

TE ARA AHI

Thermal by Bike



Whakarewarewa Forest MTB Park
© Vaughan Brookfield / Tourism NZ

ROTORUA to WAIKITE VALLEY



2 days



48km

Te Ara Ahi, meaning 'pathway of fire', delves into a **geothermal wonderland of steaming vents, bubbling mud pools and spectacular geysers.**

This 48km trail winds its way past some truly magnificent geothermal features.

Add sparkling lakes, lush forests, significant cultural sites, soothing thermal pools and adrenalin-pumping adventure activities to the mix, and you've got one incredible

adventure just waiting to be had.

Between the trail heads at Rotorua and the Waikite Valley Thermal Pools, this trail takes riders to four significant geothermal fields: Whakarewarewa, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland and Waikite Valley

Thermal Springs. Each is unique in its amazing geothermal features and flora and fauna, and steeped in Maori history and mesmerising folklore.

Other unique features along the trail include Rotorua's Government Gardens, the Lake Okaro restoration project (re-established wetland), Rainbow Mountain, Te Ranga Hot Pools (better known as Kerosene Creek), and the Waikite Geothermal Field. Most of the geothermal areas are well established tourist attractions, with a wide range of amenities such as cafés, souvenir shops, toilets and bike storage facilities.

We recommend you take at least two days to ride this trail. And if you want more after that, Rotorua will oblige – the city is a mountain-biking mecca, with a range of world-class trails to explore.

TRAIL INFO



TRAIL GRADES:

ROTORUA TO WAIMANGU VOLCANIC VALLEY GRADE 2-3 (EASY TO INTERMEDIATE)
A 30km ride taking 3-4 hours.

WAIMANGU VOLCANIC VALLEY TO WAIKITE VALLEY THERMAL POOLS GRADE 3 (INTERMEDIATE)
An 18km ride taking 2-3 hours.

MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE:

There's good mobile phone coverage from the start of the trail at Princes Gate through to Waiotapu but no reception on Waikite Valley Rd.

DRINKING WATER:

Fresh drinking water is available at cafés at the Rotorua mountain bike car park in the Waipa Valley, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland, Waikite Valley Thermal Pools and at Lake Okaro and the Waiotapu Tavern.

look out for...

Tamaki Maori Village

Experience manaakitanga – Maori hospitality – during an evening of ceremonial rituals, cultural performance, storytelling and a delicious hangi feast at the Tamaki Maori Village. Immerse yourself in the

traditional Maori way of life by learning the haka, a poi dance or warrior training, and enjoy weaving, carving and facial tattooing displays. This pre-European Maori village is nestled within a stunning 200-year-old native tawa forest.

The Redwoods

Don't miss Whakarewarewa Forest and its area known as 'The Redwoods', which is always popular for its towering Californian coastal redwoods and the walking and biking tracks that wind their way beneath them.



Prince's Gate carving © Adrian Hodge



"Nowhere else in the world can you get on a pushbike and ride for 48km past four geothermal attractions."

Todd McClay, MP for Rotorua

At Waimangu Volcanic Valley you can relax in the café or pay to go for a walk on trails through one of the world's youngest thermal areas.

► WAIMANGU VOLCANIC VALLEY TO WAIKITE VALLEY THERMAL POOLS, 18KM

From Waimangu Volcanic Valley, continue along Waimangu Rd, past Lake Okaro picnic area (campsites available) and onto SH 38. Take care crossing the highway and follow the off-road cycle path around Maunga Kakaramea, Rainbow Mountain.

After passing a roadside picnic area the trail climbs further around the mountain and drops down to cross the gravel Old Waioitapu Rd. Here you can turn left to go to Te Ranga (a thermally-heated stream locally known as Kerosene Creek) or you can carry on straight ahead on an off-road trail all the way to Waioitapu.

Parts of the trail are steep here and may require walking. At Waioitapu you will find a hotel with accommodation, a petrol station and a honey factory with a café and shop.

Make a 2km side trip to the Waioitapu Mud Pool and the Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland (paid entry). From Waioitapu follow the Waikite Valley Rd for 6km to the Waikite Valley Thermal Pools - there is camping and a café here.

Note: The best time to ride is between November and April.

riding the trail



► ROTORUA TO WAIMANGU VOLCANIC VALLEY, 30KM

From the Rotorua i-SITE, ride east on Arawa St to the start of the trail at the Prince's Gate Archway a few hundred metres away.

Follow the trail signs through Government Gardens then around the edge of Lake Rotorua for 6km to the

historic Whakarewarewa Maori Village (the village entrance is on Tryon St, 200m off the trail on your left).

From the turn-off to the village, continue following signs south past Te Puia, the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, through Hemo Gorge to the entrance to the Whakarewarewa Forest mountain biking area (100m

off the trail on your left). Here you will find a café and bike hire etc. From the mountain bike car park, ride 150m towards the highway to the start of a concrete bike path, which runs alongside the highway for several kilometres of smooth easy riding. The trail then follows Waimangu Rd to the Waimangu Volcanic Valley, which is 31km from Rotorua.



Stand Up Paddleboarding © Destination Rotorua

Along the trail

What other cycle trail offers you the chance to see boiling mud pools, erupting geysers and colourful crater lakes? Geothermal spots to check out are Te Whakarewarewa Valley, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland and the Paeroa Thermal Bluffs. A journey along this trail wouldn't be complete without experiencing

indigenous culture at a Maori village. Options include Tamaki Maori Village and Whakarewarewa, a living Maori village that relies on geothermal power for everyday living. At Whakarewarewa, residents provide a tour with a difference - from telling village stories to cooking meals and explaining how they use the landscape for bathing, laundry and predicting weather

patterns. You can also see spine-tingling cultural performances. Lakes also feature heavily along the trail, with lakes Rotorua, Tikitapu (Blue Lake), Rotokakahi (Green Lake), Okaro and Ohakuri all offering a different outlook. Rainbow Mountain is accessible from the trail, and here you'll find a steep and technical mountain biking loop trail with incredible views.

FAMILY FUN
Visit Skyline Skyrides, one of Rotorua's most iconic attractions. Here you can take a gondola ride to the top of Mt Ngongotaha to enjoy panoramic views, a café and restaurant and a store dedicated to Jelly Belly jelly beans, among other attractions, before zooming down the hill in a luge, a Rotorua-designed three-wheeled cart.



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Mountain bike mecca

Rotorua is a mountain biking destination par excellence - ranked one of the six pre-eminent Ride Centres in the world by the International Mountain Biking Association.

'The Redwoods' in Whakarewarewa Forest is one of the biggest trail networks in the country, with 85 trails spanning 140km in total. Comprising lush native bush, magnificent Californian Redwoods and other exotic trees, the trails here ensure awesome year-round riding. Trail grades range from one (easiest) to 6 (extreme). The most popular access point to The Redwoods is the highly

sociable Mountain Bike Hub on Waipa State Mill Road.

New Zealand's first year-round gondola-assisted bike park, **Skyline Gravity Park** takes the grunt out of a 200m vertical rise, giving easy access to a 13km network of world-class, downhill mountain biking. With 12 trails ranging from grade two (easy) to grade five (expert) and an assortment of different terrain, you can soak up the scenery cruising, descend hills effortlessly or consign the trees to a blurred backdrop when you rip into steep, technical terrain. The dedicated gondola cabins can take up to four bikes and riders per journey.

Rotorua City ■
second lake • 108km SE of Hamilton on SH 5

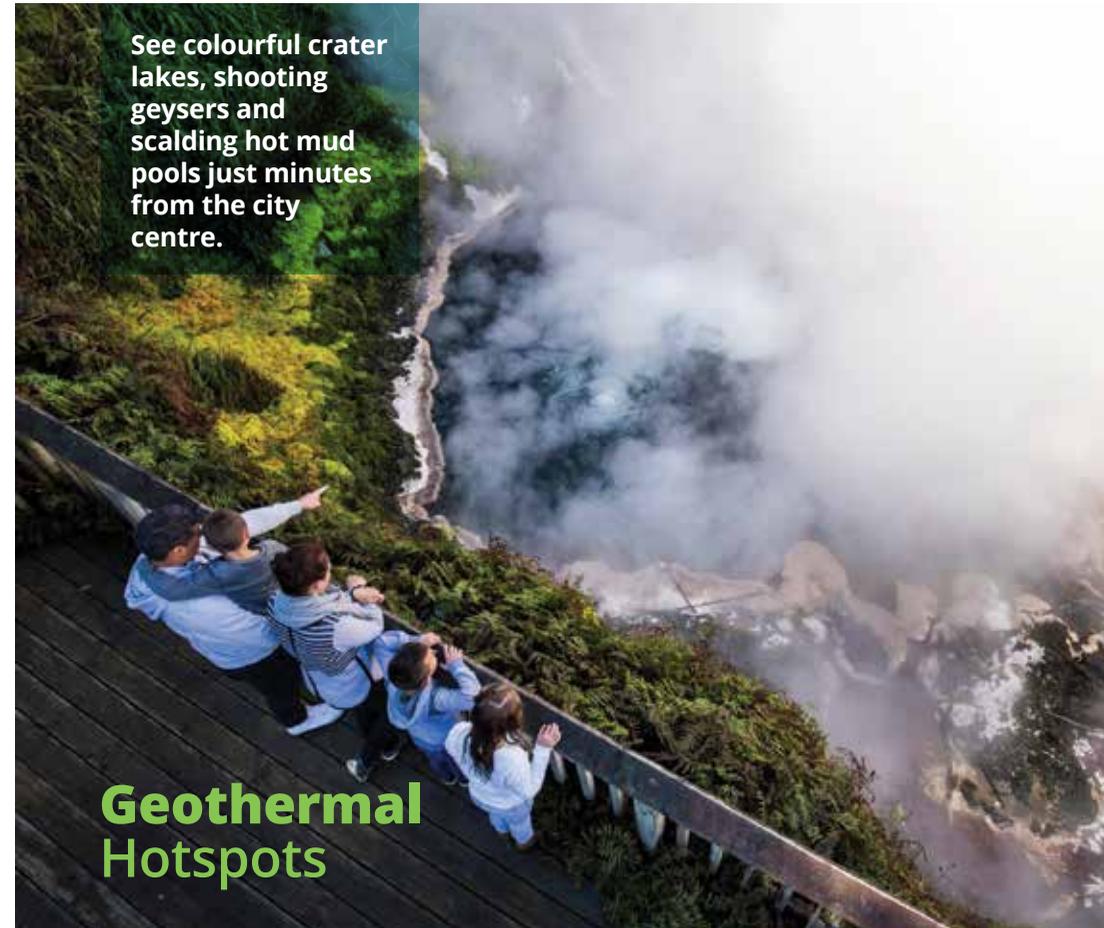
Traditional Art & Craft



See traditional Maori art and craft being created at a Maori village or check out the public art works in the city's gardens and buildings.

Rotorua has a thriving cultural community where art and craft reflect the spirit of the people. Maori art is practised here in the form of wood, greenstone and bone carvings, weaving and tattooing (ta moko).

These time-honoured art forms have been practised here for around 800 years. Pick up a Rotorua Public Arts Trail brochure from the Rotorua i-SITE and Visitor Centre and discover exemplary examples throughout the city.



See colourful crater lakes, shooting geysers and scalding hot mud pools just minutes from the city centre.

Geothermal Hotspots

Places to See

The Government Gardens in central Rotorua surround what was the old bath house, now the Rotorua Museum. Although the museum is currently closed for earthquake strengthening, you can still take a free guided tour of the Government Gardens at 11am and 2pm daily (weather dependant). The nearby lakefront precinct is a hive of activity with plenty of restaurants, cafés and pop-up attractions.

Kuirau Park, which is dotted with bubbling mud pools, hot springs and hot footbaths, is a free attraction.

Described as a 'thermal wonderland', Wai-O-Tapu, meaning 'sacred waters', is a globally renowned attraction about 30km south of Rotorua, just off the trail. It features stunning mineral terraces, lots of bubbling mud pools, hot and cold springs, the fantastically coloured Champagne Pool and the famous Lady Knox Geyser, which erupts at 10.15am every day.

The Waikite Valley Thermal Pools are the place to go to experience the 'living waters' of the Waikite Valley. A variety of geothermal hot pools and private spas are available. While you're here, follow the Eco-Trail to the magnificent Te Manaroa Spring.

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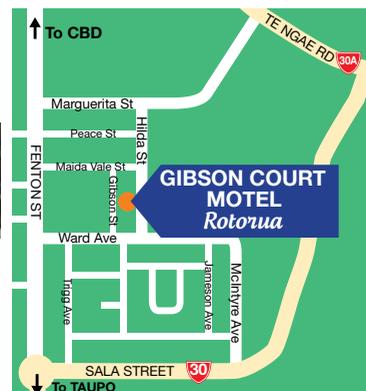
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Rotorua's geothermal hotspots give a fascinating insight into the inner mechanisms of Earth. The smell of hydrogen sulphide in parts of the city is a small price to pay for being in one of the world's great geothermal zones!

One of the city's most famous geothermal attractions is the Pohutu Geyser in Te Puia, the living Maori cultural centre just five minutes from central Rotorua. Erupting up to 20 times a day, this geyser reaches heights of more than 30m, displaying Mother Nature's power with dramatic

flair. Te Puia also offers Maori cultural experiences, including carving demonstrations and performances.

Visit Waimangu Volcanic Valley, which was formed by the Mt Tarawera eruption. The force of the eruption split the mountain in two, creating a 17km rift in the Earth's crust and seven impressive craters. Explore the colourful lakes, geysers and silica terraces. A short drive out of the city is the colourful landscape of Wai-O-Tapu geothermal park, home to the Lady Knox Geyser and the vivid Champagne Pool.

IMAGES: Waikite Hot Pools © Graeme Murray
TOP LEFT: Mountain biking, Rotorua © Alick Saunders Photography
LEFT: Weaving kakahu © Te Puia

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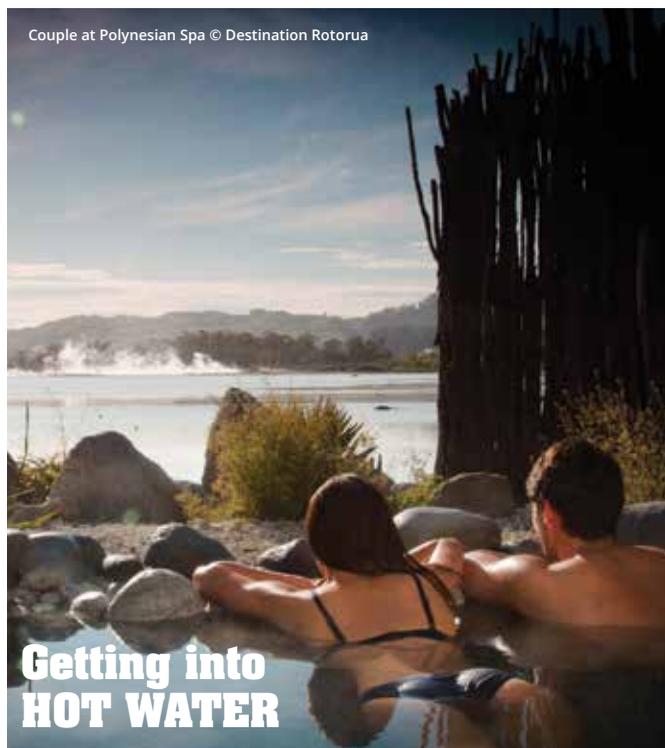
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Couple at Polynesian Spa © Destination Rotorua

Getting into HOT WATER

Getting into hot water should be one of your goals in this region. Famous for its pure spring waters and thermal bathing pools, Rotorua's hot spas take full advantage of this soothing, healing natural resource, with many also offering sumptuous spa therapy and beauty treatments. One of Rotorua's more unusual offerings is a mud bath at Hells Gate - one of Rotorua's geothermal parks. The detoxifying mineral-enriched mud works wonders on the skin!



Wild at Heart

The variety of wildlife in Rotorua impresses both kids and adults alike. Whether you're checking out our native species, getting close to a lion or watching a live show, there are all kinds of creatures to see and interact with.

Witness an outdoor flight show at the **Wingspan National Bird of Prey Centre**. You will be spellbound as you watch the New Zealand falcon/karearea being trained to hunt and survive in the wild. Flying displays start at 2pm daily.

At **Paradise Valley Springs** you can have an up close and personal encounters with some exquisite creatures. Trout can be fed in pools among the native bush, while wallabies, donkeys, pigs and sheep are also on display. You can even get close to a lion at feeding time!

Check out **Rainbow Springs Nature Park** where you can see kiwi, tuatara and more, plus have fun on the Big Splash, a water ride that showcases New Zealand's ecological evolution and finishes with an adrenaline rush.

At the **Agrodome**, watch the award-winning sheep show with live sheep-shearing demonstrations, and join the interactive farm tour to hand-feed all sorts of friendly animals.

Kiwi © Rainbow Springs



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Explore the canopy tops of an ancient native forest on a zipline adventure of a lifetime with **Rotorua Canopy Tours**. During three hours of magic you will be guided through the marvels of Mamaku Forest on a network of ziplines, swing bridges and treetop platforms high in the forest. Keep an eye and ear out for robins, kereru, tomtit, tui, bellbirds, whiteheads, kaka and fantails – around 20% of the forest is free from pesky predators and the aim is to return the eco-system to the one Captain James Cook discovered when he first arrived in this country in 1769.

Instead of walking among the giants at Whakarewarewa Forest, a world where towering Californian coastal redwoods reign, you can now see the forest from a different viewpoint – suspended in mid-air. The new **Redwoods Treewalk** is a walkway made up of 21 suspension bridges up to 12m high among the 115-year-old redwoods. The bird's-eye view captures the true beauty of the forest like never before.

In addition to the day-time treewalk, from 6pm onwards the lights are switched on for the enchanting **Redwoods Nightlights** show that includes 30 lanterns designed by the world-acclaimed sustainability champion, David Trubridge.



Lovable Lakes

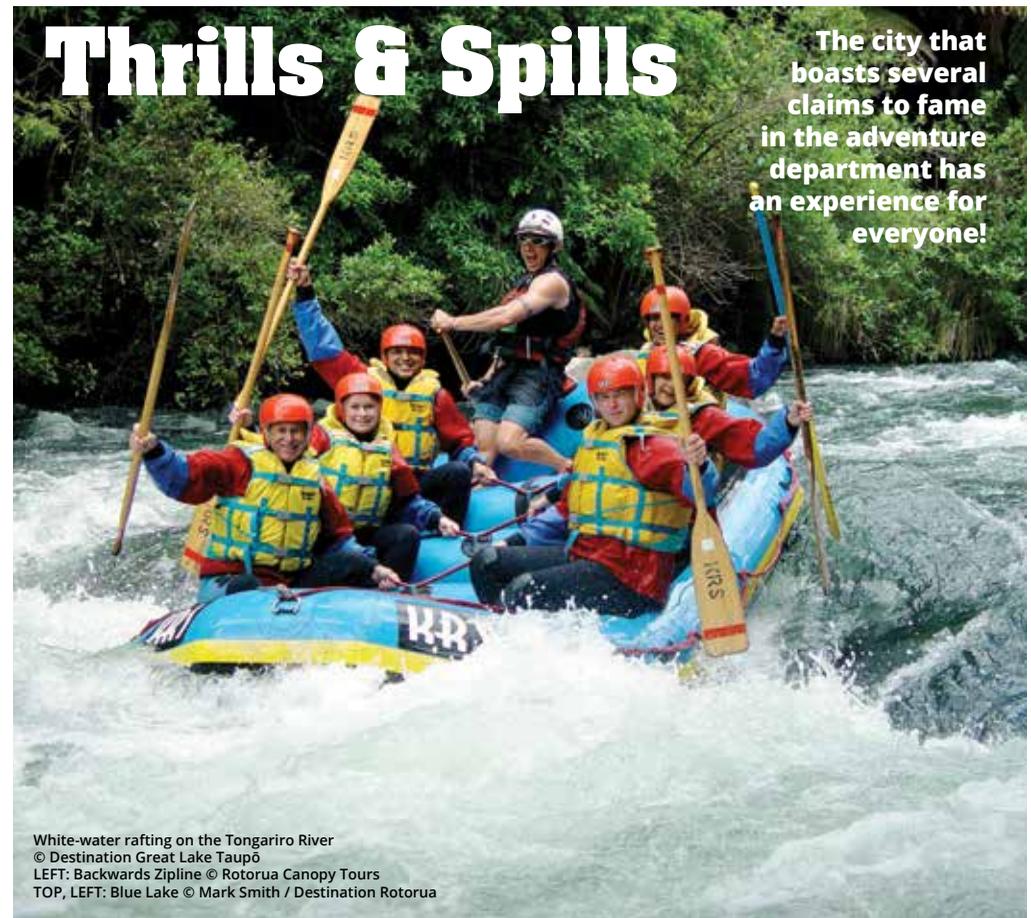
Taupo may have Australasia's largest lake, but what the Rotorua region lacks in size it makes up for in numbers, with a staggering 18 freshwater lakes, 14 of which are easily accessible. The lakes are of volcanic origin, filling craters, calderas or valleys blocked by lava flows, and many are ringed by forest and farmland with fantastic walking trails. Lake Rotorua is the largest lake in the region, while the smaller Blue and Green lakes are just as impressive.

Whether it's rafting, jet boating, off-roading, luging, soaring through the sky in a giant swing, tumbling downhill in a plastic bubble, tackling high-speed mountain bike trails or parasailing, Rotorua certainly knows how to give you the ultimate rush. Navigate the highest commercially rafted waterfall in New Zealand (7m) on the Kaituna River or skydive over Rotorua's raw natural beauty – it's utterly enchanting. Ride a flying fox through ancient treetops on a magical eco journey, or enjoy the thrill of a bungy jump.

Experience the Shweeb, or go flying – literally – at the freefall wind tunnel. For something a little less scary, there's a treetop walk and horse trekking.

The region's many lakes and rivers are used for a variety of water sports. Adventure-seekers make the most of the awesome rivers that wind their way through the region, with white-water rafting on the Wairoa, Rangitaiki, Motu, Mohaka, Tongariro and Kaituna rivers. Sledging takes place on the Wairoa River and you can jet boat on both the Waikato River and Lake Rotorua.

Thrills & Spills

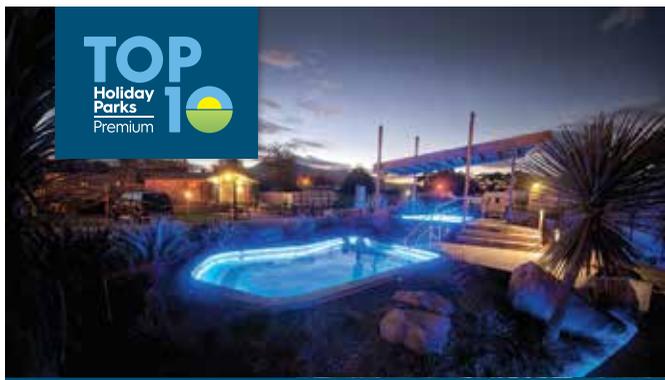


The city that boasts several claims to fame in the adventure department has an experience for everyone!

White-water rafting on the Tongariro River © Destination Great Lake Taupo
LEFT: Backwards Zipline © Rotorua Canopy Tours
TOP, LEFT: Blue Lake © Mark Smith / Destination Rotorua

Among the Treetops

You may well have seen Rotorua's incredible forests from the seat of your bike, but there are ways to join the birds for an entirely different perspective.



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