

Old forestry HQ given a new lease on life with its development into a camping and cabin facility



A new campground has opened on the top half of the Coromandel Peninsula as other campgrounds report a busy summer. Suzanne and Aaron Morgan opened the new camping and cabin facility at Whangapoua last week, after working on the project for two years. They're developing the old New Zealand Forestry Whangapoua headquarters on the corner of SH25 and Whangapoua Rd into a holiday park. At present there are 10 tent sites, 10 campervan sites and nine cabins but they have

consent for up to 60 tent sites and 30 campervan sites. Ms Morgan says there's a lot of demand for camping and cabin facilities. "It's become quite difficult for a lot of people to rent homes in places like Matarangi or Whangapoua. There's really a need for something more affordable." The idea for a holiday park arose about five years ago, when Aaron's parents, who've owned the property for about 16 years, suggested he and Suzanne might like to do something with the land.

Mr Morgan was born and raised in Whangapoua and Ms Morgan is from Hamilton. The couple returned from overseas and spent about 18 months working in Auckland before beginning work on the park two years ago. "It was Aaron's vision to do something with the huts," Ms Morgan says. "They're very well built, like an old state house, with lovely mairai floors. And they're well laid out, with a little kitchenette." However, they were very run down and it's been a hard slog.

"It's been very full-on. Aaron's got a full-time job, so he works nights and weekends, and we have toddler twins." Old ablution and kitchen facilities have also been fully upgraded. Reactions so far have been good, she says. "We've had people in the cabins since December 28 and we've had wonderful feedback." Other campgrounds around the top half of the peninsula are also reporting lots of happy campers. Helena Stratford, from Mercury Bay Holiday Park,

says the park is going great guns this year and numbers are up on last year, when the wet weather put a damper on everything. "We're definitely very busy. There are lots of families staying for longer, some extending their bookings." A new trend is the number of caravans, she says. "Kiwis are starting to go back to caravans again." Kuaotunu Motor Camp manager Corina Davidson says it's been a very busy summer, with fantastic occupancy rates. A relief manager, who's been

Suzanne and Aaron Morgan, with sons Thomas (left) and James outside one of the renovated forestry huts at Whangapoua Holiday Park.

working at the camp for some time, says she's never seen the camp so full. Gail Walker, from Long Bay Motor Camp in Coromandel town, says it's been an incredible summer so far. "Everybody's very happy – the occupancy is wonderful."



Camps are buzzing

Department of Conservation campgrounds have been bursting at the seams, with managers reporting their best summer for years. Area asset planner Greg van der Lee says numbers are up at all the camping grounds in the top half of the Coromandel Peninsula. At Stony Bay, campers have taken advantage of an extension to the facility and numbers are up about 100 per cent. The camping area has nearly doubled and can now accommodate more than 500 people. Facilities are stretched to the limit and improvements are planned this year, Mr Lee says.

A long-running dispute between DOC and Thames-Coromandel District Council over responsibility for the road into the campground has been resolved and the council did a lot of work on it last year. Waikawau has been full, especially over peak times, and is fully booked again this weekend.

Mr Lee says one problem is the amount of gear people bring with them – a couple of trailers full and the boat – and there can be six tents on a site. The sites just aren't big enough. The camp shop has been relocated to a new building housing an office and the manager's residence. The old school building which used to house the shop has been shifted to the amenities' site and will be developed as a small information centre and museum.

There's also been a huge proliferation in campervans and DOC plans to install powered sites at Waikawau, Mr Lee says. In another development, the department introduced overnight freedom camping for self-contained campervans at its Cathedral Cove carpark late last year and has four parks available.



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Departs Coromandel (Hannafords Wharf)							
to Auckland via Orapu	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
23 November 2012 - 23 December 2012	-	3:00pm	-	3:00pm	8:45pm	4:30pm	4:30pm
24 December 2012 - 6 February 2013	3:00pm	3:00pm	3:00pm	3:00pm	8:45pm	4:30pm	4:30pm
Departs Waiheke (Orapu)							
to Coromandel	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
23 November 2012 - 23 December 2012	-	9:50am	-	9:50am	7:35pm	9:50am	9:50am
24 December 2012 - 6 February 2013	9:50am	9:50am	9:50am	9:50am	7:35pm	9:50am	9:50am
Departs Downtown Auckland (Pier 4)							
to Coromandel via Orapu	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
23 November 2012 - 23 December 2012	-	8:45am	-	8:45am	6:30pm	8:45am	8:45am
24 December 2012 - 6 February 2013	8:45am	8:45am	8:45am	8:45am	6:30pm	8:45am	8:45am
Ferry Fares							
	Coromandel - Auckland		Coromandel - Waiheke				
	One Way	Open Return	One Way	Open Return			
Adult	\$54.50	\$88.00	\$35.00	\$59.00			
Child	\$22.50	\$33.00	\$21.00	\$35.00			
Senior	\$43.50	\$79.00	\$32.00	\$53.00			
Family	-	\$229.00	-	-			

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