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Travel Digest



Xtra MSN

The Charming Coromandel

31/03/2004 01:30 PM - [Travel Digest](#)

Few spots in New Zealand have a reputation quite like the little peninsular of Coromandel. This little finger of land, which curls from the firth of Thames, up to the point of Cape Colville, is the holiday destination of many North Islanders and a constant objective by tourists looking for a real kiwi experience.

The peninsular was so named by the British navy ship, HMS Coromandel that visited there in 1820 and quickly became the site of furious logging as settlers discovered its plentiful deposits of native Kauri trees. One billion feet of Kauri timber was removed from the Coromandel during this period, but the timber trade was to be replaced by mining when gold was discovered in the hills of Waihi.

Now tourism is the boom industry and there are more attractions, trails, operators, accommodation options and activities on the peninsular than in many large cities. At only two and a half-hours drive (on average), the Coromandel has become Auckland's sandpit and a visit to its marine parks, beaches, bushlands and quaint but thriving little towns is explanation enough.

For those looking for a bit of adventure on their vacation, there are some experiences that are a must. For an informative and exciting agricultural and historical tour with a difference, try out the three and a half hour eight-wheeled Coromandel Agro Adventure Tours and take in long forgotten mining sites and local history while splashing and bumping through the bush, caterpillar style. Those who prefer a bit more style could try Harley Davidson Tours. This outfit has been in operation for 20 years, making use of some of the best motorcycle-friendly roads in the North Island. Ever dreamed of being a trapeze artist? Well now you can visit the High Zone Adventure Ropes Centre and learn how to twist and turn, all with the safety of a harness and trained instructors (more then you were expecting from a trip through the country?)

Coromandel has long been known as an A-grade fishing spot, for all angling styles. The Coromandel has 400km of coastline and 100 offshore islands where shoals of trevally, yellowfin and kingfish are ready to do battle with the avid angler. Try surf casting off the scenic and sheltered Thames coastline where kahawai are said to be prevalent, or hunt for snapper amongst the mussel farms of Coromandel Harbour. Albacore and marline can be found in the Mercury Bay area and larger boats can head for the Red Mercury Islands. For those that enjoy sea air and waves, Playmaker Cruises offers luxury day trips from Mercury Bay aboard their large, custom-built launch. Coromandel is also great for diving and hosts several marine reserves, which make for colourful and fascinating underwater adventures.

Accommodation in the Coromandel region has changed a bit over the years and although there are still plenty of options available including the batch-looking homes along the beach front and popular campervan and tent parks, luxury does not have to be sacrificed whilst away from home.

Try a unique accommodation experience at the Vida Eco Resort, situated in 70 acres of native bush and pasturelands at picturesque Coroglen, near Whitianga. The resort is a way of life as much as it is a place to stay for the night. It produces its own power through sun and water yet does not sacrifice luxury for its guests. A range of spa products are available to Vida guests, including a range of massages, facials, the ancient art of Reiki and hypnotherapy and hypnohealing. And you will never feel the crowds moving as the Vida resort only hosts up to six people at a time, the perfect solution to the city's rat race.



Cathedral Cove, Xtra MSN

Another truly unique accommodation experience in Coromandel is the five-star Villa Toscana. Giorgio and Margherita, along with their young family welcome you to their Tuscan villa on the hills above Whitianga. Giorgio, a marine biologist and avid fisherman, will be happy to show you his underground wine cellar and share with you his experience as oenologist, together with a glass of vino, while Margherita is a watercolour artist who will proudly show you her in-house gallery. This villa overlooking the ocean only hosts one lucky couple at a time and specialises in the ultimate and intimate honeymoon experience. Activities available to guests include bush walks, archery, boating, fishing, painting and billiards.

For the outdoors type, try a two-seater kayak for a romantic cruise in the bay or up the river. Mountain bikes are also available or try your hand at archery on the Villa's helipad. Villa Toscana is a true Coromandel experience, unlike anything you can find in the cities of New Zealand or the world. Coromandel is a busy little place with all the tourists mingling with the colourful and friendly locals and there are several events coming up that may interest people with some time on their hands and desperation towards escape. The Kona Colville Mountain Bike Race, a 27km downhill adventure, will be held on March 27th, while the Corodo Arts Festival will take place October 23-25 and for the more nostalgic, there will be rock and roll and long boards galore at the Whangamata Beach Hop, April 23-25.