

Peter Tait's..
CoroGuide

Get ready for a holiday with a difference!



Waihi Beach



Awesome sunsets



Cathedral Cove



Ironique Cafe



Kayaking at Hahei



Orokawa Bay walk



Hahei Explorer



Pepper Tree seafood



Te Aroha Romance



Colonial Thames



Coromandel Art



Driving Creek Railway

**Your Coromandel Peninsula Holiday Guide -
use together with Tait's Coromandel Fun Maps**

COROMANDEL FÜN
Your Gateway to the Coromandel

Peter Tait's CoroGuide



Coro's Keltic Fair



Hahei Beach



Coffee at Nina's



Clean and green

The Coromandel Holiday

Long ago the Coromandel Peninsula was a range of volcanoes, today it's a pleasant mix of small towns, farmland and bush-covered hills with a meandering coastline and spectacular, ever changing scenery and beaches. All just perfect for a memorable holiday! There's plenty to see and do for both New Zealanders and tourists. If you are visiting from overseas don't rush around trying to see the whole of the North Island, slow up, relax and spend your time just enjoying the Coromandel – it's an awesome region!

Peter Tait, the writer of this guide knows the Coromandel well. He has worked around the region publishing holiday brochures since 1991 and has looked on with interest as the region has grown from a 'bit of a social and economic backwater' to become one of New Zealand's top holiday destinations. Peter says *"It's a region like no other - craggy hills and meandering coastline, historic towns, top attractions and startlingly lovely beaches. All with a unique local culture and scenery that's even beautiful in the rain - I love it!"*

The CoromandelFun website (www.coromandelfun.co.nz) which offers this CoroGuide download is the home of the Tait's Fun Maps of the Coromandel. Holidaymakers should use the maps in conjunction with the website for information on accommodation, activities, where to go and what to see etc.

The Itineraries

These itineraries are intended as a guide for visitors from overseas and first time Coromandel holidaymakers. Those who think they already know the Coromandel will still find them helpful - tourist regions are forever coming up with new forms of entertainment, better bars and cafes and places to stay.

'Stay-a-While' Itinerary (7 Nights)

Auckland International Airport – Coromandel Peninsula and return.

Choose where to stay: Miranda, Thames, Coromandel Town, Kuaotunu Coast, Whitianga, Hahei, Whangamata, Waihi area, Karangahake Gorge, Te Aroha. See the website for accommodation options and activities

'Linger-Longer' Itinerary (10 Nights)

Auckland Airport – Coromandel Peninsula and return. Choose where to stay: Miranda, Thames, Coromandel Town, Kuaotunu Coast, Whitianga, Hahei, Tairua/Pauanui, Whangamata, Waihi area, Karangahake Gorge, Te Aroha. See the website for accommodation options and attractions.



Early morning light over the Coromandel Peninsula from the Hauraki Gulf

Other Itinerary options:

Auckland - Coromandel ferry service.

Another itinerary option is becoming available as a new ferry service gets established between Downtown Auckland and Coromandel Town. The ferry takes you through the most scenic part of Auckland's famous Hauraki Gulf, a perfect start for your Coromandel holiday. This opens up the following itinerary for visitors from overseas: Auckland Airport – Auckland City (2 nights), ferry to Coromandel Town hire some wheels or catch a bus and continue with one of the itineraries above and returning to Auckland International Airport by road. This tour can return to Auckland by ferry or be reversed to perhaps suit ferry sailings better and can also be modified to include a night or two on popular Waiheke Island.

Great Cycling Holiday

This ferry trip also gives awesome opportunities for cycling holidays - the northern part of the peninsula is a great bike ride, take a tent and stay at the DOC campsites. A cycle path links the western coastal road to Stony Bay on the east side. You could also take one of the big ferries from Auckland to Matiatia on Waiheke Island and spend some time on the island before picking up the Coromandel ferry at Orapiu (at the far eastern end of the island) and continuing to Coromandel. Bikes travel free on some ferries.

NOTE RE FERRY SERVICES: The above plans are subject to convenient ferry sailings to Coromandel Town, (enquire www.360discovery.co.nz.) There are regular large ferries servicing the Auckland - Waiheke Island route but the Auckland - Waiheke - Coromandel service does not run every day and can be subject to weather.

A bus meets the ferry at the wharf and delivers passengers to Coromandel Town and vice versa. For hire vehicles and transport information try Strongmans Rentals ph 0800 668 175 or Davy Rentals 07 868 7153. You can also enquire at the i-SITE Information Centres in Coromandel Town (coroinfo@ihug.co.nz) or Whitianga (enquiry@whitianga.co.nz).

Finding your way around

Most of the Coromandel is covered by the unique Tait's Fun Maps which give all the information required for a great stay. Download the maps from this website or pick up copies at the i-SITE Information Centres where you can also make bookings.

Note:

The Fun Maps are not to scale.

Anything marked ** in this guide is recommended and shouldn't be missed.



Thames Town



Olde gold rush days



Kauaeranga Valley



Safe family beaches

Auckland to Thames

For those travelling by road from Auckland or the Auckland International Airport: Head South on SH1, turn left after the Bombay hills on to SH2 then SH25. The less direct **Seabird Coast** route is an option at a slower pace and well suited to cyclists, see the map. If you fancy a soak in a hot pool the ****Miranda Hot Springs** are on this road and refer to the Hot Pools Page on the website for a Hot Pools Tour.

By car it takes 1½ hours from Auckland City to Thames, and just 1¼ from Auckland Airport to Thames. On the way there are good cafes on the Hauraki Plains should you need a bite or a caffeine fix - try the ****Corogate Cafe** for something different!

Thames

For the visitor Thames is 'Full of Surprises' but not so many as in the old colonial gold rush days when it had more boozers and brothels than even Auckland. The stamper battery noise was non-stop and the ground shook day and night! The ****Museums** and the ****Gold Mine and Stamper Battery Tours** will give you a taste of those olden golden days. With a population of 7500, Thames is the largest town on the Peninsula. The mile long Pollen Street, the main shopping street, has all varieties of shops, some excellent for unusual gifts, art and cafes too, especially at the Grahamstown (north) end. The nearby Goldfields Mall in Mary Street has most of the big chain stores and a good supermarket. The ****Butterfly and Orchid Garden** in the grounds of the Dickson Holiday Park, just north of the town is worth a visit. For more information on activities and places to stay refer to the Southern Fun Map or Coromandelfun website. The Information Centre at 206 Pollen Street (www.thamesinfo.co.nz) will be pleased to provide bookings, bus timetables or any additional information you may require. See the accommodation pages for places to stay in Thames - all are recommended.

The nearby **Kauaeranga Valley** has top scenery, walking tracks, camping places and at the top of the hills you can stay at the Pinnacles Hut. The valley is administered by the Department of Conservation (DoC). See their own brochures for more information.

It's a pleasant drive on SH25 north up the Thames Coast which has a series of safe family beaches and small settlements. At Tapu you can take a side trip up the scenic **Tapu Valley**. A few kilometers up the valley are the the Mahara Sculpture Park and Working Pottery and the Rapaura Watergardens. Further on is the ****Square Kauri Tree**, a giant tree with a freak square trunk - the saw miller's delight! Back to Tapu and SH25 and continuing north the road hugs the coast then winds inland and on towards Coromandel Town.

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Waiiau Kauri Grove



Success Cafe



Mussel barge fishing



Driving Creek Railway

Coromandel Town

Coro as it's affectionately called is a 'treat in store'! It still retains more than a hint of it's pioneering character from the early days when it was a boat trip to the outside world and ingenuity was king. Here you become part of a friendly community and there will always be a warm welcome and a helping hand should the need arise. The main street has good cafes, old pubs restored to former splendour, and a wide range of stuff to do. Art and pottery is special here and the annual Art Trail (normally held in mid autumn) is a treat for all those interested in art.

Accommodation of all types is available. Once again refer to the Coromandel Fun Map or website for the details. All the advertisers on the Fun Map come with a recommendation and the I-SITE Information Centre will oblige if you don't already have a copy or need bookings.

Local specialties and entertainments include the **recommended **Driving Creek Railway** a narrow gauge railway which winds tortuously up the hillside through tunnels and over bridges to the 'Eyefull Terminus' for the spectacular hilltop view. The railway station (a work of art in itself) is also a working pottery with an art and book shop. DCR is sometimes rated as one of New Zealand's top visitor highlights.

Charter boat fishing is big on this coast – try the recommended **Mussell Barge Snapper Safaries, Coro Kayak Adventures or the water taxi at **Anglers Lodge. You can even be dropped off on a small island with bunks in a cave for overnight rock fishing.

Just South of Coro' Town, a short way up the 309 Road, you will find the recommended ****The Waterworks**, several acres of water wizardry in a garden setting. Just a short distance further along the 309 is one of the Peninsula's best short walks taking you to the **Waiiau Kauri Grove - see the best kauris. The Waiiau Falls are also nearby as is the climb up Castle Rock for more panoramic views, and so high that you look down on aeroplanes as they cross the ranges.

Coromandel Town boasts the largest Summer Festival on the Peninsula, the Keltic Fair, every year on the 2nd of January for stalls, food, entertainments and music.

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Coastal Pohutukawas



Matarangi Beach



CoroTown sunset



Otama Beach

North of Coromandel Town and Back

Further north is Colville with the famous Colville Co-op Store and Cafe which is a hippy HQ from the 70's and still the place to enquire regarding local alternative community activities. The Mahamudra Retreat Centre offers accommodation for spiritual travellers, look out for the Stupa. From Colville the road north hugs the coast right up to the Cape and is extremely scenic with amazing old Pohutukawa trees but take care it is also narrow, winding and unsealed. If you are not familiar with gravel roads or your rental vehicle is not allowed on such roads, then take the recommended **Strongmans Bus Tour from Coromandel Town. This tour can include the popular Coromandel Walkway where the bus picks you up on request at the other end of the walking track at Stony Bay on the east coast. The Tangiaro Kiwi Retreat offers luxury accommodation, a la carte restaurant, cafe and bar on the Port Charles Road and there are several **DoC Campsites in this area, some right on the beach, others in valleys with chuckling streams and sea views. Waikawau Bay on the east coast is just the best! Refer to DoC's own brochures for info.

Coromandel Town to Whitianga

Get back on to SH25 and head east, up and over the big hill. Check out the view from the summit then cruise on down towards the coast. The pine plantations (with a few straggley Eucalyptus especially planted to make visitors from Oz feel at home!) gives way to prime farmland. The Castle Rock Winery is accommodation, café and fruit winery all in one, take a few bottles with you.

Beaches! Beaches!

Whangapoua Beach is mostly holiday homes, but with a top walk from the north end to ****New Chum's Beach**. Grab an ice cream at the beach shop and ask directions. Further on, **Matarangi** has a beautiful long beach, a small shopping centre with a top café.

Further along SH25 is **Kuaotunu Beach**, long and picturesque. Good B&B and Lodge accommodation is available in this area. The nearby beaches Rings, Otama, Opito are all long, pristine, and north facing for all day sun. And for most of the year, they're all yours on your own!

Continue on SH25, over some more hills and down to Simpsons Beach, Buffalo Beach and into Whitianga.

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Buffalo Beach



Whitianga Town



Diving



Whitianga Adventures

Whitianga

Whitianga is the largest commercial centre on this coast. Facilities include: all types of accommodation, good shopping, top cafes and bars, recommended are Ninas Café, Uncle Harry's and Smitty's. There are plenty of activities here including: diving, art and gift shopping, golf and all types of trips on the water - scenic tours, adventure trips, fishing or relax in a hot pool.

The **Harbour Ferry** ride across the small harbour entrance lands at Ferry Landing, just a 5 minute trip. There's, the seasonal Cook Cafe just up the road and Eggsentric Café at **Flaxmill Bay** with art and music is one of the best. There are several good walks in this area, see the Fun Map for details. The nearest one to Ferry Landing goes to the top of Whitianga Rock, scene of an early intertribal Maori massacre so nasty that the water in nearby Back Bay went red with blood as a marauding tribe, newly armed with the white man's muskets, picked off the fleeing locals. Purangi Shuttles from the Winery do local pick-ups and tours on request - ph 07 866 3724

Ferry Timetable:

The Ferry runs continuously during normal hours but it is seasonal, see www.whitiangaferry.co.nz for the up to date timetable. The ferry is passengers and bikes only, ie no cars and it's cheap!

Once again in this area the Fun Map and Coromandelfun website provide additional information on services, fun stuff and accommodation. For bookings and specialist visitor information contact the Whitianga Information Centre at 66 Albert Street Whitianga. Phone 07 866 5555 or email them at info@whitianga.co.nz

Whitianga to Hahei and Hot Water Beach

Get back on SH25 which is now heading south, past the other end of the 309 Road and on. Activities in this area include Combat Zone and High Zone in the Kaimarama Valley. Then in Mill Creek Road check out ****Mill Creek Bird Park** (which also has accommodation) with over 400 birds on show - if you like birds this is a must. Rumour has it they will be breeding Kiwis there soon! The Whiti Farm Park has all types of animals in a valley setting, teepee accom too, then on to Coroglen, a small settlement dating back to early colonial days. The pub is a classic old friendly country 'boozer' with backpackers, best burgers and regular big name music nights. Holiday park accommodation is available just a few kilometers up the Coroglen-Tapu Road at RiverGlen alongside the picturesque Waiwawa River. Go horse riding at the ****Rangihau Ranch** for the best ride on the Coromandel then not far along SH25 on the right is the interesting Alan Rhodes Pottery - a working pottery and shop established in the 70s.



Cathedral Cove



Natural spa baths at famous Hot Water Beach



Kayaks at Hahei

Pull out the Tait's Fun Map again and take next left at Dalmeny Corner and along a meandering little road which services several of the most popular destinations on the Coromandel: Hot Water Beach, Hahei, Cooks Beach and Flaxmill Bay.

Hot Water Beach is where you can dig a natural hot water spa pool in the sand. It's a great place on the right day but note that - the hot water is uncovered at low water only. Stop and relax in the award winning and recommended **Hot Waves Cafe. For accommodation there is a Holiday Park, the Hot Water Beach B&B and Aunty Dawn's. Beach shop too.

HOT WATER BEACH WARNING: Don't swim in the surf unless you are a strong swimmer as there can be a strong rip adjacent to the rock near the hot water springs.

Hahei Beach

Next is Hahei, one of the Coromandel's most enjoyed beaches. And you can see why - white, white sand and sparkling turquoise waters. Hahei has a commercial centre with the popular Luna Café and top Beach Store, petrol too. Top accommodation at Tatahi Lodge and The Church, B&Bs too, see the Fun Map. Local activities include the popular walk to **Cathedral Cove**, the much photographed cave through the white headland. If you're not into walking you could join the **Cathedral Cove Kayaks and go by sea! The **Hahei Explorer does tours from the beach. Or take a dive or a snorkel in the Marine reserve with **Cathedral Cove Dive.

If you fancy a romantic hideaway, try the Purangi Garden Homestay on a large reserve at the end of Lees Road, just along the beach from where Captain Cook filled his water barrels and first raised England's flag in New Zealand.

On to **Cooks Beach** a safe family beach with a commercial centre, friendly beach store, top takeaways and if you would like to buy a house see Phil at Richardsons Real Estate. Further on is Flaxmill Bay, Front Beach and the Ferry Landing - you have come in a loop - just 5 mins by passenger ferry is Whitianga! There's a short cut back to SH25, go straight on past the Hahei turnoff then right and SH25's not far along at Dalmeny Corner. This corner is a bus stop so if the kids are being a pain, put them out to wait for the next bus home!

Take a left turn and the award winning and recommended **Colenso Café not far along on the right is a nice refreshment stop in a garden setting, sells art and gifts too.



Pauanui Beach



Tairua Beach



Whangamata Beach

Hahei to Tairua

On over the next lot of hills (heading south now) is Tairua. If you have not seen the big Kauri Trees anywhere so far, stop and look at the Twin Kauris on the roadside as you head down into town. Tairua has a long ocean beach, a harbour and the hills behind the town have wide sea views. The township has good shops, petrol, accommodation and cafes. Recommendation: try the blueberry muffins at the ****Out** of the Blue Café and check out the old steam ferry making out like a restaurant around by Paku, the big knobby hill near the harbour entrance (climb me for awesome views).

Tairua to Pauanui

Keep going, you are still on SH25 (navigation isn't a problem in these parts, just the one ring road!) awesome hills to the right side and Pauanui turnoff to the left at Hikuai. Pauanui is a holiday home beach resort on a long white and lovely sandy beach and sharing the harbour that Tairua is on. A seasonal ferry links the two centres. Pauanui has accommodation, shops and good cafes too.

Pauanui to Whangamata

Back on to SH25 and there is a choice at the next intersection not far along – left continues the tour of the Peninsula and right goes directly back to Thames.

Whangamata

Over the next set of hills and through a large pine forest is Whangamata, 'Wanga' for short. It's a nice and tidy commercial centre with shops and cafes, a boat marina and yes, yet another long white and lovely, white sandy beach! This one is great for swimming and all beach stuff, and internationally known as a top surfing beach. Whangamata holds one of the largest festivals on the peninsula – the 'Whangamata Beach Hop', three days of Rock'n'Roll and classic cars.

See the Tait's Southern Fun Map or the Coromandelfun website for more information. Again there is plenty of good accommodation (try the recommended ****Breakers Motel**) and stuff going on, cafes, shopping and a top golf club too. Call at the i-SITE Information Centre in Port Road for the latest visitor information.. www.whangamatainfo.co.nz or phone 07 865 8340.

Opoutere, Onemana and Whiritoa

These adjacent beaches are pleasant holiday beaches. Onemana and Whiritoa have friendly beach stores and accommodation. Whiritoa has a pleasant short walk to Waimama Bay from the lagoon at the north end of the beach. Opoutere is a long beach and estuary with peace and quiet, an alternative retreat and unique bird life.



Waihi Beach



Waihi town



Karangahake Gorge



Owharoa Falls

Whangamata to Waihi

Back on the road and over another set of hills to Waihi, a town dating back to the gold rush colonial days and still with a very large open cast gold mine just behind the town, it's worth a look! The town is the main commercial centre for the region with good shops, cafes, art studios and accommodation. It's also the 'gateway to the Coromandel' from the south - Tauranga and Rotorua aren't far away. Local activities include the popular train ride (some days with an antique steam loco) which runs from the original old Waihi station to Waikino in the nearby Karangahake Gorge. Don't miss the Waikino Station Cafe in the original building with an open fire in the winter.

Waihi Beach is just a few kilometers from Waihi Town. Again it's white, sandy and this time very long, 9 ks and extends all the way to **Bowentown** and the entrance to the Tauranga harbour! It has it's own beach community with good accommodation, cafes and services. The ** Waihi Beach Top 10 Holiday Park is at the heart of the action and has a large solar heated pool for the enjoyment of guests. At the Bowentown end there are calm harbour beaches and the headland has good walks and views. The coastal walk from the north end of Waihi Beach to the pristine ****Orokawa Bay** is one of the best on the Peninsula.

The **Athenree Holiday Park** (near the south end of Waihi Beach) has naturally hot water pools on site and they are FREE for guests!

Karangahake Gorge

The picturesque Karangahake Gorge on SH 2 between Paeroa and Waihi is a fascinating area with plenty going on: enjoy the cafes, a winery, farm park, waterlily gardens, top accommodation and extensive walking tracks which include rushing waters with swing bridges and old railway tunnels. A train, mentioned previously, does rides from the old Waikino Station Cafe to Waihi Town and the old gold mining relics are worth a look. The terrain is steep and scenic, the fast flowing river attracts a few trout fishermen.

Paeroa

The rural service town of Paeroa hosts several annual events including the motorbike 'Battle of the Streets', Jazz Festival, Highland Tattoo and V8 Motor Show. Nine antique and collectables shops make the town a magnet for collectors and memorabilia hunters.

See the Tait's Southern Fun Map or the Coromandelfun website for more information on accommodation, cafes and bars and all types of stuff to do in this region.

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Karangahake Gorge



Natural Te Aroha spa



Te Aroha Domain



Miranda Hot Pools

Te Aroha

Turn off at Paeroa towards the west for the spa town Te Aroha. The translation of the Maori name is 'Place of Love' and the flowing, naturally hot soda water has made it a special place since history began. The small and friendly resort town is nestled against the southern-most tip of the Coromandel Ranges, (Mt Te Aroha 952m).

The well maintained hot water pools and spas and the **Te Aroha Domain** with the original Edwardian spa buildings are a highlight of the entire region. The naturally hot, therapeutic soda water is unique to Te Aroha. Don't miss it!

The Domain also includes the museum, geyser, café and a free, hot, foot bath for walkers and hikers - soak your tired feet and make new friends! The Mokena Geyser, playing at approximately 40 minute intervals, is the world's only hot water soda geyser.

If you are heading for Auckland or the International Airport there are some choices to make: you can go west to Hamilton and get on to SH1 or back to Paeroa and across the Hauraki Plains to Miranda then SH2 and SH1 or if you have plenty of time the scenic Seabird Coast route is a pleasant back road with beach shops, accommodation, Kaiaua Fish and Chips, a friendly pub with accommodation and more. Keep in mind the recommended ****Miranda Hot Springs and adjacent **Miranda Holiday Park**. Both have king size natural hot pools and they're only there to be enjoyed - friendly staff, all facilities, big pools, small hotter pools. Round off your holiday with a therapeutic hot water soak!!

Your Comments and Experiences

Your comments are welcome and I'm interested to hear about your holiday experiences, both good and bad. Please email me: pete@coromandelfun.co.nz

AND REMEMBER - enjoy well but always respect the environment and all things that live there! Te Whenua te wai u mo nga tamariki. (Land is the nourishment for the next generation.)

DISCLAIMER:

Whilst all care has been taken in the preparation of this visitor guide, Peter Tait and TAIT Publications apologises for but accepts no responsibility for any error or omission which may have occurred.

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