

## Summary of Akaroa's settlement history

Banks Peninsula has long attracted settlers due to the natural resources of the land and sea and the shelter provided by the deep, long harbour.

Māori settled here around 800 years ago, and the first European people were those involved in the whaling industry, at its peak from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s.

It was a French whaler, Jean Langlois, whose stories of the potential of Banks Peninsula for settlement inspired the Nanto-Bordelais Company to bring French settlers to Akaroa. They were joined by six German families and left from France in March 1840 on the *Comte de Paris*, arriving in Akaroa in August.

Hopes of a French colony were dashed when the new arrivals discovered the British had claimed the country before them, and had signed the Treaty of Waitangi with Māori in February 1840.

After a few years of delicate negotiation, the French settlers could keep the land they'd been allocated by the Nanto-Bordelaise Company if they agreed to become British subjects. While some settlers returned to France, most stayed on to produce large families with descendants now spread throughout New Zealand and some still living in Akaroa to this day.

Over the next decades Akaroa became quite cosmopolitan – the French established themselves at one end of town, the British at the other, and people from Portugal, Italy, Spain, China and Australia joined them. Akaroa's population never grew much past 1000 - today it is about 650 permanent residents. Tourism has replaced farming, fishing and small town services as the mainstay of the local economy.

Small in scale, Akaroa is nestled at the edge of the harbour, protected by steep hills, the remnants of a volcanic crater. The distinctive character of Akaroa village is enhanced by the large number of well-preserved colonial buildings, in the town centre, the historic French cemetery and the French street names and French style, that runs throughout this unique seaside town. Akaroa celebrates its French heritage with a biannual event- FrenchFest, where visitors and locals alike can enjoy a re-enactment of the French landing, a French inspired market day and an evening Cabaret.