



Northland, Auckland & Coromandel

Includes ➔

Te Pahi Coastal Track	56
Rangitoto Island Loop	61
Aotea Track	64
Hillary Trail	69
Kauaeranga Kauri Trail	75

Best Landforms

- ➔ Cape Reinga (p60)
- ➔ Ninety Mile Beach (p58)
- ➔ Rangitoto (p61)
- ➔ Hiraakimata (Mt Hobson, p68)
- ➔ Whatipu Scientific Reserve (p73)
- ➔ The Pinnacles (p79)

Best Historical Sites

- ➔ Cape Reinga Lighthouse (p60)
- ➔ Rangitoto (p61)
- ➔ Aotea Track Kauri Dam (p68)
- ➔ Kauaeranga Kauri Trail (p75)

Why Go?

Drawn southwards by stories of New Zealand's legendary national parks and in particular the spectacular Southern Alps, visiting trampers often overlook the northern North Island. This is a mistake. This lush, warm and diverse part of NZ is packed with natural and historical wonders.

The region's most famous landmark is Te Rerenga Wairua (Cape Reinga), the country's northernmost point and a popular pilgrimage. Te Pahi Coastal Track affords an opportunity to traverse this coast, taking in the epic Ninety Mile Beach. Closer to Auckland, however, are numerous rewarding tramps including the multiday Hillary Trail accessed just an hour from downtown, and many through the isolated islands of the beautiful Hauraki Gulf. On the Coromandel Peninsula east of Auckland, the Kauaeranga Forest Park affords fascinating insights into the history of NZ's forests and the people who would change them forever.

When to Go

The northern part of the North Island boasts a mild climate with long dry periods in summer. Temperatures range from almost tropical around the northern tip at Cape Reinga, to an average closer to 20°C around Auckland in summer. The islands northeast of Auckland are often a degree or two warmer, averaging 25°C from December to February and sometimes climbing to 30°C. Winters are moist, with most of the rain falling in June and July. Weather on the Coromandel Peninsula may differ between the east and west coasts due to the mountain range through the interior. Generally, though, the weather during the summer is good, with temperatures reaching as high as 31°C. Torrential rain, however, can occur at any time, especially during winter.

Background Reading

There is a wealth of tramping guides and natural history books that cover the far north in detail, such as *A Field Guide to Auckland: Exploring the Region's Natural and Historic Heritage* (Ewen Cameron, ed). A worthy companion for visitors to the city, it features 150 interesting sites and details their natural features such as rock formations, plants and animals, as well as history. Another handy companion is *Day Walks of Northland and Greater Auckland* (Gavalas & Janssen) – just one in an eight-strong series of regional day-walking guides published by Penguin Books.

While you're in the bookshop, pick up a copy of *New Zealand Geographic* magazine. This is a stellar bi-monthly, with well-written, in-depth features and stunning photography.

DON'T MISS

It's a long way to the northernmost point of Aotearoa, but what a fitting end it is: Cape Reinga (Te Rerenga Wairua) – 'the leaping place of the spirits' – so named by Maori who believe that the souls of the dead depart from this point on their journey from Aotearoa to their homeland, Hawaiki.

The Cape isn't, however, the northernmost point of the North Island. This honour actually belongs to Surville Cliffs, further east. But no matter. Cape Reinga is undoubtedly the point of pilgrimage, reached 108km (around two hours) from the base of the Aupouri peninsula.

The legend of the leaping and other stories are well told in excellent interpretive displays along the path from a grand gateway to the lighthouse. There are various other ambles around the promontory, taking in expansive views over the flaxy, sandy landscape and the seemingly boundless waters where the Tasman Sea meets the Pacific Ocean. This does feel like the end of the line.

DOC Offices & Field Centres

- ➔ **DOC Auckland Information Centre** (☎ 09-379 6476; www.doc.govt.nz; 137 Quay St, Princes Wharf; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)
- ➔ **DOC Kaitaia Area Office** (☎ 09-408 6014; www.doc.govt.nz; 25 Matthews Ave; ☀ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)
- ➔ **DOC Great Barrier Field Centre** (☎ 09-429 0044; www.doc.govt.nz; Port Fitzroy; ☀ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)
- ➔ **Arataki Visitor Centre** (☎ 09-817 0077; www.avc.govt.nz; 300 Scenic Drive; ☀ 9am-5pm Sep-Apr, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Aug)
- ➔ **DOC Kauaeranga Visitor Centre** (☎ 07-867 9080; www.doc.govt.nz; Kauaeranga Valley Rd; ☀ 8.30am-4pm)

GATEWAY TOWNS

- ➔ Auckland (p80)
- ➔ Kaitaia (p81)
- ➔ Tryphena (p82)
- ➔ Thames (p83)

Fast Facts

- ➔ Ninety Mile Beach is a historical misnomer, thought to be overestimated by missionaries travelling along the sand on horseback; its length is in fact just under 90km.
- ➔ Northland is home to the largest kauri alive today, Tane Mahuta, with a diameter of 4.6m and height of 52m. It is estimated to be between 1200 and 2000 years old.
- ➔ Only 5% of the Coromandel's original kauri forests remain unlogged, mostly in the Manaia Forest Sanctuary.

Top Tip

Come summer, there's a strong chance of sunshine and high temperatures along these exposed, northern tramps. A long-sleeved shirt, hat and sunscreen are essential to avoid sunburn and heatstroke.

Resources

- ➔ www.northlandnz.com
- ➔ www.aucklandnz.com
- ➔ www.greatbarriernz.com
- ➔ www.thamesinfo.co.nz