

# Fast Facts

## TE ARAWA

### Myths and Legends

(suitable for pre/post visit)



ROTORUA  
museum

*Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa*

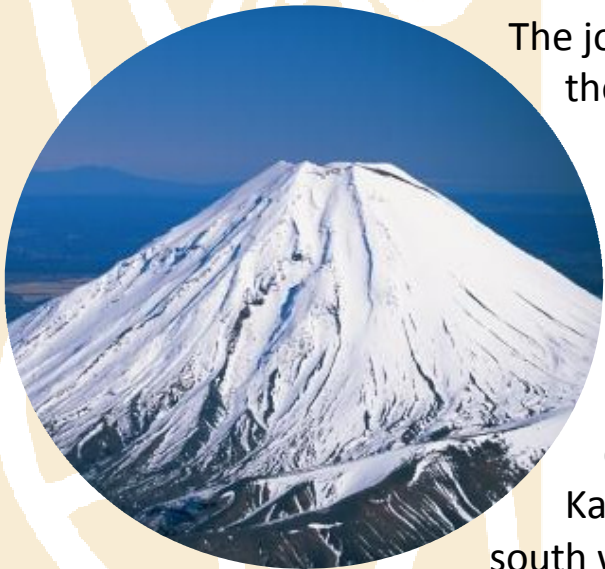
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## Ngātoroirangi and the Coming of Fire

The people of Te Arawa are the guardians of the thermal region of New Zealand. This right came from the early exploration of Ngatoroirangi, the famous tohunga (spiritual leader) of the Arawa canoe. The spouting hot geysers, the mud pools and the volcanic fire are all the result of Ngatoroirangi and his actions.



Ngatoroirangi left his first landing spot at Maketu and travelled inland. He caught sight of the gleaming beauty of Mount Tongariro. He was amazed by its magnificence and wanted to climb to its summit. After travelling closer, he ordered his companions to stay at the bottom while he and his slave, Aruhoe, climbed to the top.



The journey was very dangerous. The snowy air froze their breath and iced their fingers, it numbed their toes and stiffened their joints. Aruhoe stumbled many times but Ngatoroirangi urged him on.

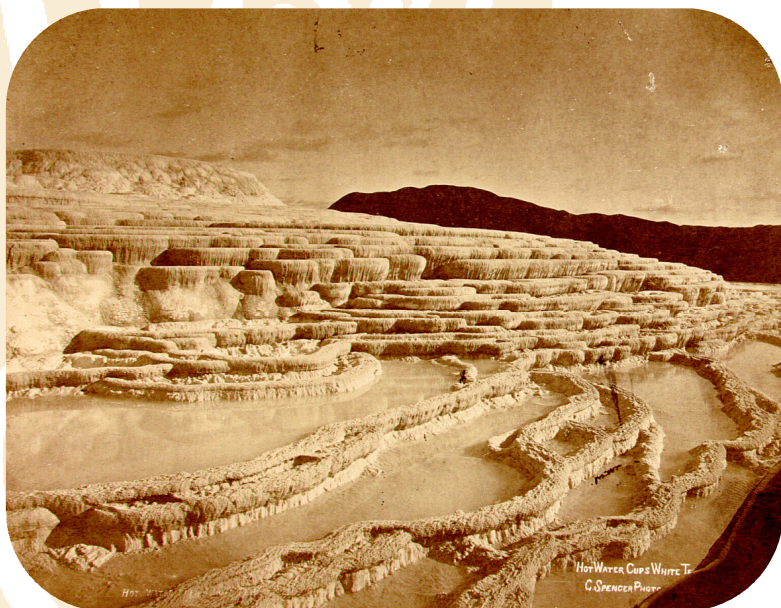
Ngatoroirangi bent over in pain caused by the stabbing cold. He prayed to his sisters in Hawaiki, “Send fire to warm me! Do not delay or I will surely die. Oh Kuiwai, Oh Haungaroa, come quickly. Ka riro au i te tonga!” (I am carried away by the cold south wind).

Far off in Hawaiki, his sisters heard his prayers. They called to the fire taniwha, Te Pupu and Te Haota, who plunged into the sea and swam quickly until they came to Whakaari (White Island).

As they lifted their heads into the air, the earth burst into flames, which have never since died down. They saw as they rose, that they had many miles to go to reach Ngatoroirangi. Down they went again, into the seas, and a steaming, bubbling wake was left in their path. At Mou-tohora they surfaced once more, at Okakaru, Rotoehu, Rotoiti, Rotorua, Tarawera, Orakei Korako and Taupo.

At each place as they popped up, flames leapt to the surface. The tunnel they made connected Tongariro to White Island forever. Then, like a flash of lightning, the taniwha burst through the enormous form of Tongoriro, arriving as Ngatoroirangi lay on the edge of death.

Although the slave Aruhoe had already died, the volcanic heat created by the taniwha saved Ngatoroirangi. The warmth spread through his veins, sending life to his muscles and bones. After gaining his strength, Ngatoroirangi took the body of his slave, Aruhoe, and threw it into the crater. The place has since been known as Ngaruhoe.



And so it came to be; volcanic and thermal activity came to the region and the Arawa tribes became its guardian.

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