

Fast Facts

TE ARAWA

Myths and Legends

(suitable for pre/post visit)



ROTORUA
museum

Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa
ART | CULTURE | HERITAGE

Mai i Maketu ki Aotearoa



Some 20 generations ago lived an iwi (tribe), called Ngāti Ohomairangi in the Polynesian homelands of Hawaiki Houmaitawhiti their chief saddened by a long history of events, decided that it was time to send his people in search of new lands.

His eldest son Tamatekapua was tasked along with other members of his iwi to build a 40 metre long-twin hulled sailing vessel.

When it was completed, the powerful tohunga (navigator-priest) Ngātoroirangi was enticed to journey with the people of Houmaitawhiti in their search for a new homeland.

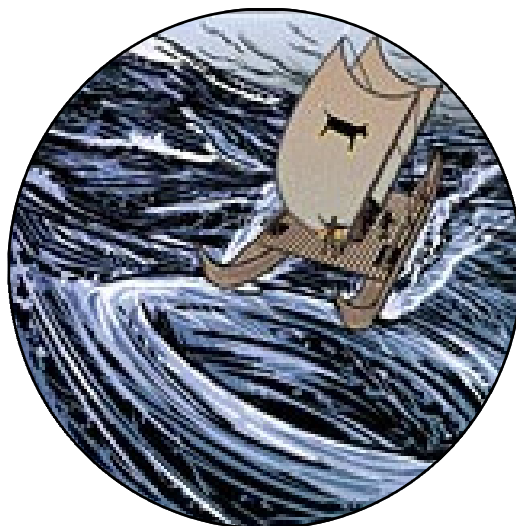
As the waka (sailing vessel) left the shores of Hawaiki, the ageing leader Houmaitawhiti bade his people farewell. Too old to travel, he stayed in Hawaiki to welcome the wairua (spirits) of his descendants back to their homeland.

The waka followed an old pathway using stars, ocean currents and wave patterns that took them to the southwest Pacific.



During the voyage our people encountered Te Korokoro ō Te Parata, a great taniwha that lived in Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa. A huge whirlpool consumed almost all of their food and possessions.

The powerful incantations of Ngātoroirangi saved the people and the waka. On their journey they saw an Arawa shark. This sign from the gods and of nature it was viewed as a good omen. To mark that event they named their waka Te Arawa.



When Ngāti Ohomairangi arrived in Aotearoa, they explored the coastline of Te Ika-ā-Māui (the North Island of New Zealand). Eventually they selected Maketu in the Bay of Plenty as their home.

An incident of fire burned their waka on land while in storage. So saddened by this event they renamed themselves after their lost canoe Te Arawa.

The people dispersed throughout the region but remembered the parting words (te Ōhaaki) of their leader Houmaitawhiti as they set out on journeys of exploration.



They travelled over mountains, through valleys and across rivers, they gave every landmark a name to remind us today of ancestral events. This ensured that the land would always remain the domain of Te Arawa's descendants.



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