

Bush and Beach

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The **Coromandel Peninsula** is popular holiday destination for New Zealanders due to the dramatic and diverse landscape and world class beaches.



The Coromandel Peninsula was named for HMS *Coromandel*, a ship of the British Royal Navy, which stopped at Coromandel Harbour in 1820 to purchase kauri spars, this ship had been named after India's Coromandel Coast.

The area was formerly known largely for its gold mining and Kauri industries. Now about 30% of the Coromandel Peninsula's land is public conservation land and the total population is only around 26,000.

The Peninsula is a narrow piece of land - 85km (53miles) north to south and at its broadest point it is only 40km (25miles) wide. The peninsula has 400kms (249miles) of coastline and rises along the volcanic ridge to nearly 900m (2950feet). The peninsula shows considerable signs of previous volcanic activity and is made up of the eroded remnants of the Coromandel Volcanic Zone, which was highly active around 10million years ago.

Thames: Maori settled in the area as early as the 15th century. Gold was discovered in 1867 and from then on the town was developed quickly. Towards the end of the 1800's Thames was the largest centre of population in New Zealand with 18,000 people and well over 100 hotels and three theatres. Thames is the biggest settlement in Coromandel and the population is now around 7,000.



Coromandel Town: At one time the harbour was a major port serving the peninsula's gold mining and kauri industries. Today, the town's main industries are tourism and mussel farming. The population is around 1500.

Driving Creek Railway was started by New Zealand potter Barry Brickell in 1975 to bring clay and firewood down from the slopes above the pottery. Now one of Coromandel's top attractions, the 15inch gauge railway attracts over 30,000 people every year with much of the proceeds funding nature conservation works such as replanting Kauri trees and other native plants. The diesel powered railway leads up to the Eyeful Tower viewing platform 165m above sea level.



The **309 road** links the east to west coast, the mainly gravel

road gives easy access to one of the oldest stands of **Kauri trees** in the Coromandel. Kauri is a hard-wood conifer famed for the quality of its wood. Found only in the top 1/3 of the North Island it can live for over 2000 years and develops a massive cylindrical trunk. Kauri was intensively logged until the early 1900's and there are only small numbers of mature trees left.

Mercury Bay: The bay was named by the English navigator Captain James Cook during his exploratory expeditions to observe a transit of Mercury across the sun in 1769. Originally Māori called the Bay Te-Whanganui-o-Hei, the great bay of Hei. Mercury Bay includes a marine reserve as well as many beautiful beaches.

Cathedral Cove: The area is very popular with tourists, and receives around 150,000 visitors a year. The cave and beach were used as the tunnel through which the Pevensie children first re-enter Narnia in the movie version of The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian.



Hot Water Beach: Within one to two hours either side of low tide, hot water springs bubble up from under the sand on the beach. The water, which can reach temperatures as hot as 64°C (147°F), comes from two underground fissures located close to each other.

Tairua: Tairua is a Maori place name meaning "two tides." Paku, a twin-coned hill was once an island. It is now joined by a sand dune and stands at the harbour heads.

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