



# Waikato & Coromandel Peninsula

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## Best Outdoors

- ➔ New Chum's Beach (p185)
- ➔ Cathedral Cove (p189)
- ➔ Otama Beach (p185)
- ➔ Surfing at Manu Bay (p160)
- ➔ Black-water rafting at Waitomo Caves (p169)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Wairua Lodge (p186)
- ➔ Driving Creek Villas (p183)
- ➔ Purangi Garden Accommodation (p190)
- ➔ Solscape (p160)

## Why Go?

Verdant rolling hills line New Zealand's mighty Waikato River, and adrenaline junkies can surf at Raglan, or undertake extreme underground pursuits in the extraordinary Waitomo Caves.

But this is also Tainui country. In the 1850s this powerful Maori tribal coalition elected a king to resist the loss of land and sovereignty. The fertile Waikato was forcibly taken from them, but they retained control of the rugged King Country to within a whisper of the 20th century.

To the northeast, the Coromandel Peninsula juts into the Pacific, forming the Hauraki Gulf's eastern boundary. The peninsula's east coast has some of the North Island's best white-sand beaches, and the muddy wetlands and picturesque stony bays of the west coast have 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 isolated bush studded with kauri trees.

## When to Go

- ➔ Beachy accommodation in Waihi, Whitianga, Whangamata and Raglan peaks across the summer holidays from Christmas until the end of January. New Year's Eve in particular can be very busy.
- ➔ Balmy February and March are much quieter around the Coromandel Peninsula with settled weather and smaller crowds. Rainfall peaks in the mountainous Coromandel region from May to September.
- ➔ The Waikato region can see summer droughts, but the southern area around Taumarunui is often wetter and colder.
- ➔ If you avoid the height of summer school holidays (Christmas to January), accommodation is plentiful in the Waikato region.
- ➔ Raglan's surf breaks are popular year-round.

# Waikato & Coromandel Peninsula Highlights

**1** Travelling remote gravel roads under a crimson canopy of ancient pohutukawa trees in **Far North Coromandel** (p184)

**2** Kayaking around the hidden islands, caves and bays of **Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve** (p190)

**3** Pigging out on smoked mussels in **Coromandel Town** (p181)

**4** Penetrating the mystical depths of the dense bush of **Coromandel Forest Park** (p182) and **Karangahake Gorge** (p195)

**5** Watching the offshore islands glow in the dying haze of a summer sunset from **Hahei Beach** (p189)

**6** Seeking subterranean stimulation in the **Waitomo Caves** (p169) – this is your chance to try black-water rafting

**7** Hitting the surf (and then the pub) in unhurried **Raglan** (p157)

**8** Tramping through an inland paradise at **Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari** (p162)

