



Cathedral Cove is picture-perfect. *Right:* Dig your own spa pool at Hot Water Beach.



# A COOL TIME IN The Coromandel

From brilliant beaches to marvellous mountains, the Coromandel region is an outdoor paradise ideal for families looking to explore all that makes New Zealand unique, says Isobel Benesch.

## ACTIVITIES

**Hot Water Beach** Grab your shovels and dig your very own spa in the sand on the beach, then soak in the thermal waters during this once-in-a-lifetime experience. With underwater hot springs that become exposed during low tide and trickle up onto the sand, Hot Water Beach is an incredible experience for all members of the family. Be sure to note that some of the areas are boiling hot, so watch where your little ones are walking and keep them close at all times.

**Glass Bottom Boat** Explore the sea, learn about the history of the town, duck into caves, discover the best swimming holes and secret beaches, and view the ocean life from above all aboard the Glass Bottom Boat ([glassbottomboatwhitianga.co.nz](http://glassbottomboatwhitianga.co.nz)). This tour is great for families – adults will enjoy learning about the area, which has some of the first evidence of Maori settlement in New Zealand, and the littlies will love the caves and watching the abundant marine life in the marine reserve swim right below their feet. Make sure you ask for Captain Joe!

**Cathedral Cove** Most well-known for the opening scene of the film *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, Cathedral Cove boasts a naturally formed stone archway that frames one of the most picture-perfect beaches in New Zealand. Pack a picnic and take a leisurely stroll downhill to enjoy the pristine beach and the stunning natural rock formations up close. Depending on your children's ages, bring a carrier for the hike back to the car, as it's completely uphill and little legs might tire quickly. Don't forget to fill up your water bottles at the natural spring waterfall that spills over the cliffside, where you can enjoy some of the freshest water in the world.

## ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

### Mill Creek Bird & Animal Encounters

With over 400 birds, a variety of animals, ponds, and aviaries, a train ride, a playground, and a cafe to grab a cup of coffee for yourself and a snack for the littlies, the Mill Creek Bird and Animal Encounters ([millcreekbirdpark.co.nz](http://millcreekbirdpark.co.nz)) is a great place to spend a few hours with the family.

**Whiti Farm Park** Meet, hand-feed, cuddle, and interact with over 40 species of friendly farmyard and exotic animals, birds and reptiles in a safe, clean environment. With a unique playground, rope swing, trampoline, and the interactive animal encounters, the Whiti Farm Park ([whitifarmpark.co.nz](http://whitifarmpark.co.nz)) is a fun outing.

## GETTING THERE

The Coromandel is spread out and with winding roads so you will want to hire a car in order to easily get from place to place and see all there is to see. We rented a Juicy Van to make the trip down from Auckland more comfortable, and the children loved the experience of riding in a van.



Spectacular views from the Glass Bottom Boat.



A beautiful place for a leisurely stroll and picnic.



## Kids' FAVES

**VERY IMPRESSIVE:** The rock formation at Cathedral Cove  
**MAGICAL:** Sitting in a spa that we dug on our very own right on the beach.

**EXCITING:** Watching the fish swim under our feet on the Glass Bottom Boat.  
**LAUGH:** Feeding the animals at the Whiti Animal Park.

*Isobel Benesch is a Kiwi, married with three littlies, who has recently returned to live in New Zealand from California. She is a writer, stylist, and lifestyle blogger, and you can find more of her work on Instagram at @belandbeau and on her blog belandbeau.com.*