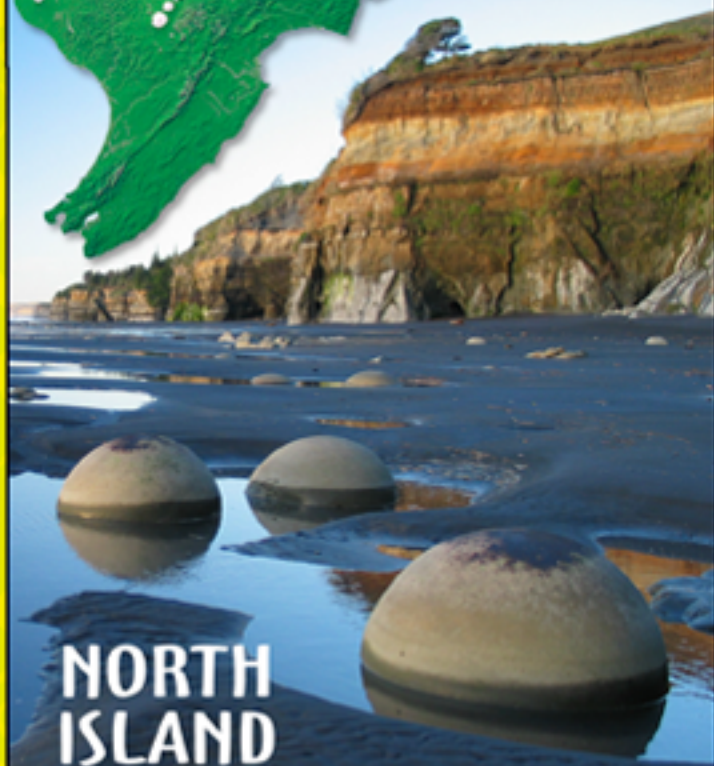


NZ FRENZY

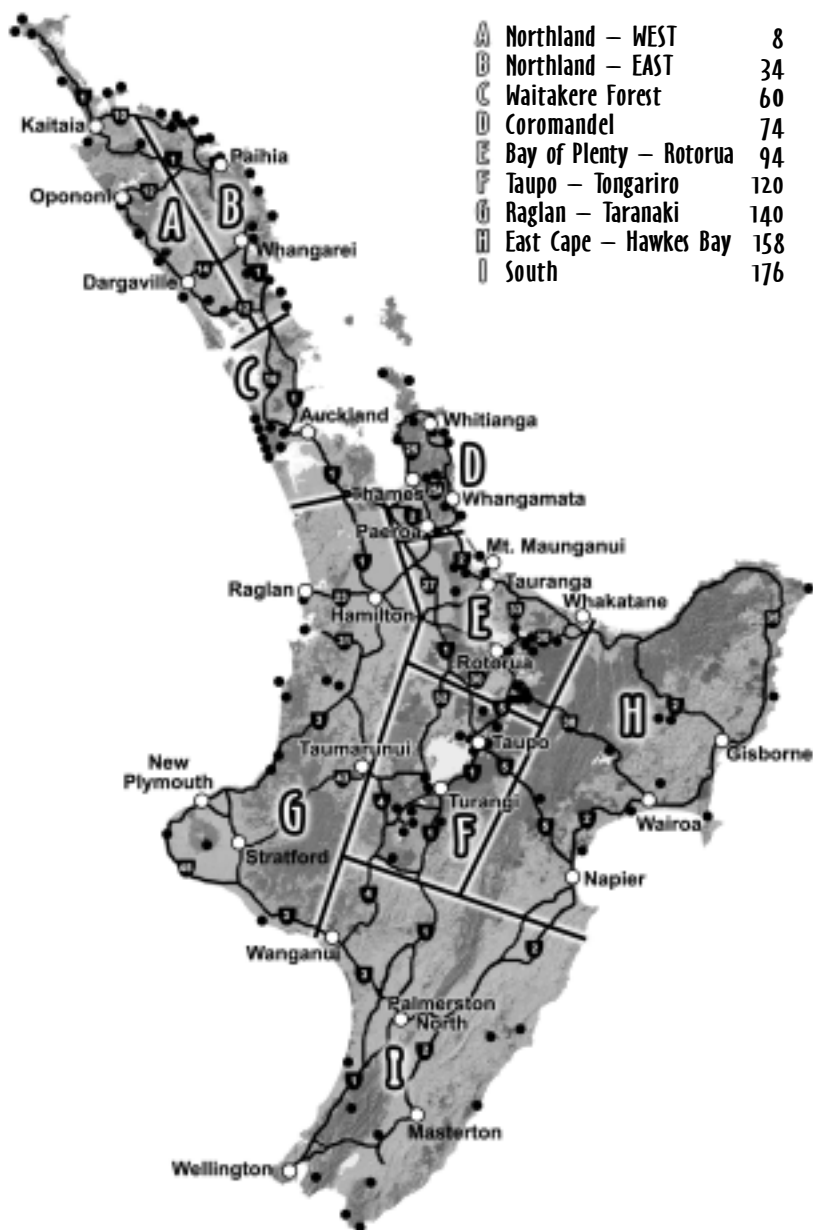
AN ADVENTURER'S GUIDE
TO NEW ZEALAND'S
WILD PLACES



**NORTH
ISLAND**

BEACHES WATERFALLS HOT SPRINGS PEAKS CAVES

SCOTT COOK

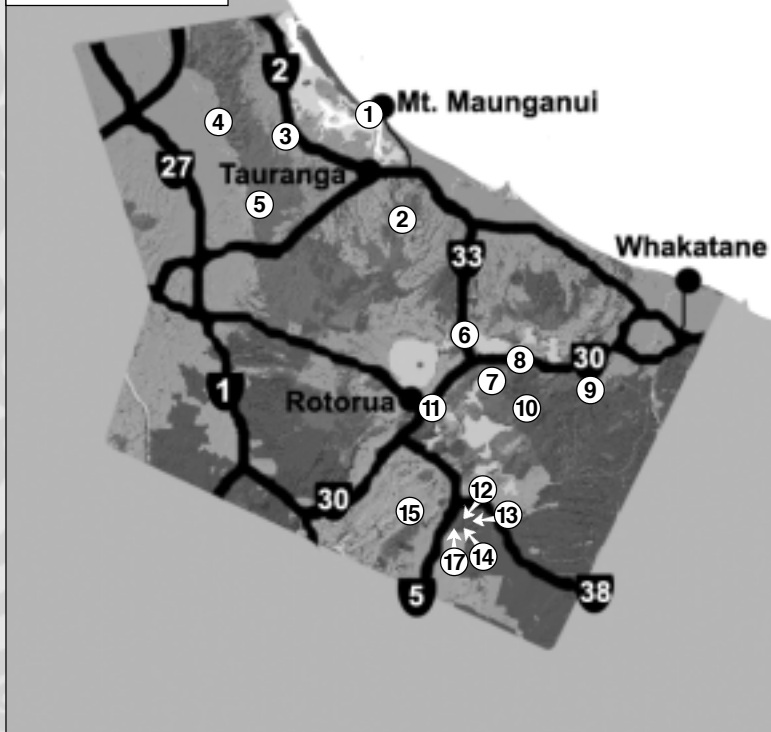


Base map courtesy of Geographx



Bay of Plenty/Rotorua

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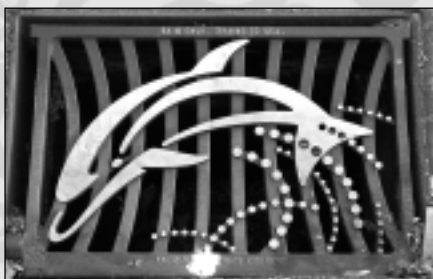
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Bay of Plenty/Rotorua Region

BAY of PLENTY

The Bay of Plenty has plenty indeed. Sunshine and warm waters are its main draw at beaches from Waihi and Mt Maunganui down to Whakatane and Opoitiki. The inland attractions of the Bay are lesser-known but still worth a look if you've got the time. Choose from gold-mining history tracks to wisping waterfalls to ancient Kauris to nude beaches...Plenty indeed! This guide barely touches on all the tramping potential that backs the Bay of Plenty.



Mt. Maunganui sewer cover

ROTORUA

Rotorua is both the best and the worst of the North Island's tourism scene. Affectionately known as RotoVegas to locals, the nickname seems an apt moniker for those who feel that Rotorua is gambling its natural charms for the quick tourist buck. This city is surrounded by some of the world's most fascinating geothermal phenomena...but will RotoVegas despoil its community just as Las Vegas has?

Who am I to comment...I'm just a guy who likes to live in the forest in a van. I love Rotorua, I hate RotoVegas. I love steaming cliffs, boiling mud, squirting geysers, hot rivers, colored terraces, rainbow-hued pools...I love lakes and hot pools and waterfalls and Redwood forests...I love Maori culture and Maori pride. But whoa Roto, what'cha doin? Endless rows of motels filled with tourist sheep ready to be fleeced by go-go tourism promoters...a geyser of brochures, a pool of indecipherable boosterism...world-famous rah-rah-rah. Hmmm. Alas, much of this city and tourism seem to be locked into a tango, and we'll have to see how the dance plays out.

Justifiably, Rotorua is NZ's claim to world fame (outside of maybe the Milford Track.) Rotorua does deserve its fame—it is the most unique area on the North Island. Unless you plan to visit Yellowstone, Iceland, or Kamchatka Russia, then **Rotorua is The Most Active Geothermal Area You'll EVER See!** That's right, few places on this planet have boiling pools as golf-course hazards. Few towns ever suffer/celebrate mud explosions. Few adventure towns feature both raft-able waterfalls and hot spring waterfalls. Few places on Earth are more intriguing, enthralling, or as...uh...“scented” as Rotorua. I love Rotorua.

For a perfect day of free sights don't miss downtown Kuirau Park, north shore's Hamurana Springs, Whakarewarewa's Redwoods, Kerosene Creek, and Mud Pool.



MT. MAUNGANUI

SURF CITY NZ

Difficulty: Easy/mod walks

Bring: Bikinis, paraglider, surf/boogie boards, binoculars



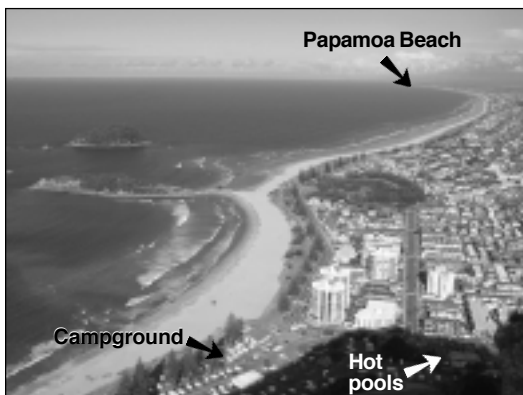
Mt. Maunganui Beach

The “Mount” is Surf City New Zealand. It's like a quintessential California beach town, only better. Better because there's an extinct volcano rising abruptly off this white sand beach and an artificial reef placed just offshore to kick up more waves. Thus, not

only do you get to watch the surfing action from the sunny beach, you also get to watch heaps of paragliders float down onto the beach from the top of the 232m Mount. Walking to the top of “Mauao” provides a killer view of everything—bay, ocean, beach, and Matakana Island. Part of Mt Maunganui's charm is that everything is packed close together—you can walk everywhere once you find a parking space. The main drag is full of fun and funky cafes, surf shops, hip retailers, and quirky curiosity shops. The town is made for fun!

And, as fun as the town is...the beach and bay are better!

Surfing, volleyball, boogie board, kayak, jet ski, cliff-jump, wakeboard, kite-board, fish, swim, paraglide, trail run... all within 1 km. Then you've got the super-popular tracks up and around Mauao. You can circle the volcano for an easy stroll or take either the difficult route up (20 minutes) or the

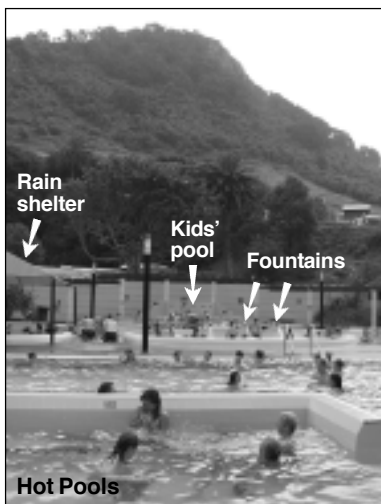


The view from The Mount



easier way (40 minutes). Needless to say, the view at the top is epic—bring binoculars and you'll be entertained for an hour.

Rain or shine (mostly shine on the sunny East coast) Mt. Maunganui is the bikini capitol of New Zealand. Of course when it's sunny the bikinis are on the sand, but when it clouds over the bikinis don't hide, they just walk 200m to the famed **Hot Water Pools**. Directly under Mauao just steps off the beach you'll find a large pool complex full of naturally heated salt water. For \$9pp you'll slide into pools big and small, hot and hotter. There's massaging fountains, underwater benches for hanging out, and kids play pools...with showers and changing rooms. Open until 10pm daily—the perfect rainy day spot, or a great nighttime unwind after a full day of Mount fun.



DRIVING: All roads lead to the Mount!

CAMPERVANS: The million-dollar campground is right at the beach. Good luck getting a spot...last I checked it was \$26 for a tent site. Surprisingly, freedom campers find little hassle on the city streets and bay front areas. Public restrooms are nearby.

FYI: The very south end of nearby Papamoa beach is considered a "tolerated" nude beach.



E2 KAIATE FALLS

WATERFALL SWIMMING HOLE

Difficulty: Easy 30-minute loop

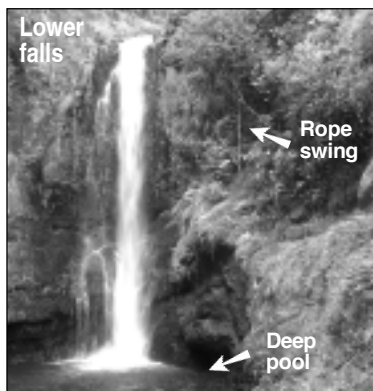
Bring: Swimsuit, Cans(!) of beer

Kaiate (or Te Rerekawau) Falls is one of those “locals” places. A cool-as spot that locals love but guidebooks like Lonely Planet completely overlook. Even the DOC literature hardly inspires a visit. That’s why you have this guide (I hope)...to find places like this. Go. There’s a waterfall for every kind of smile here.

This small stream—Raparapahoe—spits over a series of stairstep waterfalls in a sunny, forested Shangri-la. Go between noon-4pm for pool-side sunbathing. The lowest falls has the hugest dive-able pool. Each falls merits exploring—how many can you sneak behind??



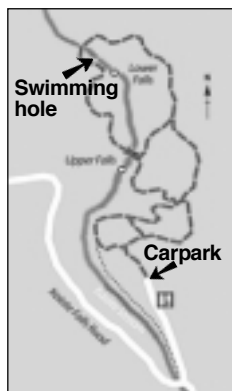
Upper Falls viewpoint



Lower falls

Rope swing

Deep pool



Swimming hole

Carpark

DRIVING: From the Mount head south on SH2 for 7km and turn right onto Welcome Bay road. Go 6.3km then left onto signed Waitao road to Kaiate Falls. Go 5.3km more then left at the Kaiate Falls sign.

From Tauranga find Welcome Bay road just south of the SH2/ SH29 junction and go east 6km to Waitao road.

From Te Puke head 2km north then turn left onto Te Puke Quarry road. Go 8.7km (half unsealed) then right at the Kaiate Falls sign.

CAMPERVANS: perfect freedom camping in the carpark.



E3 TUAHU KAURI

SOUTHERN—MOST BIG KAURI

Difficulty: Easy 15-minute walk

Bring: Appreciation

This giant may be the southernmost of the really big Kauris—this is the south end of their natural range. An easy walk will bring you within huggable proximity of this 2.7m-wide behemoth. If you've already seen the giants of Northland then this tree may seem a little ho-hum (can a tree this big ever be ho-hum?) But, if you're coming up from the south and have yet to see a big Kauri, then be sure to make a quick jaunt up here to stretch your neck at Tuahu's pride. The view through the open forest canopy as you approach the Tuahu giant is exceptionally **WOW!**

For a longer tramp a network of tracks branch out from here and a mapboard at the carpark shows the routes.



This German couple asked me to "save" them from Sapphire Springs. It's that bad.

B. o. P. -Rotorua

DRIVING: On SH2, 3km south of Katikati, turn onto Hot Springs road and follow it 5.5km to the road-end.

CAMPERVANS: Freedom campers can overnight at the undeveloped road-end carpark. Avoid Sapphire Springs.



E4 WAIORONGOMAI VALLEY

GOLD MINING RUINS

Difficulty: Mod. and Diff. tramping tracks

Bring: Map from Te Aroha I-Site, torch for tunnels

Lamented in song, a gold-mining dream gone bust... **nowadays the Waiorongomai Valley is surely the least-known most historically interesting valley on the entire North Island.** What? Never heard of it? Seems like nobody else has either, except for DOC and the legion of volunteers who are painstakingly restoring the valley's goldmine of gold-mining history. Come see...you'll be amazed at both the historic relic/ruins and DOC's effort and expense to rehab everything and place fabulous interpretive signs everywhere. Well done, DOC!

Snaking through the hillsides here are pack tracks and actual 1800s tramline rails—the **ACTUAL** rails, often half-claimed by the bush. This is NZ's oldest existing tramline! There are three separate steep "incline" alternating with level stretches. Exemplary signage brings to life the difficulties the miners faced trying to scrape a living out of these hills. Every day they risked death manipulating these ore-cart balancing schemes called "self-acting inclines." Fascinating!

Other than relics, the network of tracks also passes mineshafts, tunnels and waterfalls...as well as swimming holes in the stream below. **Do not come here without first stopping at the Te Aroha I-site,**

A Poem of Sorrow written circa 1892 by C.W. Richmond

"O wrong are you, o wrong am I,
O wrong all of us,
We're all sold, there is no gold,
The claim's not worth a cuss,
We came O why! It's all my eye,
So sing O-wai-o-rong-o-mai,
Here comes the bloomin' bus,
Let's all get in, it's a sin,
The claim's not worth a cuss,
singing O-wai-o-rong-o-mai,
O wrong are all of us."

The Waiorongomai Valley mining operation
"...can scarcely be described as other than
one long chapter of disaster".



Butler's Incline

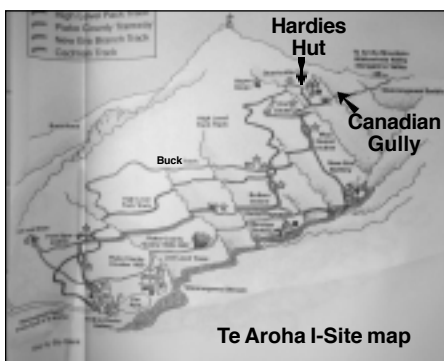


Butler's Incline circa 1898

because there is no trailhead mapboard. The I-site dedicates most of a room to this intriguing valley.

The Tracks: nothing here is easy—this valley demands reasonable fitness to see anything.

Basic loop. About an hour. Explore dark “Low Level Drive” tunnel then head up to Fern spur, along to Butlers Incline, down “Water Race track” and back along the Low Level



track.

Moderate loop. 2 hours. Up to Fern spur then over to Butlers then up incline to historic relics. Loop back down on the High Level track.

Difficult loop. 3 hours plus lunch. Fern to Butlers, up incline then over to May Queen incline and up it. At May Queen’s top head over to Canadian gully and Premier Creek

(passing Hardies Hut track). Pass thru fun tunnel and then plan on a snack at one of the creeks. Now backtrack to Hardies, go up it and loop back down to Butler incline top. Now take the Buck Rock track down to High Level/Fern spur and down.



B. O. P. Rotorua

DRIVING: Stop at Te Aroha I-site first. Head south from I-site for 3km then turn left at signed Waiorongomai road.

CAMPERVANS: The undeveloped carpark has plenty of flat streamside space, but no long-drop.

FYI: To see a 4-minute TVNZ video, Google “Butlers incline” and choose “Meet the Locals”.



E5 WAIRERE FALLS

MONSTER WATERFALL

Difficulty: Mod/Diff 30-60 minute tramp

Bring: Water shoes, birthday suit, towel

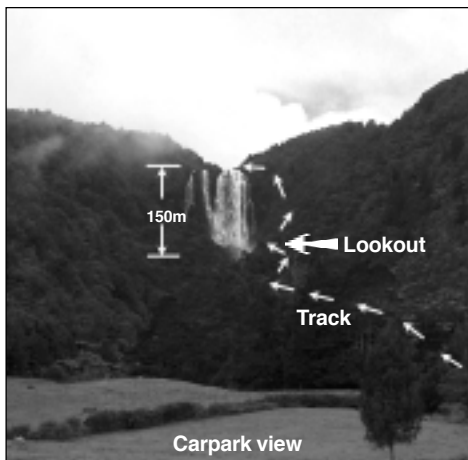
These falls are...(here I go again)...a surprise spectacle, a marvelous magnificence! Unexpectedly, 14km east of Matamata's Shiredoor Hobbitland, the Wairere stream leaps off a 152m escarpment as if it just can't wait to see Bilbo and Frodo. **Wairere Falls are the North Island's highest falls**, but amazingly they seem to stay far off the tourist map (neither "Lonely" nor "Rough" seems to have noticed the

falls.) All the better. After a heavy rain the falls blast a rainbow'd torrent, but even in normal summer flows the experience of these falls is exclamatory! Afternoon is best for these west-facing falls.

The track from the carpark heads moderately upwards about 30 minutes to a lookout platform, then steeply up another 20 minutes to the lip of the falls. No average track is this though...oh no...**DOC has outdone itself here with a crafty feat of track-engineering ingenuity.** Bridges actually zigzag as they criss-cross the boulder-choked stream. Then, approaching the lookout, the track ascends a vertical corkscrewing Koru staircase...Impressive. Thanks DOC!!



Funky bridges

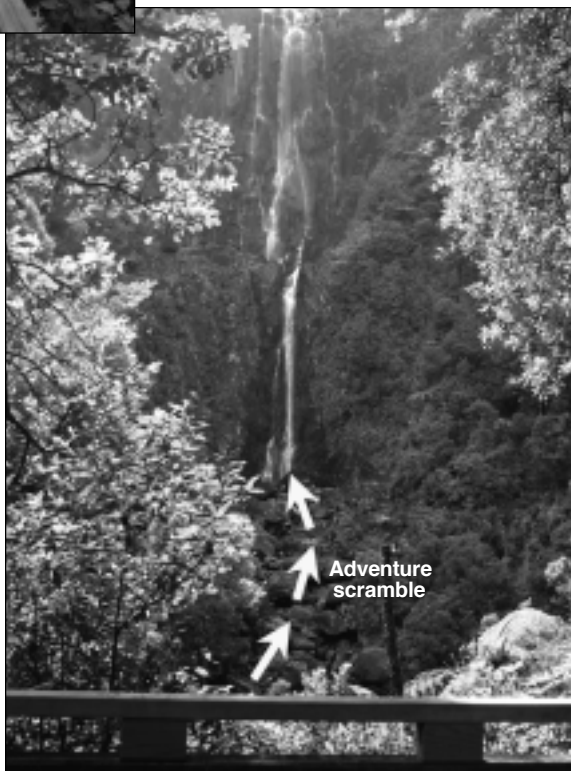


And now, as if these falls aren't "hidden" enough already...here comes the NZ Frenzy hidden insight. If you're sprightly and young-at-heart (say, 42 years old), you'll want to pack your water shoes with you. After seeing all the viewpoints, retreat back down the staircase to the bridge and shoe-up for a stream adventure. Like a leaping jungle-cat



*Corkscrew
staircase
to lookout*

possum you'll rock-hop up the base of the falls in only about 15 minutes. Sweet as! This is no South Island crowded BS tourboat frigid waterfall photo-op...this is the soul of the North Island...a do-it-yourself adventure on an island of constant surprises! Is the pool at the base swimmable? Go see. The big flat rock at the base doesn't see the sun until noon, but when it does...ahhh the ticklish feel of the mist drying off your naked skin is unforgettable.



*Low-water
lookout
view*

DRIVING: From Te Aroha head 27km south on Old Te Aroha road and turn left onto Goodwin road. From Matamata head NE on Tower road then right onto Okauia Springs road for 4km over to Old Te Aroha road. Turn left and head about 6.5km to Goodwin road and go right to the carpark.

CAMPERVANS: The carpark is perfect Freedom camping—there's a long-drop up the track a bit.



E6 OKERE FALLS/KAITUNA RAPIDS

WORLD'S HIGHEST COMMERCIAL WATERFALL

Difficulty: Easy 15-minute walk

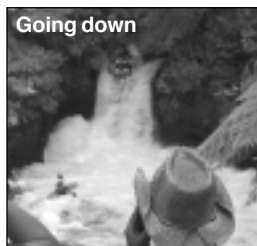
Bring: Camera, torch, swimsuit



This is the most action-packed 15-minute walk on the island.

It's so fun that you'll probably take

an hour to walk the 15 minutes! A bush track runs the length of this short gorge, providing ample viewpoints of the river and waterfalls below.



Going down



Down under



Back up

Tutea Falls overlook

Highlights include:

- The Kaituna River, Rotorua's raft, kayak, and sledge hot spot.
- 3 waterfall viewpoints, often with rafts and kayaks shooting the falls.
- Tutea's Falls...at 7m it's the highest commercially run drop in the world.
- Tutea's steps and cave
- A bridge over to the "trout pool"
- A nice deep swimming hole at rapid's end.

Watching a raft go over Tutea's Falls is the must-see. **The rafts completely disappear under the churning river**—it's quite a sight! All summer rafts run constantly and the pathway is busy with photographers from the rafting outfitters. Ask any of the photographers for the lowdown, but the cost is about \$95 to raft the rapids. This is a real Kiwi thrill that's worth every penny!



Inside Tutea's cave

DRIVING: On SH33 head north. Once past Lake Rotorua and alongside Lake Rotoiti look for Okere Falls signs. Turn left at Trout Pool road and go a few seconds to the first carpark.

CAMPERVANS: The carpark at either end of the bushwalk is good freedom camping.

FYI: for a pumping 1:48 German Youtube vid, search: 44Lzonfymw.



LAKE OKATAINA

PRISTINE LAKE/TRACKS

Difficulty: Short easy walks/long moderate tracks

Bring: Swimsuit, binoculars

Lake Okataina, so close to Rotorua on the map, feels far far away. It's a half-hour to get out of Tourism Rotorua's pocket and into Mother Nature's bosom. This big lake is swimmably warm (22° C) from its white sand beach. The road from SH30 is 7km with a few different trailheads. Note though that the only mapboard is at the lake.

Eastern Okataina Walkway. This moderate walking track takes two hours to reach Humphries Bay on Lake Tarawera. The track is sort of dull, but it does offer some solitary "beaches." The nearest beach is at

the Te Koutu pa peninsula. This peninsula hill has some interesting ancient Maori earthworks and a sign detailing the history.

Whakapoungakau

Trig. This tramping track ascends about 350m from its start at the Outdoor Centre. The trig sports



great lake views and even Hell's Gate's steaming inferno. The 75 minutes track to the trig is actually a joy to walk as it alternates steep and flats through the sun-dappled bush. It even switchbacks up to the trig instead of the usual mad steep scramble. At the trig a large grassy area invites lounging—bring a towel and a picnic. The track starts at the Outdoor Centre on the wide grass path then in ten minutes turns right. After 40 minutes turn right again (at the huge dead tree) and go 20 minutes more to the top. (Don't try this track from the lakeshore.)

Te Auheke loop. An easy 20-minute bush walk touring a pleasant small mossy cascade. Begin at the back lawn of the Outdoor centre.

Twin Lakes loop. An easy 30-minute loop passing two volcanic craters, each filled with its own mini-lake. Begin on the road opposite the entrance to the Outdoor Centre.



DRIVING: From Lake Rotorua take SH30 east for about 10km then turn right in Ruato at signs for lake.

CAMPERVANS: Carparks either at the lake or Outdoor Centre are good.



E8 WAITANGI SODA HOT SPRINGS

UNCOMMERCIALIZED HOT SPRING

Difficulty: Sand flies

Bring: Bug repellent, swimsuit, trash bag

A nice free natural hot pool, courtesy of the local Maoris. Boiling effervescent soda water surges from a nearby spring, mixes with a cooler stream and then flows into a couple of larger pools. Lots of room for everybody. The water is clean, but scads of orange algae swarms in the pool, scaring away squeamish tourists. At dusk heaps of locals show up...and this hot spring is fairly well-known to travelers also. Come during the day and you'll probably have it to yourself. Explore both up-stream and down...but of course you'll return to the neck-deep chute where the hot water will massage your "no worries" away.



Waitangi Hot Pool (1:30 pm – too hot)

One night two bikini'd French girls from Waiheke Island showed up to spend the night cramped into their tiny car. We drank beers together, watched the stars and took night-time star photos. In the morn, as they stepped into the shallows, their feet swirled a hot fog around their legs. In the dawn

light their bodies glistened as mist steamed off their skin. Wow. I'd show you the pix but I don't want to start a stampede towards this serene spot.

NZ Frenzy's a good life! Thanks for buying my book...can't wait to "research" some more.

DRIVING: The spring is located on Manawahe road between Lakes Rotoma and Rotoehu. This is 12km east of Okataina road or 20km west of Kawerau. Turn onto the signed road, pass the motor camp, then 500m more to the left-side carpark.

CAMPERVANS: There is ample flat parking, but no toilets. Do not foul this place! The nearest restrooms are just 2.6km east, right before the GAS station at the turn down to the "Lake Access" boat ramp. Try to pick up some litter and leave this place nicer than when you arrived.



E9 MT. EDGECOMBE

A BAD TRACK

Difficulty: Saying something nice

Bring: A noose

Hey, here's a track I didn't like...and I'll tell you about it so that you won't think that I just love EVERYTHING!

Mt. Edgecombe rises over Kawerau. First you have to get a special permit...not from the I-Site, but from the forestry office. Then you get lost trying to find the track. Then you go up it along a dull viewless service road. Then you get to a so-so viewpoint underneath a bunch of cell towers. I had heard that the locals hold a race up this mountain, so I tried the race-course ascent. It sucked. An hour of cursing. The road down was a bore. The only thing I liked was getting a lift from a possum hunter back to my car. Skip it.

There are actually plenty of other tracks and places that I haven't liked on this island, but I don't like to waste space telling you what not to do since there is SO much good to tell you about.

Here's some don'ts: Motu Falls, Mokena geyser, Orange Peel track, Whangara, Lucy's Gully track, Waiau summit, Whananaki South Coastal Walkway, Dome walkway, Ngawha, Sapphire Springs, Haruru Falls. There are many more. Hope you don't end up in those places...and sorry if I've insulted your favorite spot.



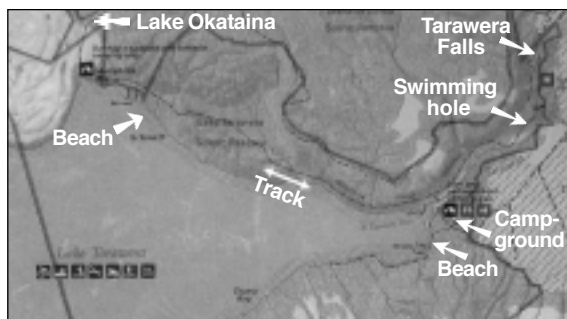
E10 LAKE TARAWERA EAST SHORE

THE BETTER SIDE

Difficulty: Easy/mod tracks

Bring: Permit, camping gear and food, swimsuits

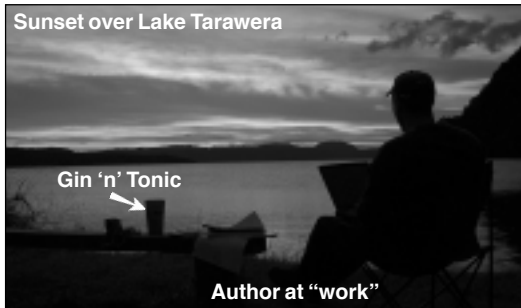
One side of Lake Tarawera will frustrate you with a touristy bustle fresh from the buried village. The other end of the lake will delight you with like-minded adventure folks, its quiet, its sunset, and its waterfall track. The Eastern-lake “Tarawera Outlet” is a DOC



campground and boat ramp where the warm top waters flow out of the lake and begin their journey to the sea, but only after pouring over a succession of unique waterfalls. Come see this side of the lake—it’s a hassle to get to, but that’s what keeps it good. You’ll see.

Tarawera Falls. (OK, sorry, but here comes another adjective-laden rah-rah.) Tarawera Falls and the warm crystalline stream that leads to it are well-known wonders to Bay of Plenty locals. But it seems that few other people in the country have heard of them. You should hear of it though...so near to RotoVegas’s maw, yet soooo far away. Here’s the deal: azure water gushes out of Lake Tarawera and rushes 3.5km until it literally disappears into a fractured cliff, suddenly reappearing as a torrent surging out of the middle of the cliff...Whoa! **An easy hour-long path cruises the 3.5km, passing swimming holes, whitewater chasms, and circular rainbows.** Before descending to the falls, don’t miss the above-the-falls-cliff-edge viewpoint just below the upper stream bridge.

This track can be walked from either downstream or from the outlet, but, believe me, it’s WAY better from the lake because upon your return to the lake you’ll have a full chilly bin eager for the beach rather than a dull carpark.



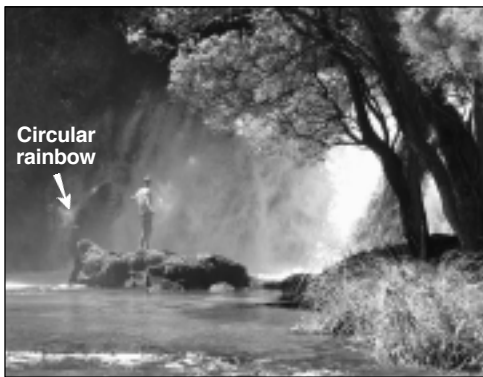
Sunset over Lake Tarawera

Gin 'n' Tonic

Author at “work”



Tarawera Falls



Upper Tarawera Falls

Tarawera Beach. This is where the wake-boarding, beers and bikinis are. Just a short 7-minute walk left from the boat ramp.

Tarawera Northern track. This moderate track runs along the



Swimming hole rope swing

north shore of the lake to Humphries Bay. It ungu-lates enough to make you sweat (burn off those Woodies) and the scenery is good. Humphries Bay isn't much except a cleared campsite and a long-drop (no beach). Humphries takes 1 hour 40 minutes from the outlet. Before you get there you'll pass two small "beaches" at about the 1 hour 25-minute mark. These can be wonderful spots for a romantic swim and picnic. From Humphries camp Lake Okataina is just 15 minutes.

DRIVING: You access Tarawera River road from Kawerau. First though you need to stop at the I-Site (behind New World) to get the \$3.50 permit to drive the private forestry road. It's quick and no hassle. Get directions how to find the road from the I-Site. From Kawerau it's 13km to the fork. Turn right to go 10km to the lower Waterfall track. Stay left for the lake—13km more. The road is unsealed, but fairly straight and fast.

CAMPERVANS: You could park at the lower carpark if you're short on cash, but the DOC campground at the lake is where you want to be. Only \$7pp...sunset, beach, tracks...ahhhh.



WHAKAREWAREWA VIEWPOINT TRACK

VIEWPOINT OVER POHUTU GEYSER AND ROTORUA

Difficulty: Moderate 20-minute track

Bring: Binoculars, track map

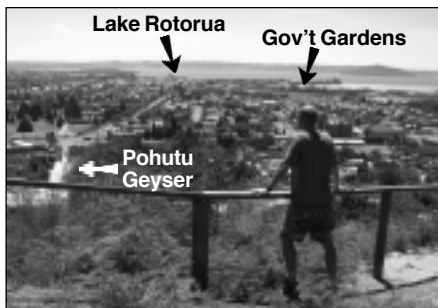
Whakarewarewa Forest Park is a peculiar forest of California Redwoods situated moments from downtown Rotorua. This forest began in 1901 on the then-barren slopes that bordered Rotorua. California Redwoods were planted because they would yield greater and faster timber harvests than native NZ trees.

Today “Whaka” a major recreational factor on the Rotorua scene and nobody’s in a hurry to chop it all down. The forest is NZ’s mountain-bike mecca—it’s laced with an extensive networks of fun trails (more trails than possums!) Thousands of weekend mountain bikers flock from every nearby city. Generally, the area around the visitor center is popular with walkers, while the mountain bikers convene at a trailhead off of Waipa Mill Road (1km south of Roto on SH5. Hire bikes are available here.)

Here’s the hidden “Frenzy” bit: my favorite viewpoint track (in all of Roto) is the Ridgeline Trig track from the Waipa carpark. Take a photo of the mapboard first then cross the bridge and sharp left. 17 minutes will get you to the trig, and 3 more down will bring you to the better viewpoint. Wow, a killer view and maybe just a short wait until Pohutu blows his top (every half-hour). You’ll probably be alone up here, so bring binoculars so you can keep the company of all the tourists down at Te Puia. Back the way you came is best. You can also get here from the VisCtr if you want.



Pohutu geysing



Whakarewarewa Viewpoint

DRIVING: VisCtr is off of Tarawera Lake road. Waipa Mill road is 1km south of Roto on SH5

CAMPERVANS: The Waipa carpark is a decent freedom spot. A better spot is 9km south of Roto at the Waipa South road/ Green Lake access road. Head 2km east to the camp that time forgot. Check it out!

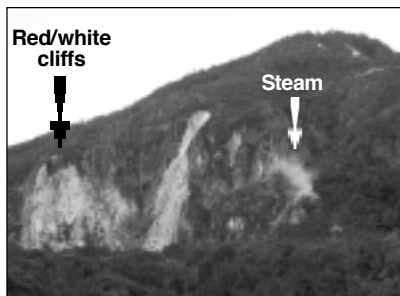


E12 RAINBOW MOUNTAIN

GEOHERMAL WONDERS TRACK

Difficulty: Mod 40-45 min. tramp (300m ascent)

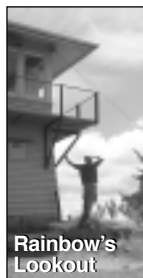
Bring: Regional map, binoculars, clock



This is a fantastic and oft-overlooked track. Undoubtedly (would you doubt me?) this is the **finest viewpoint** since the crater of Mt. Ngauruhoe. Really! This is why: first you've got a well-made track that brings you up to a couple of hidden crater lakes backed by bizarre steaming red and white cliffs. Continuing up the steeper part

of the track to the top of the 743m peak you'll find a lookout building and a nice grassy picnic lawn. Here's the good part...from this peak your gaze sweeps over the most unique spots on this adjective-riddled island. How 'bout 8 different lakes including Tarawera and Waiotapu's green Lake Ngakoro. How 'bout mountains from Tarawera, past Tauhara, down to Ruapehu. How 'bout geothermal steam from Waimangu's Lake Rotomahana, Waikite Valley's plumes, Ohaaki's 100m cooling tower, and all the steam pools around the Waiotapu Tavern. So Many Sights—be sure to bring a map!

The best time to do this track is at 9am. (This is why you bought this guidebook I hope...to get perspective.) Why? Because in the morning the air is a bit chillier so you get to see more steam from the cliffs. But, better still, is that at exactly 10:15am a bag of soap is poured into Lady



Know Geyser, adding its steam plume to the visual pizzazz. Look to the south (on a line with the cooling tower) and listen for the camera clicks!



DRIVING: The signed DOC reserve is 24km south of Rotorua on SH5. Look for the carpark on the east side of the road just south of the SH38 junction. Coming from the south the carpark is 3km north of Waiotapu Tavern. Do not leave valuables in sight.

CAMPERVANS: none



E13 KEROSENE CREEK

HOT SPRINGS WATERFALL CREEK

Difficulty: Easy 3-minute walk

Bring: All valuables from your car to pools

This hot spring oasis is sort of two-faced. On one hand Kerosene Creek can be the most beautiful, unique, and soothing place in the country...other times it can be a disgusting, rowdy, burglary-prone annoyance. K-Creek's natural setting is unsurpassed—a 40-degree knee-deep stream snaking through a fern jungle before spilling over two small waterfalls...ahhhhh.



Kerosene's waterfall pool

The issue here is how **PEOPLE** choose to interact with this slice of paradise. Kerosene Creek is no secret to tourists—it's been written up in *Lonely Planet* for years. Tourists seem to treat the experience here with reverence, often visiting NZ from countries where hot springs are considered meditative places. Many Kiwis seem to hold a different attitude, enjoying



The upper pool



K-Creek as a kickass spot to rage and get on the piss. **Of course this isn't every Kiwi!** Hopefully this guide will help attract more people who want to share Kerosene Creek as a serene experience of nature's grace.

Here's some observances:

- **Car break-ins are frequent.** Burglars pull up and can be in and out of your car (and trunk) in seconds. It's best to carry all \$\$, cameras, passports—EVERYTHING, down to the springs.
- There's no peace or quiet on weekend nights.
- Expect some nudity near dawn and dusk.
- Bring a sack to help pick up other people's litter.



Naked in Eden

DRIVING: Kerosene Creek road is 25km south of Rotorua on SH5, 1km south of SH38. It's 2km north of Waiotapu Tavern. Take unsealed road for 2km to carpark.

CAMPERVANS: There's space for freedom campers, but no toilets and no peace. Frequent logging trucks zoom past and noisy people show up all through the night. Go stay near Mud Pool, Waikite Springs, or better yet at Lake Okaro (back 1km north on SH5, go 1km east on SH38 and turn left on Okaro road for 1km to lake. Quiet, peaceful, restrooms.)



E14 MUD POOL

FREE!

Difficulty: None

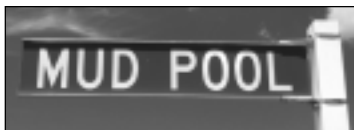
Bring: Cocktails, humor

Mud Pool may be my favorite place in the North Island (oh wait, maybe I said that about Ngauruhoe, Tongaporutu, and Waitakere forest too. Oops, sorry) It sort of seems

that Tourism Waiotapu would have you believe that Mud Pool is part of their park, but it's not. It's outside of Waiotapu and it's free.

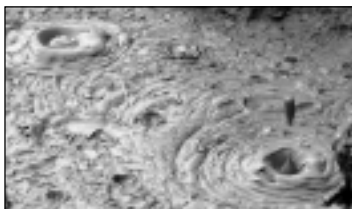
Oh Mud Pool, how I love thee...let me count the ways...

- 1) FREE!
- 2) The best mud pool in Rotorua—the locals agree.
- 3) Spluttering mud makes me laugh — the belching holes flinging mud burps at each other seem like little kids fighting....LOL ☺.
- 4) The sound effects of Mud Pool test my thesaurus...seething, belching, hissing, spluttering, plopping... squonching, pluffing, blummp, sssplip.
- 5) "Mud Pool" is such a DOC name. Make up a new name...how 'bout "Devil's Arse?"



A Mud Pool morning

6) Happy hour at Mud Pool is a “blast!” No tourist crowds. It’s intoxicating to sit with a cocktail on the railing, marveling at how the mud becomes funnier the more you drink.



7) If the mud volcano near the fence is plopping, it’s fun to lean over and try to catch a fling of flying mud. Where else on Earth can you do this? Catch one and you’ll swear—“Damn, it’s HOT!!”but then you’ll reach out again...so fun! (Holding my friend’s arm as she leaned over the volcano to catch a splatter, I’ll never forget the shocked look on her face as she shook her hand to get the hot mud off! Laughing with glee, she reached out quickly to snare another hot plop—unforgettable!!)

8) A drip in a cave is called a “cave kiss.” What’s a mud splatter-scald called?



8:30 am tour bus to
Waiotapu
(Even more crowded after
the 10:15 geyser show)

B. o. P. Rotorua

Mud
volcano



Finally, splattered with mud, a bit of a mud buzz...head to Kerosene Creek for the perfect rinse. NZ Frenzy!

DRIVING: On SH5 at the Waiotapu Tavern, take the Waiotapu Loop road for just 500m.

CAMPERVANS: Overnighting on the road to Mud Pool is fine...no toilets.



E15

WAIKITE VALLEY THERMAL POOLS

COMMERCIAL HOT POOLS COMPLEX

Difficulty: Leaving

Bring: \$12pp, \$6 for kids. Open 10am-9pm daily.

This is a commercially operated hot pools complex. The local community funded its development out of the desire to bask, rather than to just make a buck. They did an extraordinary job—I highly recommend this place!

Waikite is blessed with the largest boiling gusher in the country—you should see it! From this boiling spring a network of terraces are set up to cool the water before it gets to the pools.

There are a variety of pool sizes, temperatures, and “no kids” regulations to please everyone. A café is adjacent to the pools for meals and snacks.

But wait, even if you don’t have the time for a soak, it’s still worthwhile to stop in just to witness the Te Manaroa Spring. For just \$3 you can walk the short “eco-trail” along a steamy mini-valley. **This is Jurassic Park, dawn-of-time cool...**mists swirl and caress the tree ferns

while sunbeams slant through the canopy. No sound but god at work fashioning a boiling stream. Pterodactyls circle overhead. One moment you’re enshrouded in a cleansing curtain of steam and the next...poof...you get a quick glimpse of the boiling cauldron. Primal fury at its rawest! Beware the Tyrannosaurus!



Waikite Hot Pool Complex



The boiling stream

Te Manaroa (Mana - Charismatic, Roa - Long lasting) spring has the largest discharge of boiling water in New Zealand

DRIVING: 28km south of Rotorua on SH5 (to Taupo), just north of the Waitapu tavern, turn west on Waikite Valley road and go 7km.

CAMPERVANS: Waikite has a campground with both powered (\$18pp) and tent sites (\$16pp). Admission to the pools is free for campers. My personal favorite campground in the area.



E? WATERFALL SPOUT BATH

"SECRET" HOT POOL

Difficulty: ???

Bring: ???

Waterfall Spout Bath hot spring doesn't have a real name. Everyone who writes about it just sort of throws some words together out of spout and falls and shower and bath.

I don't want to see this small hot pool overrun with visitors, so I won't tell you exactly where it is...but I'll give you a riddle to help the clever find it.

*"I'm friends with a "Lady"
and we're told that we're sacred waters.
I'm protected by only a white guard
who swings his arm closed at night.
Get by this guard and you'll know
to look for the towering twin pines
and to listen for my gurgle...
then you'll scamper Right over."*

If you can't find me from this riddle,
then you'll have to ask Sally and her
guidebook.

B. o. P. -Rotorua





E17 WAIOTAPU THERMAL WONDERLAND

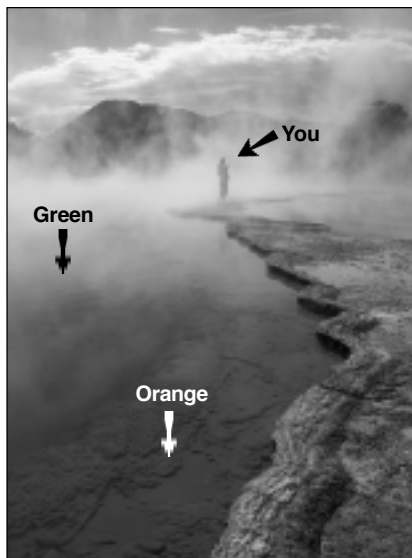
COMMERCIAL THERMAL PARK

Difficulty: Easy, but tiring 90-minute walk

Bring: Clock, camera, \$27 or more, less for kids

Waiotapu is the best commercial thermal park near Rotorua. Each of the various parks has its own star attraction, but on the whole, Waiotapu has the most and best. (Just my opinion.) Champagne Pool and its insane green and orange coloring is one of the most unique pools in the world! Waiotapu also has crowds, and by now you know that I'm no fan of tourist crowds...so I'll tell you how to avoid the crowd at Waiotapu... but first lemme tell you about Lady Know Geyser.

This geyser, located a short drive from the main Waiotapu area, goes off every morning at 10:15am when the guide artificially in-soap-enates it. Yup, a bar of soap sets off the not-so-natural geyser, and like a trained dolphin it does tricks for the stadium audience. Hundreds pack the bleachers to watch it. It sprays for 45-60 minutes, and if you're thinking about hanging around until everybody leaves and then hopping the fence to stand in the warm spray....don't, they have cameras set up and guards will come!



Champagne Pool (on back cover)



Devil's Bath

So, if you want to tour Waiotapu without the summer crowd...do it between 9:30am and 11am when everyone else leaves to see the geyser perform. Note though that the place is packed from 8:30-9:30, and also right after Lady Knox. Late afternoon is OK also, but long shadows only hinder good photos of the geothermal attractions.



Lady Knox Geyser, 10:14 am



10:15 – Soap!



10:16 – get ready!



10:17 – Geyser!

DRIVING: The Waiotapu Loop road is 27km south of Rotorua on SH5 at the Waiotapu Tavern.

CAMPERVANS: people seem to stay in the carpark for the 8:30 opening.

FYI: To see Lady Knox Geyser on Youtube, type search code: g18kmagvpk0 or “Rotorua geysir” for 4:32 video.