

Meddelin Setiawan

DISPATCH: Thursday evening (Craters of the Moon and Rotorua)

Rotorua felt to me like a geothermal town that lives off of tourism; and so although we were studying geothermal energy, we also enjoyed hot spring baths and beautiful (and smelly) walks through geothermal parks.

On Thursday evening, we went to Craters of the Moon on our way to Rotorua. It is a walking path that takes people around a cratered valley full of geothermal steams.



Picture: Group photo at Craters of the Moon

What was the most interesting to me was the valley's colorful rocks and clays, which colors were described below on one of the boards. This was especially intriguing to Sydney, Austin, and Aagje who has a geoscience background. Since the board showed that purple is mercury, we were very shocked when we found a purple colored clay (see right picture). After some discussion, we thought maybe it's not harmful since it was only a very little amount traced.



Left picture: Colorful clays in Craters of the Lake.

Right picture: Purple clay.

Something also prominent from this area is the smell; which comes from sulfur. Sulfur is very common to be found from geothermal deposits. Thus the hot steam that comes from subsurface smells like so (people like to call it eggy smell, which is a spot on description). When me and Austin went to the Polynesian Spa that night, we noticed the very strong eggy smell even from outside the building – and on our bodies after we bathe there.

That night, we enjoyed some time in Rotorua to explore the town. We were lucky because the night market was held every Thursday nights, which has a lot of interesting souvenirs and food. It was a really nice ambiance. My last remark about the trip was on the current economic problem that locals are facing – Andy had told me about this from his conversation at a local bar – which caused by the decline in tourism since the pandemic. As I mentioned, the town relies a lot on tourism but then was significantly impacted by COVID. Not only facing an economic crisis, but a lot of travel logistics were hindered – as I noticed later on too when I plan my trip to Waiheke island. I hope that New Zealand can recover from this problem soon!



Left: Polynesian Spa in Rotorua



Right: Soft serve from Rotorua Thursday Night Market. In the background, friends were buying carved vinyls from a local artist.