



Tāmaki
Paenga Hira
Auckland
War Memorial
Museum

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Te hokinga mai: Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum welcomes Māori sail Te Rā

Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum will host Te Rā, the only known customary Māori sail in existence, from Saturday 18 November 2023 in an exhibition titled *Te Rā: Navigating Home*.

Held in the collection of the British Museum, this is the first time the taonga, which is thought to be more than 200-years-old, has returned to Aotearoa. *Te Rā: Navigating Home* is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for New Zealanders to see the sail first-hand.

Te Rā has been in Aotearoa since July on a two-stage tour of Aotearoa. The sail is currently on display in an exhibition at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, with its second stop in Tāmaki Makaurau in November.

At nearly four and a half metres long and featuring a complex three-way pattern woven from harakeke, Te Rā is a testament to the skill of Māori weaving and serves as a reminder of the rich history of Māori sailing and navigation.

Based on study of Te Rā, the sail is known to have been made in the late 18th century, but it is not known where in Aotearoa Te Rā was made, or who made it. Marks and signs of wear on the sail show that Te Rā was used before it was collected in Aotearoa and taken to Britain.

Auckland Museum Chief Executive David Reeves says, “The arrival of Te Rā to Aotearoa, and now to Tāmaki Makaurau, is an extraordinary moment that allows us to connect with a little-known aspect of Māori history and see the results of remarkable skills that designed and crafted Te Rā over 200-years ago. It is a timeless taonga that has the potential to inspire new interest in the knowledge and application of Māori weaving and sailing.”

“We are very pleased to have been able to partner with Christchurch Art Gallery in bringing Te Rā back to New Zealand for weavers, researchers, rangatahi and the public to enjoy. After being away for over 200 years, the exhibition of Te Rā is a rare and valuable opportunity to experience the beauty and significance of this taonga.”



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In Tāmaki Makaurau, Te Rā will be accompanied by the display of two additional sails produced by Te Rā Ringa Raupā, a group of highly skilled weavers mentored by weaver, installation artist, and researcher Dr Maureen Lander. The group first formed in 2009 in response to a near-century-old challenge from Māori scholar Te Rangihīroa (Sir Peter Buck) who, in December 1922, challenged Māori weavers to visit the British Museum to study, reproduce, and revive the unique weaving knowledge found within this sail.

Through a process of research, knowledge sharing and hands-on experimentation, the group has completed two sibling sails of Te Rā. Hine Mārama is a small-scale model that shows the meticulous thought process, innovative techniques, and challenges encountered in the pursuit of recreating Te Rā; and Māhere Tū ki te Rangi, a stunning full-sized recreation of Te Rā born of the collective skill and effort of the group.

Auckland Museum Curator Pou Ārahi, Māori, Dr Kahutoi Te Kanawa says “To have Te Rā in Aotearoa for the first time in many generations is a huge moment for all Māori.”

“Through the creation of the two sibling sails, Te Rā Ringa Raupā have demonstrated the knowledge embedded in Te Rā and how it can be accessed through study and recreation. This tells us the importance of preserving and learning from our taonga.”

“Te Rā represents the preservation of wairua (spirit) of our ancestral knowledge and enduring connection of tūpuna, wisdom, creativity and artistry through time. Alongside the two sister sails, we see the kotahitanga (unity) of the wairua, tinana (body) and hinengaro (mind) that is the strength of Mātauranga Māori,” says Te Kanawa.

While the existence of Te Rā was known to early 20th-century scholars of Māori art and culture who published descriptions of the sail in New Zealand journals, no formal study of this rare and remarkable taonga had been undertaken until recently.

The project to bring Te Rā to Aotearoa has involved many hands, including a research group led by Rānui Ngārimu ONZM, Dr Catherine Smith and Dr Donna Campbell. Their research project ‘Whakaarahia anō te rā kai hau! Raise up again the billowing sail!’ was funded by the Royal Society Te Apārangi Marsden Fund.

Te Rā: Navigating Home is at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum from Saturday 18 November 2023 until Sunday 26 May 2024. The exhibition of Te Rā represents a significant collaboration between the British Museum, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum.

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[IMAGES](#)

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TE RĀ: NAVIGATING HOME

OPENS SAT 18 NOV 2023 – SUN 26 MAY 2024

Te Marae Ātea Māori Court

FREE with Museum Entry

TE KARANGA O TE RĀ

OPENS SAT 18 NOV 2023 – SUN 26 MAY 2024



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Te Taunga Community Hub
FREE with Museum Entry

Exhibition supported by:



ABOUT AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Auckland War Memorial Museum is one of New Zealand's first museums. The Museum tells the story of New Zealand, its place in the Pacific and its people. The Museum is a war memorial for the province of Auckland and holds one of New Zealand's top three heritage libraries.

It has pre-eminent Māori and Pacific collections, significant natural history resources and major social and military history collections, as well as decorative arts and pictorial collections.

Banner image:

Makers unknown *Te Rā [the sail]* (detail) c. 1770–1800. Harakeke, kererū, kāhu and kākā feathers, dog skin. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum. © Whakaarahia anō te rā kai hau Te Rā Project. Photo: Cultural Heritage Imaging