

ROTORUA

NEW ZEALAND



Culture and legends

ROTORUA
feel the spirit
Manakitanga

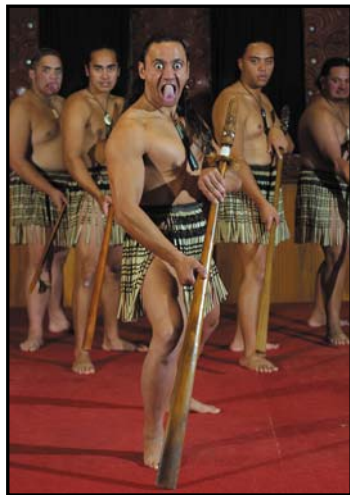
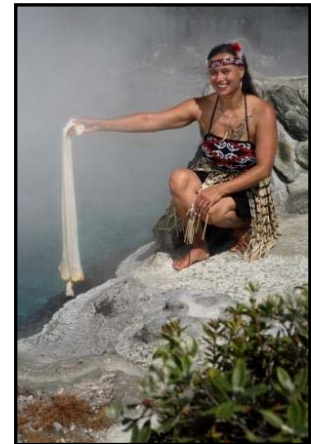
The culture...

Rotorua is a land cloaked in legend; the cultural heartland of New Zealand. Wherever you go here, Maori people enrich your experience and you'll be spellbound by the stories they have to tell.

The Arawa people made Rotorua their home 500 years ago and were New Zealand's original tour guides. Maori people now comprise more than a third of Rotorua's population. These people delight in sharing their stories, warmth, proud spirit and humour with visitors.

Nowhere else can you immerse yourself so thoroughly in this fascinating culture. Sample modern dishes infused with indigenous flavours, take in a cultural performance or hear the region's stories on a guided tour. Learn carving or weaving from master artists, enjoy traditional haka lessons, and visit historic sites shrouded in mystery.

At Whakarewarewa Thermal Village, the descendants of the survivors of the Mt Tarawera eruption continue the hosting tradition begun in the 1880s when people flocked from around the world to see the Pink and White Terraces. The village is an active geothermal area and offers cultural performances twice a day, as well as marae stays allowing visitors to interact fully with villagers. Residents of this unique village use the thermal water for bathing, cooking and cleaning.



In the heart of the Whakarewarewa thermal reserve is Te Puia, which opened in 1963 to teach traditional Maori crafts such as carving and weaving. Te Puia is a renowned attraction offering visitors insight into Maori culture and history, and the chance to see thermal activity. It is home to Pohutu geyser, which erupts several times a day and can reach heights of 30m.

For a more interactive experience, experience a hangi and concert at Mitai or Tamaki Maori Villages, or visit Haka World for a haka class. The lessons, taken by local man Tiki Edwards, are for men and women. Tiki came up with the idea when he was living in the UK. He played rugby and was repeatedly asked to perform the haka. He found people from all cultures were interested in it and he now wants to educate people with fun 90-minute sessions.

Ohinemutu has been home to the Ngati Whakaue people for hundreds of years. Open to visitors since the 1800s, it is the site of Rotorua's Te Papaouru Marae and St Faith's Church, which was built in 1910. It has a richly decorated interior and features an image of Jesus Christ, dressed in a traditional Maori cloak and seemingly walking on water.

These attractions – and so many more - showcase a culture that is part of everyday life in Rotorua but retains its specialness.

and the legends...

Ngatoroirangi

Ngatoroirangi was a tohunga (high priest) of the Arawa people, who were Rotorua's first tour guides.

While travelling inland from Maketu on the east coast, Ngatoroirangi stopped to rest in Taupo and caught a glimpse of Mt Tongariro. He was overwhelmed by its majesty and determined to climb it. He travelled closer and ordered his companions to stay put while he and his slave Auruhoē climbed the mountain.



"This is a dangerous climb, and you must do what I say so I can do it safely," he told them.

"Eat no food. This will give me the strength I need and the gods will protect me. When I come back we will eat together and I will share what I have learned."

His companions reluctantly agreed.

During the climb, the snowy air froze Ngatoroirangi and Auruhoē's breath, numbed their fingers and toes and stiffened their joints. Auruhoē stumbled many times but Ngatoroirangi urged him onward. Meanwhile, the waiting companions became hungry.

"He may have died and we wait in vain," one of them said.

The others agreed, so they started a fire, cooked the food Ngatoroirangi had saved for his return, and ate it.

With their actions, Ngatoroirangi's heart turned cold. He doubled over in agony and prayed to his sisters in Hawaiki (where Maori people originate) to send fire to warm him. His distant sisters heard his prayer and ordered fire demons Te Pupu and Te Haota into the sea, to swim to Ngatoroirangi. As they reached White Island, they lifted their heads above water, causing the earth to burst into flames that are still there today. White Island is New Zealand's only active marine volcano.

The demons continued towards Tongariro, surfacing again at Mou-tohora, Okakaru, Rotoehu, Rotoiti, Rotorua, Tarawera, Orakei Korako and Taupo. Flames leaped up at each of these spots, and the trail they made connected Tongariro to White Island forever.

Auruhoē was dead by the time Te Pupu and Te Hoata reached Tongariro, but Ngatoroirangi was slowly revived by the volcanic heat the demons created. After regaining his strength, Ngatoroirangi took Auruhoē's body and threw it into the crater, and the place has been known as Mt Ngauruhoe ever since.

Hinemoa and Tutanekai



Hinemoa was a beautiful and high-ranking young maiden, the daughter of an influential chief. Her family lived at Owhata, on the eastern shores of Lake Rotorua. Because of her rank, Hinemoa was declared sacred; her family and the elders of her tribe would choose a husband for her when she was old enough. Many men wanted to marry her, but none gained the tribe's approval.

Tutanekai, who lived on Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua, was the product of an affair between his married mother and a chief from another tribe.

At one of many meetings between their two tribes, Hinemoa and Tutanekai met and eventually fell in love. But due to Tutanekai's background they knew her family would never approve.

Tutanekai would often sit on the shores of Mokoia Island and play his flute. The music wafted across the lake to where Hinemoa sat, sad because she knew she could never marry anyone but Tutanekai. Her people suspected this, and pulled all the canoes on to the shore, to stop her sneaking away.

One night Hinemoa could take no more and swam to Mokoia Island, guided by Tutanekai's flute. She headed for Waikimihia, a hot pool near Tutanekai's house, to warm up when she got to the island. She then remembered she was naked and was too shy to approach Tutanekai.

Just then Tutanekai's slave arrived to fetch water. The slave had to pass near where Hinemoa sat. As he passed the pool, a gruff voice called out to him 'Mo wai te wai?' (For whom is the water?) When the slave said it was for Tutanekai Hinemoa smashed the calabash on the side of the pool. When this happened again Tutanekai became angry and went to the pool himself. He challenged Hinemoa to show herself, but she stayed hidden beneath a rock. Tutanekai grabbed her by her hair and pulled her out. "Who are you? Who dares annoy me?" he cried.

"It is I, Hinemoa, who has come to you," Hinemoa answered.

Tutanekai couldn't believe his ears. He wrapped her in his cloak and took her home with him.

The next morning Tutanekai's people noticed he was sleeping in. When his father sent a slave to wake Tutanekai up, the slave recognised Hinemoa.

"It is Hinemoa. It is Hinemoa who lies with Tutanekai," he cried.

No one believed him till Tutanekai stepped from his house with Hinemoa on his arm, and then people noticed canoes heading toward the island. Knowing it would be Hinemoa's family, they feared war. But instead there was rejoicing between the tribes, and peace was forged. Hinemoa and Tutanekai were married and their descendants keep their story alive today, through the song Pokarekare Ana.

Kuirau Park

The now-boiling lake and beautiful parkland on the corner of Ranolf St and Lake Rd was once much cooler and known as Taokahu. Tamahika was the first person to set up permanent residence at the spot, and his great-grandson Tumahaurangi had a beautiful young wife named Kuirau.



One day as Kuirau was bathing in her private pool in Taokahu, a taniwha (legendary monster) that lived in the pool seized her and dragged her down to his lair below the lake. Seeing this, the gods became angry and caused the lake to boil so the taniwha would be destroyed forever.

From that time the lake and the land surrounding it has been known as Kuirau Park. The waters have boiled ever since, making the area too hot for bathing, although there are several foot pools for public use.

Te Ahi-Manawa

There are many stories surrounding the lakes and the ridge that separates them. The first involves a taniwha – Kataore of Lake Tikitapu.



Kataore was a polite, quiet young taniwha, a pet to the people of the area. But eventually rumours surfaced of people mysteriously disappearing; Kataore's nature had changed as he grew and he had started stealing through trees around the Blue Lake to catch and eat travellers.

The final straw was when Kataore stole a high-born young maiden called Tuhi-karapapa, the fiancée of Reretoi, a young chief. Reretoi was overcome with grief and he wanted revenge. He gathered together more than 100 warriors who had battled other Taniwha and they plaited flax into nooses while tohunga (sacred men with powerful spiritual gifts) chanted prayers that had power over all taniwha.

After finding Kataore's lair Reretoi and Pikata, another warrior, took their nooses and crept into the cave. At first all they could see were the eyes of Kataore gleaming like greenstone. They saw his body was still – the tohungas' prayer had sapped his strength. The warriors edged forward and slipped their flax ropes about Kataore's massive head. Then they ran from the cave and the other warriors began to haul on the ropes. When Kataore stirred, his spine spikes stood upright and the air quivered with his roar. The warriors pulled the nooses tighter till Kataore's strength failed and his thrashing grew weak.

The warriors then leaped forward and stripped his flesh. Some of it was cooked and eaten, and some saved to be distributed amongst the tribes who had suffered at Kataore's will. The tohunga cut out Kataore's heart, cooked and ate it on the ridge which separates Blue and Green Lakes. The ridge has since been known as Te Ahi-Manawa (the place where the heart was cooked).

Lake Tikitapu (Blue Lake)

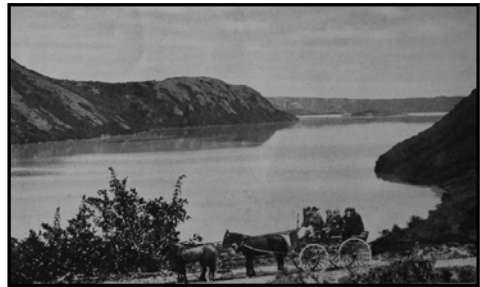
The story surrounding the Blue Lake is simple. The daughter of a high-born chief was bathing in the clear water while wearing a sacred greenstone ornament. It was tied around her neck by a tightly woven flax cord, but it slipped off while she swam. Slaves and members of her family searched frantically for it, but their efforts were in vain. The greenstone is said to be still somewhere in the lake.



Lake Rotokakahi (Green Lake)

The lake is now deserted and sacred, but the surrounding region was once heavily populated. Its name originated from when these people lived off the food the lake provided; the lake was known for kakahi, a shellfish found in the sand.

Rotokakahi means the lake of the kakahi. This fish was an important local food, useful for feeding sick people and children. The shellfish was cooked and softened with the water in the shell so it could be sucked, like milk.

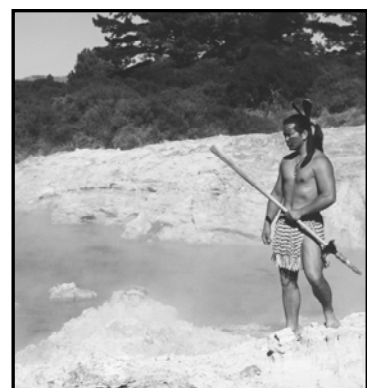


The Tuhourangi tribe occupied the island in the middle of Green Lake before the Mt Tarawera eruption. It is where Hinemoa is now buried.

Hells Gate (Tikitere)

Hell's Gate (Tikitere) is home to the Ngati-Rangi-te-ao-rere sub-tribe of Te Arawa.

Rangi-te-ao-rere was a clever and innovative warrior who was – as reward for his bravery – married to a beautiful and high-ranking girl called Huritini. They were happy at first but then Rangi-te-ao-rere started neglecting Huritini. She decided to end her pain and misery, and threw herself into a boiling mud pool that still bears her name. Huritini means ever-circling. When her people heard of the tragedy they cried out in anguish.

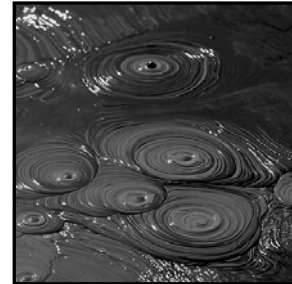


“Taku tiki i tere (our darling daughter has floated away).”

Tiki” is the shortened version of potiki (child or youngest child) and tere means floated.

The boiling mud of Tikitere

The Whakapoungakau mountain range is between Tikitere and Lake Okataina. Before any boiling mud pools formed, Tikitere was a peaceful place often visited by Tane-whakaraka and his sisters, Kuiwai and Haungaroa. They had come from Hawaiki, where all Maori people originate.



After their travels the three of them used to rest in the sheltered and sunlit valley, listening to the native birds. While his sisters prepared the campsite for their overnight stays, Tane made bird spears and snares for the kereru (native pigeon).

One day, Tane went into the hills to find food for them all, and didn't come back. His sisters watched for him for days, but eventually they realised he was lost forever and returned to Hawaiki. They called the place where Tane was lost the Hills of Longing, and left a token of their love in the valley.

They prayed to Ruaumoko, the god of volcanic fire and he heated the pools and tumbling cascades, so if Tane ever came back he could bathe his tired body.