

Hunt for the Pink and White Terraces

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Preparations are under way to find out if the Pink and White Terraces near Rotorua are still intact underground.

Researchers claimed in June they had found the site where the terraces had been buried by Mt Tarawera erupting 131 years ago.

They believed the terraces were about 10-15 metres beneath the ground near Lake Rotomahana.

Now researches are going to use radar imaging to confirm their theory. If radar imaging and core drilling returned positive results, the next step would be excavation.

HOW GROUND PENETRATING RADAR WORKS

Ground penetrating radar uses high-frequency radio signals which are transmitted into the ground. The signal bounces off objects below the surface and is reflected back to the transmitting device.

It uses the time between sending and receiving a signal to establish how deep an object is and creates an image of what's below the surface.

What were the Pink and White Terraces?

The Pink Terrace, or Te Otukapuarangi (“The fountain of the clouded sky”) in Māori, and the White Terrace, also known as Te Tarata (“the tattooed rock”), were natural wonders of New Zealand. Until recently, they were lost and thought destroyed in the 1886 eruption of Mount Tarawera.

It's estimated the Pink and White Terraces were formed over a 600 year period, after an eruption in 1314.

The original site of the white terrace was the size of a city block and about six storeys tall. The pink terraces were half that size.

The 1886 Mt Tarawera eruption lasted about five hours and is considered the largest volcanic eruption in New Zealand in the past 200 years.

Numerous Maori villages were destroyed, including the famous Buried Village tourist attraction near Rotorua.



