

# World's 50 Best Surf Spots

## Puerto Escondido, Mexico at #8

Jade Bremner, for CNN • Updated 1st July 2013

**CNN** — Maybe you surf, maybe you don't. It doesn't matter.

Everyone who's been to the beach in the last 50 years is influenced by surf culture.

If you've ever listened to a Beach Boys record (most of the guys in the group didn't surf) or donned a pair of baggy shorts or looked wistfully out at the breakers and dreamed of an endless summer of waves and bonfires with the perfect surfer guy or girl on your arm, you can claim a connection to surf culture.



*Pipeline – Oahu Hawaii: Numero Uno – most surfers will never be good enough to ride here, but everyone dreams of bobbing along its perfect crest.*

That's why even if you're the type who sits on the beach with your toes planted firmly in the sand, the world's best surf spots still matter.

To get you to them, we asked the editors of [Surfing Magazine](#) to help us compile picks for the world's greatest surf spots (our top 10 is heavily influenced by theirs), adding them to a mix of contributions from pro surfers and our own experiences.

### 1. Pipeline, Oahu, Hawaii

Here it is -- the granddaddy of all waves.

Most surfers will never be good enough to ride here, but everyone dreams of bobbing along its perfect crest.

Located on the island where modern surfing was developed, this is one of the heaviest waves in the world, scaling more than six meters over a shallow base of razor-blade table reef.

Ride this flawless water tube and you've communed with one of nature's finest creations.

### 2. Supertubes, Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa

The best right-hand ride in the world, according to our panel of Surfing Magazine editors, Jeffrey's Bay offers long, fast barrels off an intense point break.

The bay is divided into sections, so there are plenty of choices -- Kitchen Windows, Magna Tubes, Boneyards and, gnarliest of all, Supertubes.

Expert surfers flock here for rides up to 300 meters long.

### 3. Teahupo'o, Tahiti, French Polynesia

"Teahupo'o is one of the most perfect and feared waves in the world," says Paul about this unique Tahiti reef break.

"It's a short, intense ride and when it gets above 10 feet it's one of the most surreal waves in the world -- almost cartoonish."

The heavy hollow-breaking wave is as dangerous as it is rewarding -- the name means "Wall of Heads."

### 4. Uluwatu and Kuta, Bali, Indonesia

This paradise island attracts expert surfers from Australia and Hawaii, plus beginners from across the globe -- all can enjoy these perfect glassy faces.

### 5. P-Pass, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

P-Pass (short for Paliker Pass) is known for its incredible right-hander.

"It's just flawless, blue, reef-pass tubes," says Paul.

Due to a remote location and the relatively high cost to reach it, the spot remains largely uncrowded despite its superlative rides.



### 6. Maverick's, California

The wave of legends is surfed by only the gutsiest of board riders.

The mammoth peak forms as a result of hair-raising storms out at sea and reaches bone-chilling heights of 25 meters.

The only way to reach this wave is by boat or jet-ski; come at it at the wrong angle and you're fish food.

In 1994, skilled Hawaiian big-wave surfer Mark Foo died surfing this point.

Those surfers who do conquer its peak join a small club of overachievers.

### 7. Hossegor, France

This Atlantic surfing spot has been dubbed the "surfing capital of Europe."

The rich and famous have mansions and holiday homes near the beach -- previous owners include the likes of surfing songwriter Jack Johnson.

People come from miles around to watch the pros ride tubes, which can rival Hawaii for heavy walls breaking on an unnervingly shallow sandbank.

### 8. Puerto Escondido Southern Oaxaca, Mexico

With a long, blessed surf season from March to December, this Mexican state attracts surfers with its powerful barrels and surrounding sandy point breaks.

"It's the main attraction when surfers head south of the border," says Paul, who recommends basing out of Puerto Escondido and driving to various points along the coast.



*Puerto Escondido MX: With a long, blessed surf season from March to December, at #8, the Mexican Pipeline has powerful barrels and sandy point breaks.*

## 9. Cloud Nine, Siargao Island, Philippines

This dramatic and powerful reef break, which crashes onto shallow razor-sharp coral, offers right and left death rides. Fearless surfers will experience a slice of paradise or hallucinations as waves wrap over them like a liquid cocoon. Skin and sometimes bone are often ripped to shreds by the ocean bed.

## 10. Lance's Right, Sipora, Mentawai Islands, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

Near a seaside village on the tiny, beautiful Indonesian island of Sipora is a killer right tube that's worth the time, money and effort it takes to find it.

Warm water, mechanically consistent waves, a cove lined with palm trees and dozens more world-class waves nearby -- no wonder the place is called "perfection" by avid surfers.

## 11. Sultans, North Male, Maldives

A consistent reef wave that's absolutely pumping in the spring, the rocks at Sultans can be hazardous, so going with a live-aboard outfit such as [Surf Atoll](#) is recommended.

The expert wave spotters can also deliver surfers to other fine points among the Maldives' 1,190 coral islands.

## 12. Trestles, Orange County, California

The combination of easy paddle-outs and consistent high-quality breaks make the Trestles one of the most revered destinations in Southern California.

Five spots make up the Trestles and provide a variety of left- and right-handed barrels -- the best surf (and the biggest crowds) are found at Lower Trestles.

"There's no other wave in the world that allows for such high performance surfing, and the fact that the A-frame is located in Orange County -- the heart of the surf industry -- makes it the epicenter for progressive aerials and surfing," says Surfing Magazine editor in chief Taylor Paul.



## 13. Honolua Bay, Maui, Hawaii

Finding this right-hand point break is tricky.

Locals may respond to requests for directions with "go back home," but this is a world-class ride with the added bonus of whale spotting from your board.

## 14. Montanita Beach, Montanita, Ecuador

Not many travelers make it to (or even know about) this spot on the west coast of Ecuador.

The majority head straight to the Galapagos Islands and miss this hidden spot, which wasn't even on the map a few years ago. There are only a thousand or so locals in Montanita and they're among the friendliest bunch of surfers you'll find.

After pounding right-hand breaks, you can get to know them during apres-surf events on the village's bar strip.

## 15. Rincon, Santa Barbara, California

While it doesn't break often, when the surf is up, Rincon is the best point break in California, offering long, steep, right-hand waves on most big northwest swells.

When that happens, this world famous spot gets extremely crowded.

## 16. Nihiwatu, Sumba, Indonesia

A private beach may grate on the idyllic surf attitude, but there's no denying the appeal of a break reserved just for you and a few others. All day, any day.

Especially when it's frequently rated as one of the top 10 left-handers in the world, and has a stunning location.

## 17. Manu Bay, Raglan, New Zealand

Made famous in the 1960s as a location in the surf classic, "The Endless Summer," atmosphere is key at this sleepy town.

Bars and cafes play surf videos and serve healthy smoothies and fresh cakes.

The waves on this wide-open bay range from one meter to about three, with an occasional barrel.

## 18. Riyuewan, Sanya, Hainan Island, China

China isn't known for its beaches, let alone its surfing, but Hainan Island offers untouched tropical beaches with consistent uncrowded waves.

Local outfit [Surfing Hainan](#) arranges transportation to beginner spots, such as Riyuewan Bay, and lesser known locations.

## 19. Jaws, Maui, Hawaii

The most iconic big wave reef break on the Hawaiian Islands takes its name from the ferocity of its legendary waves.

"It's a right and a left, and both offer giant barrels -- and potentially deadly consequences -- for anyone who's crazy enough to ride them," says Paul.

Waves can reach an unbelievable 27 meters in winter, when strong winds create the monster swells for which the break is famed.

In 2012, big wave legend Shane Dorian caught the extreme barrel ride that won Billabong's XXL Ride of the Year, the accomplishment that's finally getting him inducted into the Surfer's Hall of Fame this July.

## 20. The Box, Margaret River Valley, Australia

The Box is possibly the world's most venerable slab wave, meaning that it transitions quickly from deep to shallow water. Named for its square barrel shape, the Box is said to be responsible for a resurgence among thrill seekers to search out dangerous slab waves around the world.

"It's sharky as all hell, but worth it," says Surfing Magazine editor in chief Taylor Paul. "It has an incredibly late takeoff and offers a short, powerful right-hand barrel."

## 21. Surfrider Beach, Malibu, California

These small, perfectly formed crests where Johnny Fain and Miki Dora surfed in the 1950s are a great place to grab a longboard and surf Beach Boys-style. Unfortunately, the place is absolutely rammed for exactly this reason.



## 22. Superbank, Gold Coast, Australia

Superbank produces tubes and solid walls.

It's crucial to save some energy for the two-kilometer walk along the beach back to where cars can be parked.

## 23. Cloudbreak, Tavarua Island, Fiji

In the easygoing South Pacific, Cloudbreak is strictly for experts.

This brutal, hollow wave forms about 1,600 meters off the coast, and holds for up to 500 meters, reaching 10 meters in size.



## 24. Watergate Bay, Cornwall, England

Watergate Bay isn't as famous as Fistral Bay, but it has more English charm, is less crowded and is equally as surfable, with waves ranging from 30 centimeters to three meters.

## 25. Backdoor, Oahu, Hawaii

An experts-only spot, the reef bottom here creates potent, hollow, fast and intimidating world-class tubes.

Epic, though not quite as epic as its North Shore neighbor, Pipeline.

Non-expert surfers should probably just experience this break from the beach.

## 26. Pasta Point, Maldives

One of the most famous waves in the Maldives, this break offers left-hand rides and 100 meters of pure tube riding out to sea.

There's a catch: only [Dhonveli Beach Resort & Spa](#) guests can access the spot. A stay on the exclusive island costs upwards of \$340 per night.

## 27. Tamarindo Beach, Tamarindo, Costa Rica

Good for beginners and experts, this half-kilometer stretch of beach with warm water generates waves that reach heights of three meters.

Howler monkeys swing through the trees and parakeets screech in the background.

## 28. Bundoran Beach, County Donegal, Ireland

These shimmering green waters produce rolling waves, which are shaped by the headlands and flat rock reefs.

The cold water doesn't deter die-hards.

Locals will offer tips and advice to visiting surfers.

## 29. Rincon, Puerto Rico

Not to be confused with Rincon, California (also on this list), this once sleepy Puerto Rican town on the Caribbean Sea has become famous for surfing.

The green hill is a great place from which to scout the best surf.

### **30. Hanalei Bay, Hawaii**

Set in a sandy, horseshoe bay, Hanalei on Kauai is particularly pretty, with waterfalls tumbling down magnificent tropical cliffs in the background.

Pros love it for its overhead tubes and consistently fine waves.

Others just love the super-chill vibe of a perfect beach town.

### **31. Carrapateira, Portugal**

This lovely left-hand Euro break with plenty of shelter from the rocks can reach up to three meters during mid-high tide.

Best of all, it's usually empty.

### **32. Coconuts, Samoa**

Even professional surfers come close to cracking their boards at this classic wave, which breaks over live coral and on top days offers 150-meter rides.

### **33. Sao Francisco do Sul, Brazil**

Surfing competitions are often held at this decent quality sandbar below San Paulo on the east coast of Brazil.

There's a fun-loving atmosphere, plus some nice bars from which to watch the surf until sunset and eat tasty local grub.

### **34. Pedra Branca Ericeira, Portugal**

Along this sublime surf beach 48 kilometers north of Lisbon on the Atlantic coast you'll find a sleepy fishing-village-turned-surfer town with six kilometers of stunning beach, including the sandbar Sao Lorenzo and the epic Pedra Branca reef break. It's one of the best waves in Europe.

### **35. Killer Point, Taghazoute, Morocco**

Popularized by hippies in the 1960s, this southern Moroccan village makes for an utterly unique surf trip.

A perfectly peeling wave breaks over a cliff shelf, which was named after the many killer whales in the area.

### **36. Les Cavaliers, Anglet, France**

Flanked by two rocky girders, surfers should use the channel at the right-hand side to paddle into this killer wave, which works perfectly in offshore winds with west swells.

Locals can be aggressive when they feel their waves have been stolen.

### **37. Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia**

Popular among European backpackers, this mellow town is home to bars that religiously play reggae and waves along a 70-kilometer stretch of sand.

Shark nets have been implemented, but look out for the sunken ship.

### **38. Tofino, Vancouver Island, Canada**

The surfing capital of Canada offers a picturesque break on the west coast of the island.

Unique feature: it's surrounded by a looming rainforest.

Suitable for all abilities, the only prerequisite is a thick wetsuit -- it gets cold out there.

### **39. Ponta Preta, Maio, Cape Verde**

In Portuguese "Ponta Preta" means black point, and if this was a ski slope it would most definitely be a black run.

This break over exposed reef offers thrilling rides in winter for expert surfers.

## 40. Biarritz, France

Surfers have been hitting this spot since the 1950s.

It pumps all year around thanks to ferocious North Atlantic swells that make their way down the Gulf de Gascogne.

## 41. Surf pool, United Arab Emirates

The only artificial surf site to make the list, the wave pool at [Wadi Adventure](#) in the United Arab Emirates has converted its share of skeptics, inspiring some to proclaim it the future of surfing.

The surf pool can be adjusted to create rights, lefts and even barrels.

"It may not be the best wave in the world, but it's the best wave pool in the world," says Surfing Magazine editor in chief Taylor Paul.



## 42. Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, Buxton, North Carolina

Cape Hatteras Lighthouse has been popular since the 1970s and renowned for good surf caused by deadly hurricanes, which have over the years caused numerous shipwrecks and given it the nickname "the Atlantic graveyard."

## 43. Black's Beach, San Diego, California

One for seasoned professionals, Black's Beach is one of the most powerful breaks in California.

San Diego's best surfers flock here; it can get crowded on weekends.

## 44. The Bubble, Fuerteventura, Canary Islands

On the north shore off the coast of El Jablito, this expert right-hand tube works best when it's head-high to double overhead.

Similar to many of the waves in the Canaries, the only thing that hurts this reef break are aggressive locals who resent giving visiting surfers a turn on "their" wave. Visitors may find themselves in a paddling race to get a shot at riding this classic face.

## 45. Surfer's Point, Barbados

On the southernmost tip of Barbados you'll find hollow and fast beginner-to-intermediate peaks scattered along the bay. Waves face both left and right.

## 46. Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka

Not just a great surf spot with a right-hand peak, surfers here share the beach with wild monkeys and elephants that graze in the forest nearby.

## 47. Surin Beach, Phuket, Thailand

Though Thailand isn't a world-class spot, we like the location, the warm opaque waters, fresh pad Thai at street stalls and raucous nightlife.

## 48. Fulong Beach, Taiwan

In northeast Taiwan, Fulong Beach has great camping nearby and produces thrilling right- and left-peeling waves from a sandbar.

Waves range from one to two meters.

## **49. Baja Malibu, Baja Norte, Mexico**

Though water cleanliness is an issue (don't swallow any), this exposed break works when offshore winds blow in from the east.

You can ride both right and left and fall onto a sandy base.

## **50. Eisbach, Munich**

The most unusual wave on the list is found on an artificial river next to Englischer Garten, Munich's main park. It's completely landlocked.

This one meter standing wave (meaning you don't move along the river, but surf in the same spot) is created by water pumped fast against a large rock, forming a crest.

As long as there's enough water the ride never stops ... until you fall.