



ECO-TRAIL WALK

A leisurely stroll along the Waikite Valley Thermal Pools Eco-Trail takes walkers to the head of the Te Manaroa Stream and the impressive Te Manaroa Spring. Gushing boiling (98°C) water at a rate of 1800 litres per minute, the spring is the largest single source of natural boiling water in New Zealand. The 200m long walk is rich in interesting geological and botanical sights and information. The fascinating plant life found in and around this unique area includes Cristella ferns and club mosses. The geothermal club mosses are an ancient form of plant life dating back some 360 million years. Very rare in New Zealand, the Cristella fern can only be found in a few geothermal areas south of Rotorua, yet is abundant in the rainforests of South America. This seemingly peculiar fact can be explained by the fact that South America, Australia and New Zealand were once part of the same land mass (Gondwanaland) and thus shared the same plant and animal life. When this land mass separated some 85 million years ago, the Cristella fern was one of the few species that survived the split. (187 words)