

The Coromandel Peninsula

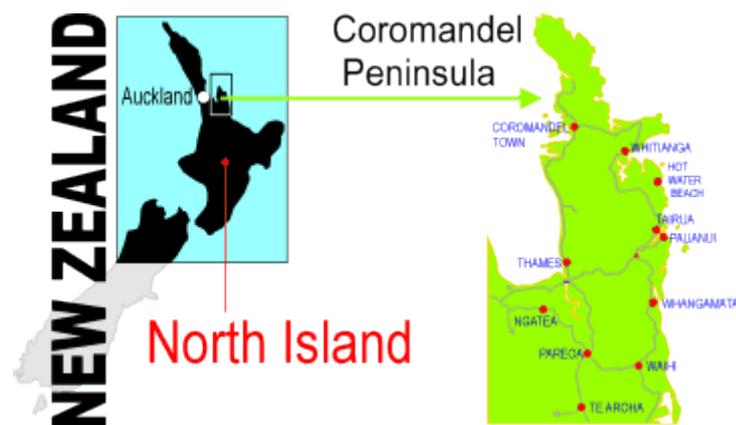
The peninsula is steep and hilly, and is largely covered in temperate rain forest. The Coromandel Range forms a spine for the peninsula rising to nearly 900 metres, and the large island of Great Barrier, which lies beyond the northern tip, can be thought of as an extension of the range. Great Barrier is separated from Cape Colville on the peninsula's northern coast by the Colville Channel.

Although the peninsula is close to large centres of population such as Auckland to the west and Tauranga to the southeast, its rugged nature means that much of it is relatively isolated, and the interior and northern tip are both largely undeveloped and sparsely inhabited. A forest park covers much of the peninsula's interior.

Numerous small islands and island groups lie offshore, such as the Motukawao Islands to the northwest, the Alderman Islands and Slipper Island to the southeast, and the Mercury Islands to the northeast.

The peninsula shows considerable signs of previous volcanism. It comprises the eroded remnants of the Coromandel Volcanic Zone. The peninsula is also fairly close to the Auckland Volcanic Field, which exhibits a gentler style of volcanism. Geothermal activity is still present on the Peninsula, with hot springs in several places, notably at Hot Water Beach, in the central east coast between Whitianga and Tairua.

There are many historical mines in the Coromandel area, especially for gold mining. Waihi, in the south of Coromandel Peninsula, still has an active gold mine, as of the late 2000s, though most other mining in the area ceased about the 1980s.



The Bay of Islands - one of the most picturesque and popular holiday sites in New Zealand, combining great outdoor experiences with some of New Zealand's most significant historic sites. It was the site at which the earliest contact between the indigenous population and European settlers took place. As well as the peace and relaxation of the beaches and fishing and sailing opportunities, the Bay of Islands provides for the thrill seekers; one of the most popular attractions is the Hole in the Rock, off Cape Brett. You can take a boating trip through the hole in a huge rock outcrop. Here you can also swim with the local common and bottlenose dolphins, or take a diving trip to see the final resting place of the Rainbow Warrior wreck.



Rotorua - the place of skyrocketing geysers, hot springs and boiling mud pools. No visit to New Zealand would be complete without stopping here.

Rotorua is one place where the turbulent forces that formed New Zealand are most evident. This city, on the Volcanic Plateau, has one of the world's most lively fields of geothermal activity and sits squarely on the Pacific Rim of Fire.

Rotorua is also the ancestral home of the Te Arawa people who settled here more than 600 years ago and their presence offers the visitor numerous cultural experiences. Try a hangi feast – cooked in the steaming ground, take a tour of an authentic pre-European Maori village or treat yourself to an indulgent spa therapy. If adventure is your thing, Rotorua has many attractions to get the adrenalin flowing; everything from skydiving and lugging to zorbing and one of New Zealand's best mountain bike circuits.

It's also a big trout fishing area with fishing on the lakes and tributary rivers and if you're unlucky there you can sight some of the huge trout (but, alas, not catch them) at Rainbow and

Fairy Springs. With its international airport, Rotorua is also the gateway to the North Island's skifields for excellent skiing and snowboarding at Mt Ruapehu in the winter.



Kaikoura

Kaikoura is a town on the east coast of the South Island. The name 'Kaikoura' translates to 'meal of crayfish' ('kai'- food/meal, 'koura' - crayfish) and the crayfish industry still plays a role in the economy of the region. However Kaikoura has now become a popular tourist destination, mainly for whale watching (the Sperm Whale watching is perhaps the best and most developed in the world) and swimming with or near dolphins. There is also a large and readily observed colony of Southern Fur Seals at the eastern edge of the town.

Sperm whales, the largest of the toothed whales, grow to over 15 metres in length. They dive deep into the ocean to feed. The resident population of sperm whales at Kaikoura can be seen all year round. Orca (killer whales) may be seen from December to March, and humpback whales in June and July. Several dolphin species are seen almost daily in the area.



Tongariro National Park is the oldest national park in New Zealand, located in the central North Island. It has been acknowledged by UNESCO as one of the 28 mixed cultural and natural World Heritage Sites.

Tongariro National Park was the fourth national park established in the world. The active volcanic mountains Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, and Tongariro are located in the centre of the park.

There are a number of Māori religious sites within the park and the summits of Tongariro, including Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, are *tapu* (sacred). The park includes many towns around its boundary including Ohakune, Waiouru, Horopito, Pokaka, Erua, National Park Village, Whakapapa skifield and Turangi.



Mount Ngauruhoe, Tongariro National Park

Taupo

Taupo is a town on the shore of Lake Taupo in the centre of the North Island. Taupo is located at the outlet of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest Lake. Taupo is a centre of volcanic and geothermal activity and hot springs suitable for bathing are located at several places in the vicinity.



The Abel Tasman National Park

The **Abel Tasman National Park** is a national park located at the north end of the South Island of New Zealand. The park was founded in 1942 and is the smallest of New Zealand's national parks. The park consists of forested, hilly country to the north of the valleys of the Takaka and Riwaka Rivers, and is bounded to the north by the waters of Golden Bay and Tasman Bay. It is named after Abel Tasman, who in 1642 became the first European explorer to sight New Zealand.



One of many beaches along the Abel Tasman Coast Track

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