

For immediate release

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Rotorua's famous love story comes to life at TRENZ

Walking in the footsteps of Rotorua's famous lovers Hinemoa and Tūtānekai, TRENZ media will explore sacred Mokoia Island – a place steeped in cultural history and home to endangered wildlife.

Mokoia Island sits in the heart of Lake Rotorua, 134 hectares in size and 170 meters above the lake surface - an iconic landmark dating back to 1350 A.D. The private land is owned by the Mokoia Island Trust, comprised of four Te Arawa iwi (tribes) as kaitiaki (guardians) - Ngāti Whakauae, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Rangiteaorere and Ngāti Uenukukopako.

Mokoia Island Trust caretaker and Katoa Lake Rotorua guide Tony Pecotic says Mokoia is a living island for Te Arawa as the iwi (tribe) still sees it as kainga (home), with many tapu (sacred) sites including nine fortified villages, an ancient statue of fertility called Matuatonga, Hinemoa's Pool and buried relatives.

"The 1823 musket wars drove everyone to the mainland after Northland's Hongi Hika led his tribe to Lake Rotorua, hauling canoes overland for 12 days to surround and attack Te Arawa on Mokoia Island.

"This made our people realise, with guns introduced to New Zealand, the island was no longer safe."

Pecotic says Mokoia Island is now a Māori Mau Taiaha Wananga (Māori martial arts school) and a wildlife sanctuary with the Trust collaborating closely with the Department of Conservation to protect endangered birds in the predator free environment, including kōkako, kiwi, tui, weka, toutouwai (North Island robin) and tieke (saddleback). There are also indigenous spotted skinks and native plants and trees such as kawakawa, totara, rimu, pohutakawa and water rose.

One of the stories capturing hearts in this significant place is that of Māori lovers Hinemoa and Tūtānekai, a story so popular, one of New Zealand's national songs Pōkarekare Ana is about the pair. Rotorua also named two intersecting streets in their honour. Today, some 12 generations later, many hundreds of their descendants live in the Rotorua region.

The story is that Hinemoa and Tūtānekai fell in love, but her family resisted the marriage, as Hinemoa was beautiful and high-born, while he was of lower social

status. Hinemoa would listen each night to the flute music of Tūtānekai as the sounds drifted across from his home on the island of Mokoia in Lake Rotorua.

When Hinemoa's family tried to prevent her leaving, she strung together six empty gourds for flotation and swam three kilometres naked across to Mokoia Island at night, guided by the sound of the music. Tūtānekai found her warming herself in a warm pool on the island. Their marriage was eventually the source of strong bonds among their kin.

Pecotic will show delegates the famous Hinemoa's Pool on the lake edge of Mokoia Island, a naturally geothermally heated pool.

To have the modern day experience of lakeside geothermal bathing like Hinemoa, TRENZ delegates will then visit Polynesian Spa's Deluxe Spa to soak in hot mineral pools on the shores of Lake Rotorua.

At Polynesian Spa waters from two natural springs are fed into 28 mineral pools. The slightly acidic Priest Spring relieves tired muscles, aches and pains while the alkaline waters of the Rachel Spring nourishes skin.

Destination Rotorua chief executive Michelle Templer said finishing the day overlooking Lake Rotorua in a hot pool, will give visiting media an opportunity to reflect on the stories from the day's tour.

"The stories of history, the richness of culture and the elements of nature are integral to understanding a place like Rotorua with real depth. Visiting media will now have a great platform from which to share their experiences."

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Notes for media:

Polynesian Spa:

At Polynesian Spa TRENZ media will experience the Deluxe Lake Spa, embracing nature's sanctuary and slipping into five mineral hot pools (36 - 42°C) overlooking Lake Rotorua. They will also have the option to experience the cold

plunge pool and lounge on geothermal recliners, while also enjoying luxurious changing rooms.

Polynesian Spa has been an icon of the Rotorua tourism industry since it was established in 1972. The world-leading natural hot mineral bathing and spa treatment facility was built on the site of historic bath houses for which the city first became world famous in the 1800s.

Starting out with 13 pools, Polynesian Pools (former name) was immediately a famous destination, drawing people from all over the world. As the new millennium approached, demand for a more deluxe product experience increased which led to the introduction of our relaxation therapies and the rebranding to today's Polynesian Spa in 1996

The Spa continues to evolve and focus on health and wellness, introducing passive and active bathing experiences for increased immunity and greater energy levels.

At Polynesian Spa, elements of early buildings and baths have been carefully retained and the site is registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

<https://www.polynesianspa.co.nz/>

Katoa Lake Rotorua:

Katoa in Te Reo (Māori language) means entirely, everything, and everyone. It was the meaning of the word Katoa that led the business on its journey to become Katoa Lake Rotorua. A place where you can go to uncover all of Lake Rotorua's history, culture, and thrills on Lake Rotorua and Mokoia Island.

Embrace a deeper understanding of Māori culture alongside local guides, and discover how this culture is steeped within all of us in New Zealand. Learn about the famous love story between Hinemoa and Tūtānekai on Lake Rotorua as well as the wars that have scarred Mokoia Island.

Katoa also offers Parasailing and Jet Boating with V8 engines providing epic rides with speed, spins and heights.

www.katoalakerotorua.co.nz

Mokoia Island Trust

The Governance of Mokoia Island is equally represented by three elected trustees from the four Hapu me Iwi (tribes) who preside as kaitiaki (guardians) of the island - Ngāti Whakaeu, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Rangiteaorere and Ngāti Uenukukopako.

These elected trustees are responsible for the management, protection and preservation of this taonga (treasure) for all its owners and beneficiaries. They ensure that activities both by hapu & iwi (tribe) members and commercial operators on the island maintain and uphold the mana (status, spiritual power, charisma) and the mauri (life force, vital essence) of Mokoia.

Mokoia Island Trust has an agreement that the only commercial operator that can land on the island is Katoa Lake Rotorua.