

Students go on volcano field trip without leaving classroom

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Thousands of New Zealand students will this week be taking a peek into active volcanic craters without having to leave the safety of their classrooms.

Thanks to the Earthquake Commission (EQC), students from around the country will embark on a LEARNZ virtual field trip in which they explore the country's most spectacular volcanic attractions.

The Natural Hazards trip will take them from the historical landmark of Maketū in the Bay of Plenty to Taupō and the buried village of Tarawera to discover how the volcanic area around Lake Taupō shaped the landscape.

Students will also meet the locals at the Volcanic Activity Centre in Turangi before travelling down to Wellington to visit the National Geohazards Monitoring Centre and the spectacular Te Taiao exhibit at Te Papa.

Project leader Pete Sommerville says that LEARNZ field trips are initiative of education providers CORE Education who want to create virtual, accessible, engaging and meaningful learning in the real world for students who may not be physically be able to get to these places.

“During this field trip, students will follow the journey of legendary high priest Ngātoroirangi south from Maketū to Tongariro, visiting sites that tell the Māori creation story,” says Mr Sommerville. “Geologists will align this narrative with their understanding of the formation of the landscape from volcanic activity.”

Modern technology enables the project team to give students a digital experience that is often better than real life, including taking a close peak into a bubbling mass of lava and directly putting questions to experts in live web conferences.

Mr Sommerville says the response from teachers after a similar field trip to Iceland was overwhelming, which encouraged the CORE team to pull out all stops for this New Zealand volcanic tour. One school described the real-time aspect as “ingenious” while another school commented that the content was engaging for year 1 to 8 and very useful to relate back to their own environment in their home town.

Ms Renée Walker, EQC's Deputy Chief Executive of Response and Recovery, says that the Earthquake Commission is proud to be involved in the LEARNZ field trips because education is a major part of EQC role in New Zealand.

“EQC is not just about dealing with earthquake damage. One of our biggest responsibilities is to educate New Zealanders about natural hazards and help them

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prepare for any future events.

“This field trip is a fantastic opportunity to educate so many Kiwis at a very young age about the land we live in and hopefully this experience and knowledge will help them the rest of their lives,” says Ms Walker.

EQC Media release

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