



# Coromandel Peninsula

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## Why Go?

The Coromandel Peninsula juts into the Pacific east of Auckland, forming the eastern boundary of the Hauraki Gulf. Although relatively close to the metropolis, the Coromandel offers easy access to splendid isolation. Its dramatic, mountainous spine bisects it into two very distinct parts.

The east coast has some of the North Island's best white-sand beaches. When Auckland shuts up shop for Christmas/New Year, this is where it heads. The cutesy historic gold-mining towns on the west side escape the worst of the influx, their muddy wetlands and picturesque stony bays holding less appeal for the masses. This coast has long been a refuge for alternative lifestylers. Down the middle, the mountains are criss-crossed with walking tracks, allowing trampers to explore large tracts of untamed bush where kauri trees once towered and are starting to do so again.

## When to Go

With the beaches playing the starring role here, summer is the best time to visit. When the pohutukawa trees put on their pre-Christmas display, the entire peninsula is edged in crimson. The population explodes during the summer school holidays (from Christmas until the end of January) and things can go a little nuts on New Year's Eve. Balmy February and March are slightly quieter. Being mountainous, the region attracts more rainfall than elsewhere on the east coast (3000mm or even 4500mm a year) – peaking from May to September.

## Best Beaches

- » New Chum's Beach (p180)
- » Hahei Beach (p184)
- » Cathedral Cove (p183)
- » Otama Beach (p180)
- » Hot Water Beach (p184)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Black Jack Lodge (p180)
- » Driving Creek Villas (p177)
- » Cotswold Cottage (p175)
- » Bowentown Beach Holiday Park (p188)

## Coromandel Peninsula Highlights

- 1 Travelling remote gravel roads under a crimson canopy of ancient pohutukawa trees in **Far North Coromandel** (p179)
- 2 Staking out your own patch of footprint-free sand at **New Chum's Beach** (p180)
- 3 Kayaking around the hidden islands, caves and bays of **Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve** (p182)
- 4 Burning your butt in a freshly dug thermal pool in the sands of **Hot Water Beach** (p184)
- 5 Pigging out on smoked mussels in **Coromandel Town** (p176)
- 6 Penetrating the mystical depths of the dense bush of

