

ARE YOU READY FOR THE LAND OF THE SACRED PEAKS?

TE KĀHUI
THE SACRED PEAKS
TUPUA
NEW ZEALAND

MAJESTY

EXHILARATION

ENCHANTMENT

LEGACY

EXPRESSION

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te káhui tupua

– THE SACRED PEAKS



PIC: MT RUAPHEHU

A Mighty Fish, Supreme Mountain and River of Tears

Deep in time, Maui the Maori warrior demi-God hauled his great fish, Te Ika-a-Maui, from the oceans of Tangaroa, God of the Sea. In so doing, the North Island of New Zealand (Aotearoa) was formed forever connecting the Maori people to the land, mountains, rivers, forests, sea and each other by genealogy (whakapapa).

Fearful of the mighty fish, Maui's brothers pleaded to Ranginui, sky father, for help. He, in turn, placed the great mountain Ruapehu in the centre of the new island. Standing alone, proud and majestic, Ruapehu brought calm to the land.

As time passed, Ruapehu became lonely and his sorrow was noticed by Ranginui who took pity and placed teardrops at his feet. Legend tells us that one of these teardrops formed the beginnings of the Whanganui River.

When Ruapehu's loneliness became too great to bear, Ranginui again took pity, sending four mountain companions to keep him company. They were: Tongariro, the warrior

guardian of the teardrops; Taranaki, the custodian of the tapu (sacred); Ngauruhoe, the ultimate servant; and Pihanga, a fertile maiden who was betrothed to Tongariro.

With time, Pihanga became distracted and tempted by the allure of the tall, elegant Taranaki. To keep his mana intact, Taranaki left, sadly meandering down the Whanganui River, filling it with his tears before finally settling towards the west, with the setting sun.

SACRED PEAKS

Te Kahui Tupua (Sacred Peaks) combines the three districts of Ruapehu, Wanganui and Rangitikei; bringing together as one some of the world's most spectacular scenery.

Central to the region is a volcano called Ruapehu, from which three sacred rivers (the Whanganui, Whangaehu and Rangitikei) run. Together with spiritual forest tracks, the rivers form the Chosen Pathways (Te Ara Whanui), which connect ancestors,

prophets and fellow travellers with Sacred Peaks; iconic treasures within an ancient land.

The Sacred Peaks lie scattered throughout the three districts and draw travellers in along the Chosen Pathways. The Pathways retrace ancient memories; they are engraved with the stories of the land and are timeless reminders connecting the future with the past.

It is said that the relationship between the people and the natural landscape is held strong by a sacred "rope" that was plaited many generations ago by the children of Ranginui (Skyfather) and Papatuanuku (Earthmother).

This rope is known as 'Te Taura Kotahi' – the woven rope of unity – and is believed to possess the human qualities of Majesty, Exhilaration, Enchantment, Legacy and Expression that guide those taking a journey.

From Ruapehu in the north, passing through the tributaries and into the rapids of New Zealand's longest navigable river, the Whanganui, and on to the coast, the rope extends

strands of unity to the Rangitikei and other Maori tribes, whose homelands straddle the sacred Whangaehu and Rangitikei rivers.

Within the regions are many taonga – treasures – that lie scattered across a landscape that has been made internationally famous by Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies.

From herb fields to forests, tranquil lakes, desert-like plateau, active volcanoes and spiritual rivers, Te Kahui Tupua offers the chance to form a connection with an ancient land and its people. It's a place of adventure where the unexpected is expected and surprises appear around every corner.

RUAPHEHU DISTRICT

"Haere hoki ki o maunga – Return to your sacred peaks"

The Ruapehu district is blessed with outstanding natural features such as Tongariro National Park, which is a dual World Heritage site and home to Mount Ruapehu, Mount Ngauruhoe and Mount Tongariro.

The setting for Mt Doom in the *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, Mt Ruapehu featured in *The Return of the King* when Frodo and Sam stumbled up its slopes.

Established in 1887, Tongariro became New Zealand's first National Park and only the fourth in the world. It is one of only 25 dual World Heritage areas that exist globally and the first to be identified as a cultural landscape. Such status recognises the park's important Maori cultural and spiritual associations, as well as its outstanding volcanic features.

Within the park lies the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, an 18.5 km (7-9 hours) hike across meadows, past alpine tarns and along the slopes of active volcanoes. The track is renowned as the best one-day alpine crossing in all of New Zealand and one of the best hikes in the world.

Mt Ruapehu stands sentinel over the surrounding Te Kahui Tupua lands and is one of the most active volcanoes in the world, as well as the highest point on the North Island. Known to Maori as Te Matua

o te Mana (the Mountain of Prestige), or Kahui Maunga (Sacred Mountain), it is the taonga or a treasure of New Zealand's dual World Heritage Area.

A unique way to experience the scenery and connectivity of this mountain to the surrounding landscapes during the summer months is to venture on a Guided Crater Lake Walk (starts in mid-December).

Beginning with a scenic chairlift ride to 2,020 metres, experienced local guides lead the six-hour trek through spectacular alpine scenery, to Mt Ruapehu's snow-capped peaks and Crater Lake (at 2,670 metres). In addition to this walk, there are other internationally significant walks such as the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, and Ruapehu Round the Mountain.

At the foot of Ruapehu sits the Bayview Chateau Tongariro, an iconic hotel built in 1929. The neo Georgian-style Chateau is the only four-star New Zealand hotel located within the World Heritage Area, and has its own National Architectural Heritage Status. Inside the



ALL PICS: BECKY NUNES



“Haere hoki ki o maunga — Return to your sacred peaks” // “Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au — I am the

river, the river is me” // “Ko toku rohe ko te takutaimoana o te ao — My realm is the shores of the world”

Chateau are roaring log fires, the glow of grand chandeliers and sublime cuisine.

A new wing was opened in 2005 and includes the Te Heu Heu suite; named for the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa, Horonuku Te Heu Heu Tukino, who gifted the parkland to the people of New Zealand in 1887. This gifting ensured this precious land's protection for all time and enjoyment by all people.

On the Chateau's doorstep are the renowned ski fields of Whakapapa and Turoa, which number among the few places in the world where it's possible to feel the adrenalin rush of skiing a live volcano.

WANGANUI DISTRICT

“Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au — I am the river, the river is me”.

South of Ruapehu, on the West Coast of the North Island, Wanganui is a river city renowned for its heritage and arts. Deeply entrenched with Maori and European history, many of Wanganui's beautifully preserved buildings, parks and gardens date back to the early days of European settlement.

The Whanganui River's spiritual

source can be found in the Ruapehu District, while its outlet is the Tasman Sea. The riverbanks once pulsed with human activity and were home to more than 30,000 Maori people who lived in thriving villages (marae) up until the turn of the 20th century. It forms part of an ancient Chosen Pathway, and following European settlement was a bustling waterway to the hinterland, until it once again fell undisturbed and silent with the advent of road and rail travel.

Whanganui National Park attracts hikers who seek out an untouched bushland environment. The Park was gazetted in 1986 and protects one of the largest remaining tracts of lowland forest remaining in the North Island.

Dissected by the Whanganui River — the longest continually navigable river in the country — the waterway is an important Pathway into and through the area. It's possible to paddle the Whanganui River on a 145-km journey from Taumarunui to Pipiriki. For those who are time poor a shorter canoe trip from Whakahoro to Pipiriki is another option.

Western tributaries of the Whanganui have eroded the mudstone (papa) landscape and this in turn has created spectacular gorges, bluffs and a maze of intricate ridges and V-shaped valleys. The streams and rivers are an important habitat for the Whio (blue duck), an endemic species that is admirably suited to river life.

Nestled on the western bank of the Whanganui River sits a small retreat called The Flying Fox, which is cradled within mist-cloaked ridges and surrounded by the dense native forest of the National Park.

It can only be reached via aerial cableway or boat from the serpent-like gravel Whanganui River Road. “Remote” is the best word to describe The Flying Fox and this is all part of the allure.

Two small self-contained guest cottages — The James K and The Brew House — have been lovingly built from recycled materials and are set amid gardens and orchards that provide locally grown, organic produce.

Three-hour guided canoe journeys on the river are possible, following a

meandering course that passes through tranquil surrounds. For those more experienced, a self-guided tour offers an ideal way to get to know the country, albeit at your own pace.

RANGITIKEI DISTRICT

“Ko toku rohe ko te takutaimoana o te ao — My realm is the shores of the world”.

Legend has it that Maori ancestor Hau named the Rangitikei River when pursuing his wife and her lover southward from Taranaki some 600 years ago. With long strides (tikei) he moved one day (rangi) to the river, which he then called Rangitikei (the day of striding out).

Nothing has influenced the district's

landscape more so than the mighty Rangitikei River. It carves its way from the headwaters in the Kaimanawa Ranges to the Manawatu Region, where the finest remaining examples of parabolic sand dune systems can be seen.

The river defines the North Island back-country landscape, and table-like Mount Aorangi looms over it, a silent guardian of this virgin land. Within its shadow lie small rural towns and villages that feature intimate galleries and stunning private gardens that may be enjoyed by visitors.

The dramatic landscape of the upper Rangitikei, the peaks of Pukeokahu, and mana-filled Aorangi beckon travellers to a sheltered haven called River Valley. A pioneer of the Adventure Lodge

concept, River Valley offers multi-day adventures that include grade 5 rafting, horse trekking, fly fishing and hiking within one of the most stunning regions in the country.

The property is a standing place (turangawaewae) where deep roots have been seeded. The host family has a connection to the river that spans five generations and believe that the sharing of stories is paramount.

They, like the Sacred Peaks and Chosen Pathways, extend a hand of friendship to all those who come. It is hoped that those visitors who follow in the footsteps of the ancestors through Te Kahui Tupua will take a little of New Zealand with them when they leave, and gift a little of themselves in return.



ESSENTIAL LINKS

The Sacred Peaks // www.sacredpeaks.co.nz
Mt Ruapehu // www.mtruapehu.com
The Chateau // www.chateau.co.nz
The Flying Fox // www.theflyingfox.co.nz
River Valley // www.rivervalley.co.nz

