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DAYS AT THE BEACH

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Catch a wave at 10 top surfing spots around the world

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10 OUT OF 10

Take a beach break at the world's top spots for waves

CELESTE MITCHELL



When it comes to beaches, in Australia we're blessed with waves and beauty (and a climate hard to top). There's the wild, rugged coastline of Margaret River, the famous peaks of Bells Beach and the longboarder dreamscape that is The Pass in Byron Bay.

Manly in Sydney, Burleigh to Snapper Rocks on the Gold Coast, and Noosa have even been recognised for their perfect peelers and outstanding beauty, endorsed as World Surfing Reserves (there are only 10 in total).

But there may just be other places in the world as good, and a surf trip to seek them out is no longer only the domain of Kombi-driving surf rats.

"The art of riding a wave is the most effective way of giving your mind a rest so I think surfing's very rejuvenating for people," says Tropicsurf founder Ross Phillips.

"I'm also a big believer in the value of travel, so I think when you combine travelling to cool places and experiencing new sights and cultures and food and people with

the love of surfing, the mental holiday and the freedom that comes with that is unbeatable."

With surf clinics set up in luxury resorts around the world – from the Maldives to Fiji – Ross says a huge part of the appeal of a surf holiday these days is being able to combine family time with the chance to surf pristine, uncrowded waves. Twenty years ago, this idea of "luxury surfing" didn't exist.

"We feel like we've had to invent the concept because back then most surf accommodation was quite basic – from a jungle hut where you might catch malaria through to something where if you had an airconditioned room then that was luxury. But today it's certainly five-star," he says.

Summer is here so make it your New Year's resolution to surf one of these 10 beaches around the world.

THAA ATOLL, MALDIVES

Why it's worth it: The Maldives is good for everyone, no matter your surfing skill level. Consistent swells travel uninterrupted from Antarctica and waves peel around the 1200 islands giving them a predictable

THE JUNGLE BACKDROP AND SIGHT OF MOUNT AGUNG IN THE DISTANCE GIVES THIS BEACH A SPIRITUAL FEELING

shape and you a beautiful long ride. Staying on the Thaa Atoll provides the chance to surf five pristine breaks within a 30-minute speedboat ride from your resort, like the consistent right-hand reef break known as "Farms". Tropicsurf is based at COMO Maalifushi (comohotels.com), one of the northernmost resorts in the Maldives archipelago with unicorn-like waves on tap.

What else is there: Diving,

dolphin spotting, beach picnics, yoga and an overwater spa.

How to get there: You'll need to factor in a seaplane transfer from Male International Airport – money pays when it comes to exclusivity.

When to go: Tropicsurf's surf program runs between April and October, though the resort is a year-round destination.

KERAMAS, BALI

Why it's worth it: Whether you stay at dedicated surf resort, Komune (komuneresorts.com), or at one of the more low-key shacks along Bali's east coast, here, the surf is king. The volcanic black sand may challenge your idea of beauty at first but the jungle backdrop and sight of Mount Agung in the distance gives this beach a spiritual feeling. Be warned: this powerful right-hander is popular. But you can book night surfing under floodlights at Komune to share the waves with just five others.

What else is there: Yoga in Komune's Health Club, beachfront dining in Sanur, and easy day trips to Nusa Lembongan to swim with manta rays.

How to get there: Komune is about an hour's drive from Ngurah Rai International Airport.

When to go: The WSL pro surfing competition is held at Keramas in May 2019, which means the surf break will be closed during event times. For the biggest swells, head over between May and August.

PUERTO ESCONDIDO, MEXICO

Why it's worth it: Whether you're here to face off against the pounding beach break of Zicatela – aka Mexico's "Pipeline" – or want to sign up for lessons at beginner-friendly La Punta (the point) or Carrizalillo, Puerto Escondido is a beach bum's dream.

What else is there: Release baby turtles at Playa Bacocho, watch movies on the beach, and glide in a kayak over the phosphorescent La Laguna de Manialtepec.

How to get there: Fly to Puerto Escondido on a local carrier like VivaAerobus or Interjet from Mexico City (unless you want to catch a 12-hour bus).

When to go: The biggest swells hit between May and September but



The French Atlantic Coast offers spectacular beaches at Biarritz; the Wild Atlantic Way, Donegal, Ireland, is amazing even if you're not a surfer; Waikiki, Hawaii, is iconic; Portugal's Ribeira d'Ilhas is great for beginners.

PICTURES: ISTOCK, ALAMY



IRELAND



HAWAII



PORTUGAL

ERICEIRA IS NOT ONLY A MECCA OF SURF IN PORTUGAL, BUT A PRETTY, COBBLESTONE-STREET SEASIDE VILLAGE

while Christmas means throngs of Mexican holidaymakers, visiting over an Aussie summer means friendly wave sizes and pleasant temps.

BIARRITZ, FRANCE

Why it's worth it: The French Atlantic Coast offers some of the most spectacular swathes of beaches, and Biarritz's charming Old Town was a fashionable resort for French royalty in the late 1800s.

Nearby Anglet offers more surf and a chilled-out beach bar scene.

What else is there: Port Vieux Beach, a petite wedge of sand made for swimming and sunbathing, a scenic walkway leading to Le Rocher de la Vierge (or The Rock of the Virgin), chic boutiques and fresh seafood on the wharf.

How to get there: Biarritz is a two-hour drive south of Bordeaux.

When to go: The biggest swell comes over France's winter but water temperature drops. Even the pros prefer to show up in September-October when crowds have thinned out after summer and the water is still warm(er).

ERICEIRA, PORTUGAL

Why it's worth it: Named as a World Surfing Reserve in 2011, Ericeira is not only a mecca of surf in Portugal, but a pretty, cobblestone-street seaside village worth visiting by anyone's standards. Especially if you love pastel de nata. Stay at Magic Quiver

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COVER STORY



The Kiwis can claim one of the world's longest left-handers at Manu Bay, Raglan, a rocky point break best left to more advanced surfers.

PICTURE: ALAMY

NEW ZEALAND

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(magiculver.com) and you can test out their collection of boards from some of the world's top shapers. There's decent waves right in town while nearby Ribetra d'Illhas is great for beginners. Further north, Coxos is a gnarly right-hander, better suited to experienced surfers.

What else is there: Fresh seafood overlooking the water, hiking and mountain bike trails. Both Lisbon and Sintra are in day-tripping distance.

How to get there: Ericeira is a 40-minute drive northwest of Lisbon.

When to go: You'll find nice consistency – and warmer days for beachcombing – in September and October.

BUNDORAN, IRELAND

Why it's worth it: A road trip along the Wild Atlantic Way should be on the bucket list of any traveller, surfer or not, for its gobsmacking scenery and cheery locals. And it's not often you get to see ancient ruins while

you're in the surf. At Bundoran you'll find a good vibe in the water and not too many crowds (although keep your ears pricked, an Aussie accent is almost guaranteed to be heard).

What else is there: Bundoran is a great spot for families with an indoor aqua centre and playgrounds set on the headland. Sink into a seaweed bath after your surf and head to a local pub for plenty of craic.

How to get there: Bundoran is in County Donegal, just under three hours' drive from Dublin.

When to go: Don't expect balmy beach days here (by Aussie standards, anyway) but the best time for surf is September-October. Larger swells roll in from November to March but you'll want a thick wetsuit to survive the single-digit temperatures.

MAMANUCAS, FIJI

Why it's worth it: Seasoned surfers will need no introduction to Cloudbreak – a left-hander consistently ranked as one of the world's top 10 waves. You can reach it from a number of resorts, including the new Six Senses Fiji

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(sixsenses.com) where Tropic Surf is stationed. Still in the Mamanuca group of Islands, Namotu Left is sometimes referred to as the best longboard wave in Fiji, and serves intermediate riders well, while Swimming Pools on the southeast side of Namotu Island is great for beginners but not as reliable.

What else is there: With resorts such as Castaway (great for families) through to Tokoriki (honeymooners' paradise) to choose from, the list of beaches and activities is as long as it is varied. Visit local villages, snorkel

your heart out, and spend a day at Cloud 9 floating beach club.

How to get there: The Mamanucas is the closest island group to Nadi International Airport. Depending where you stay, transfers will be available via boat or seaplane.

When to go: You can surf year-round in Fiji, but you'll find the most consistency between April and October.

WAIKIKI, HAWAII

Why it's worth it: It's crowded but it's iconic and every wannabe surfer should tick it off the list at least once. Once the playground of Hawaiian royalty, the surf at Canoes and Queen's offers up gentle rollers, which is music to the ears of beginners and longboarders.

Flanked by ritzy resorts and lined with hire huts where you can rent softboards and stand-up paddle boards, this swathe of sand was where the godfather of surfing Duke Kahanamoku grew up.

What else is there: Non-surfers can practise the sport of shopping, visit the Honolulu Zoo and Waikiki

Aquarium, while Pearl Harbor is half an hour away.

How to get there: Visit on a cruise or fly into Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu – a 15-minute drive from the surf.

When to go: If you want swell, visit over the winter months, though Waikiki is fairly consistent year-round.

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Why it's worth it: It's called Surf City USA for a reason. It was here that Duke Kahanamoku introduced surfing in 1925. With a long, wide sandy beach, there's consistent surf either side of the long pier. Take your first surf lesson from one of the many operations in town and leave "shooting the pier" – surfing straight through the pylons – to the pros.

What else is there: Lunch on crispy coconut shrimp at Duke's; book a firepit to toast marshmallows on the sand; visit the International Surfing Museum (surfingmuseum.org) partly curated by Aussie surf legend, Peter "PT" Townend; and walk the Surfing Walk of Fame.

How to get there: Huntington Beach is in Orange County, about 90 minutes drive from LAX.

When to go: September to February (though the water is pretty damn cold in January-February). The Vans US Open of Surfing will take over the beach in late July 2019.

RAGLAN, NEW ZEALAND

Why it's worth it: Shot to fame in cult surf film *Endless Summer* in 1966, Raglan is to NZ what Byron is to NSW. Ngarunui (Ocean) Beach is perfect for all levels while Manu Bay is a rocky point break serving up one of the longest left-handers in the world but is best left to the more advanced. Surfer or not, there's plenty to love about the chill, boho vibe of this surf town on the wild west coast of the North Island. Not least, the coffee.

What else is there: Hike to Bridal Veil Falls, go horse riding along the black sand beaches at sunset, and kayaking on the limestone coastline.

How to get there: Rent a car or campervan and drive 2½ hours south of Auckland.

When to go: Be prepared for four seasons in one day, no matter when you visit. If you want to be able to feel your extremities, visit between September and April.

THE WRITER TRAVELLED TO THE MALDIVES AS A GUEST OF COMO HOTELS AND TROPICSURF (TROPICSURF.COM)

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