



Rotorua & the Bay of Plenty

Includes ➔

Rotorua	273
Around Rotorua	288
Tauranga	292
Mt Maunganui.....	298
Katikati.....	302
Maketu.....	303
Whakatane	304
Ohope.....	309
Opotiki	311

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Macau (p296)
- ➔ Elizabeth Cafe & Larder (p296)
- ➔ Post Bank (p301)
- ➔ Abracadabra Cafe Bar (p285)
- ➔ Sabroso (p286)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Koura Lodge (p284)
- ➔ Warm Earth Cottage (p303)
- ➔ Moanarua Beach Cottage (p310)
- ➔ Opotiki Beach House (p311)
- ➔ Tauranga on the Waterfront (p295)

Why Go?

Captain Cook christened the Bay of Plenty when he cruised past in 1769, and plentiful it remains. Blessed with sunshine and sand, the bay stretches from Waihi Beach in the west to Opotiki in the east, with the holiday hubs of Tauranga, Mt Maunganui and Whakatane in between.

Offshore from Whakatane is New Zealand's most active volcano, Whakaari (White Island). Volcanic activity defines this region, and nowhere is this subterranean spectacle more obvious than in Rotorua. Here the daily business of life goes on among steaming hot springs, explosive geysers, bubbling mud pools and the billows of sulphurous gas responsible for the town's 'unique' eggy smell.

Rotorua and the Bay of Plenty are also strongholds of Māori tradition, presenting numerous opportunities to engage with NZ's rich indigenous culture: check out a power-packed concert performance, chow down at a *hangi* (Māori feast) or skill-up with some Māori arts-and-crafts techniques.

When to Go

➔ The Bay of Plenty is one of NZ's sunniest regions: Whakatane records a brilliant 2350 average hours of sunshine per year! In summer (December to February) maximums hover between 20°C and 27°C. Everyone else is here, too, but the holiday vibe is heady.

➔ Visit Rotorua any time: the geothermal activity never sleeps, and there are enough beds in any season.

➔ The mercury can slide below 5°C overnight here in winter, although it's usually warmer on the coast (and you'll have the beach all to yourself).

i Getting There & Around

Air New Zealand (☎ 0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz) has direct flights from Tauranga and Rotorua to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

InterCity and ManaBus services connect Tauranga, Rotorua and Whakatane with most other main cities in NZ. Bay Hopper bus services run between Tauranga, Whakatane and Opoiki. Twin City Express buses link Tauranga and Rotorua.

ROTORUA

POP 65,280

Catch a whiff of Rotorua's sulphur-rich, asthmatic airs and you've already got a taste of NZ's most dynamic thermal area, home to spurting geysers, steaming hot springs and exploding mud pools. The Māori revered this place, naming one of the most spectacular springs Wai-O-Tapu (Sacred Waters). Today 35% of the population is Māori, with their cultural performances and traditional *hanga* as big an attraction as the landscape itself.

Despite the pervasive eggy odour, 'Sulphur City' is one of the most touristed spots on the North Island, with nearly three million visitors annually. Some locals say this steady trade has seduced the town into resting on its laurels, and that socially Rotorua lags behind more progressive towns such as Tauranga and Taupo. And with more motels than nights in November, the urban fabric of 'RotoVegas' isn't particularly appealing... but still, where else can you see a 30m geothermal geyser!

History

The Rotorua area was first settled in the 14th century when the canoe *Te Arawa*, captained by Tamatekapua, arrived from Hawaiki at Maketu in the central Bay of Plenty. Settlers took the tribal name Te Arawa to commemorate the vessel that had brought them here.

In the next few hundred years, subtribes spread and divided through the area, with conflicts breaking out over limited territory. A flashpoint occurred in 1823 when the Arawa lands were invaded by tribes from the Northland in the so-called Musket Wars. After heavy losses on both sides, the Northlanders eventually withdrew.

During the Waikato Land War (1863–64) Te Arawa threw in its lot with the government against its traditional Waikato enemies, gaining troop support and preventing East Coast reinforcements getting through to support the Kingitanga (King Movement).

ESSENTIAL ROTORUA & THE BAY OF PLENTY

Eat At the buzzy cafes and restaurants along the Strand in Tauranga (p295).

Drink Local craft beer from Rotorua's Croucher Brewing Co (p286).

Read *How to Watch a Bird*, an exposition on the joys of avian observation, written by Mt Maunganui schoolboy Steve Braunias.

Listen to *Kora*, the eponymous rootsy album from Whakatane's soulful sons.

Watch Excellent bilingual shows in Māori and English on Māori TV.

Go green Negotiate the verdant bush-clad experience of Rotorua's Redwoods Treewalk (p279).

Online www.rotoruanz.com, www.bayofplenty.co.nz

Area code ☎ 07

With peace in the early 1870s, word spread of scenic wonders, miraculous landscapes and watery cures for all manner of diseases. Rotorua boomed. Its main attraction was the fabulous Pink and White Terraces, formed by volcanic silica deposits. Touted at the time as the eighth natural wonder of the world, they were destroyed in the 1886 Mt Tarawera eruption.

Sights

City Centre

Rotorua Museum

MUSEUM, GALLERY

(Map p278; ☎ 07-350 1814; www.rotoruumuseum.co.nz; Queens Dr, Government Gardens; adult/child \$20/8; ☀ 9am–5pm Mar–Nov, to 6pm Dec–Feb, tours hourly 10am–4pm, plus 5pm Dec–Feb) This outstanding museum occupies a grand Tudor-style edifice. A 20-minute film on the history of Rotorua, including the Tarawera eruption, runs every 20 minutes from 9am. The **Don Stafford Wing**, dedicated to Rotorua's Te Arawa people, features woodcarving, flax weaving, jade and the stories of the revered WWII 28th Māori Battalion. Also here are two **art galleries** and a cool cafe with garden views (although the best view in town is from the **viewing platform** on the roof).

The museum was originally an elegant spa retreat called the Bath House (1908):