukura lookout** (Map p138), which has a glorious view inland from the top of the *makatea* cliff.

Rangimotia (169m) is the highest point on the island. It's not really a peak, more of a high plateau. You'll know when you're at the top as there are two telephone masts, but you have to explore a few hundred metres in several directions to see the entire coast. From the Oneroa side of the island

THE MANGAIAN KINGFISHER

If you're lucky while you're on Mangaia, you'll see a *tanga'eo* (Mangaian kingfisher), a bird endemic to this island. In the 1970s it was feared that the *tanga'eo* had become extinct, pushed out of its habitat by Indian mynahs, and its eggs plundered by rats. However, the *tanga'eo* did survive, and its population is now estimated to be around 500.

Walk through Mangaia's native-forest interior and you've got a fairly good chance of spotting one of these small birds, recognisable by their relatively large beak, blue-and-white plumage and confident manner.

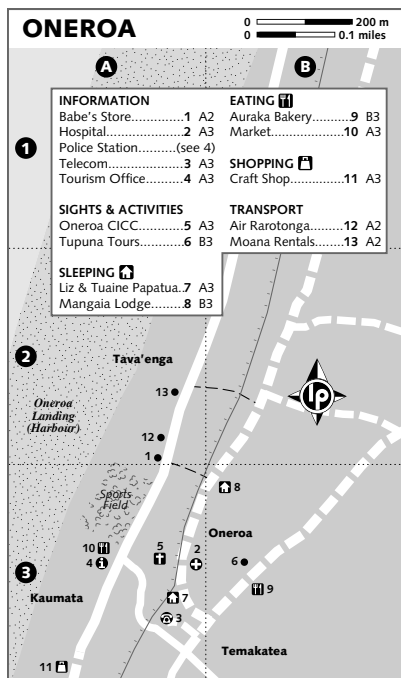
there's a dirt road right to the top, with two smaller roads nearby leading to the island's **dam** and **wind generator**. Other roads and tracks, less distinct, follow the ridges of Mangaia's rolling hills back towards the coast. From Oneroa up to Rangimotia, down to Tamarua and back to Oneroa is a pleasant, but quite long, day's walk; over 25km in total.

A number of the **cuttings** through the *makatea* cliffs are beautiful for short walks, with narrow roads winding between the high, grey cliffs, hanging with vines and climbing plants. The cutting from Ivirua village heading inland to the *taro* swamp behind the village is probably the most beautiful on the island, with its steep walls draped with ferns and creepers.

There are also a couple of bowl-shaped depressions along the inland roads that are thought to be old **underground ovens** – though no one's quite sure whether they were simply used for harmless *umukai* (traditional Polynesian food), or for feasts of a rather more sinister nature.

Caves

Like its sister islands in the Southern Group, Mangaia's *makatea* is honeycombed with caves, though many are larger and deeper than the ones you'll find elsewhere. The largest and most spectacular is **Te Rua Rere** (Map p138), a burial cave that was rediscovered in the 1930s by a local, Tuaratua George, and Robert Dean Frisbie. Te Rua Rere means 'jump' (possibly because people used to jump down into the cave opening). This dramatic



cave holds many crystalline, glistening-white stalactites and stalagmites, but the most interesting feature, apart from the human skeletons, is simply how far it continues. There are no major side chambers but the main cavern continues on and on. Some people brave enough to keep exploring reckon that it continues for at least 2km, though no-one has ever reached the end. Wear old clothes for this tour, as you'll get quite muddy, and remember to bring mosquito repellent and a powerful torch. Tuara George, whose family has been exploring this cave for decades, is the guide (see p142).

Mangaia has many other caverns worth exploring, including the multileveled **Tuatini Cave** (Map p138) and the long, maze-like **Toru a Puru Cave** (Map p138). Each cave is on private land, so arrangements must be made with the appropriate landowner and visited with the correct guide. It's thought there are many more caves lost in the *makatea*, including some that contain forgotten weapons and sacred artefacts, and one fabled cave that's rumoured to contain the bones of a race of giant warriors.

Churches & Marae

Mangaia has some of the best-preserved churches in the Cooks, mainly built in the 1890s shortly after the departure of William Wyatt Gill, the historian-missionary who spent much of his life on Mangaia and recounted his experiences in *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia*. The **Tamarua CICC** (Cook Islands Christian Church; Map p138), surrounded by a shady grove of ironwood trees, is especially beautiful. Look for the wood-carving and the sennit-rope binding on the roof beams. These features were once found in all Mangaia's churches, and were especially dramatic at the large **Oneroa CICC** (Map p140), although most of the original decoration was removed in the 1980s. In front of the Oneroa CICC an interesting monument lists ministers of the church, both *papa'a* (foreigners) and Maori, as well as Mangaian who have worked abroad as missionaries. The **Ivirua CICC** (Map p138) has undergone the most alteration of all, but it's still worth a look, especially for the Te Mata o Te Atua (the Eyes of God) – small circular openings in the gable ends of the church, intended to represent the all-seeing eyes of God.

Mangaia also has many premissionary *marae*, many of which are currently being cleared. There are 24 around the island, but you'll need a local expert to find them – contact Tupuna at Tupuna Tours (see p142). Mangaia's *marae* are no longer used in modern ceremonies though, which is the case on some other Cook Islands.

Beaches & Lake Tiriara

Countless little beaches and bays dot the coastline, although they're not that good for swimming – the reef is very shallow and generally close to the coast. The only place where the water is deep enough to swim is at the wharf at Avarua Landing near Oneroa, which is often packed with kids at weekends and is a popular fishing spot. After a dip at the wharf, locals often head about 100m to the left (south) to where a small freshwater spring gushes up from the *makatea*, with refreshing cool water and tiny fish. The spring is too small for swimming, but you can sit in the water to wash off the sea salt.

On the southwestern side of the island, Tuati Beach is a tiny unmarked beach too shallow for swimming, but you can splash around and it's very attractive. There's also

a sandy beach at Karanganui Landing on the northeastern side of the island, where again you can get wet, but it's too shallow for swimming. Many of the coves are quite difficult to spot from the main road – look out for the faint pathways leading towards the coast.

Lake Tiriara, the only lake on the island, is surrounded by swamp and high reeds, but it's clearly visible from the inland road from Tamarua to Oneroa. The sheer cliffs of the *makatea* rise behind the lake on the opposite side from the road, covered with vines and creeping plants. There are a couple of viewing platforms on the lake-shore, from where you should be able to glimpse a cave mouth at the base of the cliff (which leads underwater all the way to the coast).

Taro Plantations

Each of the huge, sodden valleys of Mangaia is almost filled with *taro* plantations. It's worth a trip inland to one of these plantations to see the impressive earthworks diverting water into various plots. The inner cliff of the *makatea* towers over one end of the valley, with tiny ancient tracks weaving down from the cliff to the crops. Each valley belongs to one of Mangaia's six traditional districts, corresponding to the areas where families lived before missionaries gathered them all together for convenient preaching.

Rangi Ue Gardens

These newly cleared gardens are perched in a fantastic position high on the *makatea*, just behind Ivirua village. The name translates as 'swollen sky', and it's not hard to see why once you've glimpsed the views: from the bottom of the gardens you have an uninterrupted vista across *taro* fields and green plantations right across to the high point of Rangimotia. The gardens belong to **Maui and Lyn Peraua** (☎ 34388), who also live on site, and will happily take you on a tour around the garden – you'll probably get some tea and homemade cake, too. Lyn also runs craft workshops making tie-dyed *pareu* (wrap-around sarong-type garments), necklaces and shell ornaments – contact her if you're interested. The gardens are reached by an ancient coral track through the *makatea* that starts behind Ivirua, but it's difficult to find unless you know the way. It's best to call in advance of your arrival.

TOURS

There are a number of excellent organised tours on Mangaia. Like 'Atiu, the island is keen to promote itself as an 'ecotourism' destination, and most of the tours include an introduction to local life, history and contemporary culture.

Clarke's Island Tours (☎ 34303, Babe's Place ☎ 34092) Offers a full-day island tour for NZ\$50, including visits to the inland *taro* plantations and Lake Tiriara. He also leads cave tours to Tuatini Cave for NZ\$30.

'AVAIKI

Traditional legend says that Cook Islanders arrived from the mythic homeland of 'Avaiki. The names of many Polynesian islands still bear some relation to the legendary homeland (notably Hawaii and Savai'i in Samoa), but 'Avaiki is as much a concept as a real place. The name also refers to the netherworld from which all living things originate, and to which the spirit returns after death.

Premissionary Mangaian believed 'Avaiki lay within the shell of a vast coconut, whose outer edges formed the limits of the universe. At the bottom of this shell was a thick root, inhabited by three spirits who constituted the foundation of the universe. Above them lived Vari (The Very Beginning), who moulded the six main gods of creation – Vatea (half-man, half-fish, whose eyes are the sun and moon); Tinirau (Innumerable, the lord of all fish); Tango (Support); Tumutean-aoa (Echo); Raka (Trouble, ruler of winds); and Tu-papa (who dwells with Vatea at the bottom of the universe).

The first human gods were Rongo (ruler of the night) and Tangaroa (lord of the seas), who were the twin sons of Vatea and a female god called Papa. Along with their three brothers Tonga-iti, Tangiia and Tane-pap-kai, these were the principal deities of the early Cook Islanders; most of the *marae* (ancient meeting grounds) were dedicated to them, and sacred offerings and sacrifices were usually made in their honour.

Jan Kristensson (Aramoana Bungalows ☎ 34278) Offers a circle-island tour of all the island's main sites for NZ\$50.

Maui Peraua (☎ 34388) Based at Rangī Ue gardens high on the *makatea* cliff near Ivirua, Maui Peraua leads tours to his family cave of Toru a Puru (NZ\$35). It's the longest cave on the island – be prepared for a steep 'challenge' at the end. If you don't feel up to it, Maui will happily lead you back to the main entrance instead. He also offers a fascinating cultural tour (NZ\$40) into the inland plantations, where you can help feed his pigs and hear all about traditional life on Mangaia. His wife, Lyn, also leads tours of Rangī Ue Gardens (p141), which include an introduction to traditional activities such as necklace-making and tie-dyeing.

Tere Tauakume (☎ 34223) Tere is one of the island's most experienced guides, and leads a fascinating three-hour tour (NZ\$40) of several interconnected caves in the Ivirua area, telling stories of his ancestors as you walk. The tour also visits water holes, inland tracks and some hidden valleys, and includes a spectacular view of Ivirua's *taro* plantation from the *makatea* cliff. Tere is a great character and has some interesting theories about the origins of ancient Polynesia. Ask about the 'horned ancestors' who visited the islands long ago – you might be surprised to hear where Tere thinks they came from.

Tuara George The one-hour tours (NZ\$25) pass by a number of ancient human skeletons inside Mangaia's most impressive cave, Te Rua Rere. Ask about the tour at Babe's Place (right).

Tupuna Tours (☎ 34365; www.tupuna.com; tevaki1@hotmail.com) Mangaia's newly appointed tourism officer is a keen historian and cultural expert, and he offers a selection of island tours tailor-made to your interests – visiting some of the island's ancient *marae* and battlefields, or exploring the island's unique geology. Tours cost from NZ\$30 to NZ\$50.

SLEEPING

There are a couple of organised places to stay on Mangaia, but you could also consider staying in a local house or in a local village hall. All the places to stay on Mangaia make some provision for guests' food, either cooking meals for you or allowing you to prepare your own. Babe's Place, Aramoana Bungalows and Mangaia Lodge can be booked via the travel agents on Rarotonga (see p56).

For groups of four or more people, there's also the option of staying at one of Oneroa's community halls. They each have fully equipped kitchens, showers and foam mattresses. The cost is about NZ\$50 per night for the hall, whatever the size of the group (contact Tupuna at the tourism office for more details).

Babe's Place (Map p138; ☎ 34092; www.babesplace.co.ck; Oneroa; s/d/tr incl all meals NZ\$75/120/150) The ubiquitous Babe owns the island's main store and liveliest bar, and also runs this comfortable motel, just south of Oneroa near Tuatai Beach. Most of the accommodation is in four motel-style units, complete with mosquito nets, colourful bedspreads and a small patio area. There are also a few bedrooms in the main single-storey house, where you'll also find a large kitchen (where meals are served) and a large shared lounge. Babe's Bar is right next door – don't plan on getting to sleep too early on a Friday or Saturday night.

Aramoana Bungalows (Map p138; ☎ 34278; www.aramoana.com; Ivirua; s & d NZ\$40, small bungalow s/d NZ\$60/65, medium bungalow NZ\$115/135) Tucked away on the opposite side of the island and set around a small tropical garden, these rural free-standing cabins make a tranquil and secluded place to stay, though it can feel a touch isolated here. The budget thatched bungalows really are small – basically the size of an average garden shed – and essentially they're just a small wood-panelled bedroom and a tiny bathroom at the back. The larger thatch-roofed bungalows are much more spacious and rather better furnished, though they're pretty pricey for what you get. Meals are available for NZ\$45 a day extra, and are served in the open-walled bar area to the right of the bungalows. A lovely cliff-top picnic shelter is reached by a short pathway from the main garden.

Mangaia Lodge (Map p140; ☎ 34324; fax 34239; Oneroa; r NZ\$35, with meals \$50) High on the hill above Oneroa, near the hospital, this large colonial-style lodge has three plain bedrooms, a kitchen and a sunny, enclosed terrace overlooking the grassy gardens. The accommodation is pretty basic, and the separate shared toilet/shower block is rustic to say the least, but the owners are very welcoming and you'll feel very much a part of village life. The prices listed include breakfast; otherwise you do your own cooking (meals can be arranged by request for NZ\$15).

Liz & Tuaine Papatua (Map p140; ☎ 34164; Oneroa; r per person NZ\$35, with meals NZ\$50) This local couple rents a large bedroom in their home in the Temakatea section of Oneroa. The house is near the hospital and overlooks the sea.

EATING

As on all the outer islands, the food selection in Mangaia's shops leaves a lot to be desired, and it's generally quite expensive. If you're staying long you might want to bring some food supplies with you.

Babe's Store (Map p140; ☎ 34092; Tava'enga) By far the best-stocked shop on the island, with fridges and some frozen goods, but the selection is still pretty limited. You can get fresh bread here several days a week.

Auraka Bakery (Map p140; ☎ 34281) Freshly baked bread is available here several days a week.

There are a number of smaller village shops around the island selling the basic necessities, including **Kirikiri Store** (Map p138; ☎ 34133), north of Ivirua, and **Akeke Trading** (Map p138; ☎ 34206), inland from Oneroa. There's a weekly morning **market** (Map p140; ☎ from 8am Fri) beside the post office in Oneroa, where you can get whatever fruits and vegetables are around.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Mangaia also has its own version of the *tumu* (bush-beer drinking sessions) tradition, though here the home-brew is definitely served without the ceremony. Ask around about visiting the local 'pub' – someone will be glad to show you the way, but it might be a good idea to go with a local who can keep an eye out for you.

Babe's Place (Map p138; ☎ 34092; www.babesplace.co.ck; Oneroa) The large open-air bar at Babe's Place is the island's main nightclub, with a

disco and live bands on Friday and Saturday nights. Beers and spirits are available pretty cheaply, and it can get quite rowdy towards the end of the evening. Apparently it's a popular hangout for the Prime Minister, Jim Marurai (a Mangaian), whenever he's on the island, so keep your eyes peeled.

Aramoana Bungalows (Map p138; ☎ 34278; Ivirua) The big bar at Aramoana Bungalows is usually open on Friday night and whenever guests are staying, but most people end up at Babe's.

SHOPPING

Mangaia is a great place to pick up some traditional craft work, which is still a popular pastime on the island. Basketwork, tie-dyed *pareu*, jewellery and Mangaia's trademark *pupu 'ei* necklaces are all often made on the island, and if you hunt around you should be able to find some examples for sale.

The Mangaia Women's Council has a small **craft shop** (Map p140; ☎ usually 8am–1pm Mon & Wed) next to the church just south of Oneroa. It's run as a community venture to promote local craftwork, and all profits are invested back into the community; you might even be able to try your hand at making some *pupu 'ei* or a traditional woven basket. The opening hours can be erratic; if it's closed, contact the island administration centre (☎ 34289) to find out when it'll next be open.

Lyn Peraua runs a small gift shop at the airport terminal that's open for all incoming flights. You can pick up *pupu 'ei* necklaces, *pareus*, postcards, handmade dolls

PUPU 'EI

Mangaia is famous throughout the Cook Islands for its bright yellow necklaces, made from the shell of the *pupu*, or land snail, *Orobophana flavescens*. Usually worn around the neck in thick strands, but sometimes used as a *tarae* (decorative hatband), the gift of a dozen *pupu 'ei* is the traditional Mangaian gift for departing friends and relatives.

You'll often see the island *mama* (older ladies) crouched down in the thick foliage collecting *pupu* by the side of the road, especially after heavy rainfall. The shells are cleaned and then boiled in caustic soda to remove the snails inside, which gives them their distinctive colour, although sometimes they're boiled in bleach first to turn them white. Rarer species of snails have orange or even black shells, and are highly prized by *pupu* makers. The shells are then individually pierced with a needle and threaded to make the finished 'ei. It's a time-consuming business.

Since it takes around 400 to 500 *pupu* to make a single 'ei strand, it's rather less common to see visitors being given them as departure gifts these days, so you'll probably have to make do with buying your own. On Rarotonga, *pupu 'ei* from Mangaia fetch as much as NZ\$90 a dozen, and they're even more expensive elsewhere in the Pacific, but you can get them for around NZ\$60 a dozen on Mangaia. Ask around to find out where they're currently for sale on the island.

and other souvenirs while you're waiting for your plane.

The Friday morning market also often has traditional crafts for sale.

Wood- and stone-carving is also a long-standing tradition on Mangaia – the island is especially renowned for its stone pounders and carved-stone axes, but you'll be lucky if you find any for sale. Ask at the tourism office just in case.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Flights with **Air Rarotonga** (Map p140; ☎ 34888 in Tava'enga; www.airraro.com) operate between Rarotonga and Mangaia four times a week. The cost is NZ\$270 return – contact Rarotonga-based travel agents (see p56) for package deals, including air fare and accommodation.

Boat

Inter-island cargo ships operate from Rarotonga to the other islands of the Cooks, including Mangaia. See p180.

GETTING AROUND

Moana Rentals (Map p140; ☎ 34307), in Tava'enga, north of Oneroa, is the main place to hire motorbikes. Rental is NZ\$30 per day with a full tank of petrol, and NZ\$25 for every subsequent day. You can also hire bikes and a 4WD truck from Tupuna Tours (p142). You can get petrol at Moana Rentals, or at Akeke Trading and Kirikiri Store (see p143).

Walking is fine, and generally not too strenuous, but the distances are pretty long and you can't count on getting a ride from a passing vehicle as there is so little traffic.