

Surf's up

Struggling to find the best breaks for surf-loving sun-seekers? Laura French has the lowdown

@laurafrench121

Everybody's going surfin' and not just in the USA. If surf tourism was once something of a niche, limited to a few enviably bronzed daredevils throwing themselves over the barrels of Hawaii, it's now firmly in the mainstream.

And it's not just about the pros, with surf schools offering lessons for every level and deluxe resorts across the world giving fussier clients a chance to try out the adrenaline-pumping sport without sacrificing on luxury.

That's good news for you, offering an added hook when it comes to selling new as well as classic destinations – think everywhere from Oman to the Maldives, South Africa to Sri Lanka. Plus, it's a chance to push those higher-value bookings, whether that's to newbies wanting an hour's lesson or a champion looking for an intensive, surf-dedicated week.

► EUROPE

Catching that winning wave doesn't have to mean jetting off to the other side of the world – we've got our fair share of decent surf in the UK, not least in hip young hangout Newquay.

For the best waves, suggest Fistral Beach, where swells range from four to 12ft in winter – making it ideal for the more advanced – and a tamer span of one to four feet in summer, when it's well-suited to beginners.

"It's a great place for all the family to learn to surf," says Chris Cundall, head of trade relations at Super Break, who recommends Victorian-built hotel The Headland for a clifftop, characterful stay two minutes' walk from the beach, complete with a 'Surf Sanctuary' offering group and private classes.

Across the Channel in southern France you'll find plenty of surf spots too, especially in glitzy ➔



➔ Biarritz, home to calmer beaches such as La Côte des Basques as well as fiercer options for the more intrepid. "It's considered one of the best areas in Europe for surfing and attracts all levels due to its year-round swell," says John Escott, sales and partnerships manager for Al Fresco Holidays. Suggest Le Ruisseau des Pyrenees holiday camp near here for families who want a good-value stay close to the action with surf schools in easy reach.

Alternatively, direct clients to Portugal, where the west Atlantic coastline is one giant surfers' playground. Levels vary from ultra-challenging – including at Praia do Norte in Nazare, home to some of the biggest waves in the world – to beginner and intermediate; for the latter recommend Ericeira or Peniche, both near Lisbon.

In the far southwest, Sagres gets its share of decent surf too; for families, suggest Martinhal Sagres Beach Family Resort Hotel, which offers activities including surfing and bodyboarding sessions alongside dedicated surf weeks, as well as other sports including stand-up paddleboarding, diving, windsurfing and land sports.



ABOVE: Biscarosse Beach, near Biarritz, France

LEFT: The Headland, Newquay

BELOW: Tropicsurf lesson at Anantara Dhigu Maldives

THE US

Hawaii lays claim to being the original surfing spot – the activity was a central part of ancient Polynesian culture – and the island is still one of the world's most sought-after destinations today.

There's no shortage of areas for the more advanced, with the



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likes of the Banzai Pipeline on the northern shores of Oahu offering waves reaching up to 50ft, but you needn't limit it to the pros, with plenty of beginners' classes available too, especially on Waikiki.

Suggest the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa for those wanting to stay right by the sand, with special rates on surfing lessons, canoe rides and other rentals available to guests wanting to make the most of this iconic location.

Just as big on the surf scene, of course, is California, where three Hawaiian princes first rode the waves in 1885, introducing the sport to the States. Recommend

San Diego's North County in southern California from August to November for those after high-performance surf, or for the seriously experienced, suggest Mavericks in Half Moon Bay, where waves can crest at more than 25ft, according to Mark Meredith, travel trade director for Visit California UK & Ireland.

You'll find a number of surf-oriented resorts across the state – suggest the Kimpton Shorebreak Hotel in Huntington Beach for a perfectly located beachfront boutique decked out in surf-inspired decor, complete with its own surf ambassador who can direct guests to the best beach break.

THE MALDIVES

Don't just look to the classic destinations. The Indian Ocean is fast becoming a hotspot for those on the hunt for good waves, and the Maldives is taking centre stage with a swathe of luxury resorts offering classes to high-end holidaymakers looking for an active add-on.

Among them is Anantara

Dhigu Maldives, whose surf school offers lessons in partnership with luxury operator Tropicsurf from April to October. There are five levels alongside an optional multi-day ride clinic featuring fitness analysis, confidence building and other aspects for serious surfers wanting to up their game. There's even a Seaplane Surfing Safari for those wanting to fly out to other atolls with expert guides who'll help find the perfect wave.

Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa offers a similar deal with Tropicsurf lessons, a customised seven or 10-day 'surfari' and a Surf's Up package, which includes one or two-day courses, breakfast, a welcome gift and complimentary use of surf equipment.

Six Senses Laamu in the southern Maldives has launched a partnership with the same brand this year – expect morning and evening trips from Laamu atoll's dolphin-filled waters alongside the chance to ride the renowned Ying Yang wave, a few minutes' boat-ride away.



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SAMPLE PRODUCT

Travel 2 offers a week's holiday from Sydney to Brisbane - including Britz HiTop Motorhome hire, surf experiences at Bondi Beach and Byron Bay, and Emirates flights from Gatwick - from £959 per person, valid for travel between May 14 and June 14. travel2.com

Abercrombie & Kent offers a week-long stay at Four Seasons Kuda Huraa for two adults including half-board, Emirates flights from London and seaplane transfers, from £8,964 in June. Surf packages start at \$800 per person. abercrombiekent.co.uk





LEFT:
Niyama
Private
Islands,
Maldives

RIGHT:
Surfers'
Paradise,
Gold
Coast,
Australia



PICTURES: STEVE WYPER, SHUTTERSTOCK; GOLD MEDAL

→ It doesn't end there. Niyama Private Islands Maldives lays claim to being the only resort in the archipelago where surfable waves break right onto the island, making it a good option for those wanting to try it without too much of a time commitment. It's also a good shout for families thanks to several Surf Family Beach Suites, although Vodi surf point and other areas accessible by speedboat make it an option for those who want more of a challenge.

▶ REST OF THE WORLD

Over in Sri Lanka there's plenty more going on, not least at the new surf-oriented hotel Cantaloupe Veralu Verala, a modern, 18-room boutique set to open late this year in Midigama on the south coast. Aiming to put the island's pristine waters on the map for those on the hunt for crowd-free waves, it will offer packages in partnership with surf network The Perfect Wave, with a Surf School located on 'Lazy Left' – one of the top surf hangouts on the island – offering tuition for beginners through to advanced.

Further along the south coast, there's Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort. It provides small-group lessons at beach breaks for beginners, and guided surfing trips for intermediates and the more experienced – all within 15 to 30 minutes from the resort – plus kids' lessons for over-fives. In keeping with the



Bali has gained a reputation worldwide and for good reason, with Padang Padang luring in the real pros

Anantara brand there's a large spa and wellness centre focused on Ayurvedic treatments, ideal for post-surf relaxation.

Of course, no surfing run-down would be complete without giving Indonesia its dues. Bali has gained itself a reputation worldwide and for good reason, with areas such as Uluwatu drawing in those up for a challenge and Padang Padang Beach luring in the real pros. For beginners, look to neighbouring Kuta and Legian Beaches, or Canggu Beach, close to the Seminyak area.

That's where you'll find Echo Beach, the new property from Como Hotels and Resorts, which has 119 rooms, suites and villas. Surf lessons are a stone's throw from the resort, plus there are activities for surfing spouses – think golf trips, walking tours, yoga and pilates.

Beyond Bali you'll find a string of other surf-loving islands in Indonesia, not least Sumba. Home to the world-renowned Occy's Left wave on Nihi Beach, it's something of a magnet for

skilled thrill-seekers, but there are options for beginners too. Nihi Sumba Island has a new beginners' surf school on the calmer Rua Beach close by, with 'nursery slope' waves for those not quite ready for the big ones; expect half-day trips with breakfast or lunch.

The ultimate head of the surf kingdom, of course, has to be Australia. With waves both big and small it's something of a no-brainer for surfers of every

level. Suggest the Gold Coast in Queensland, Bondi Beach in Sydney or laid-back Byron Bay for a plethora of surf schools offering lessons to those who have never been near a wave. Travel 2 offers a commissionable package combining the last two with campervan hire from Sydney to Brisbane – worth recommending to families or groups of youngsters after a real Aussie adventure and willing to dive in at the shallow end. **TW**

✓ Best of the rest

South Africa: With a plethora of challenging waves, South Africa is a dream for advanced surfers. Key spots include the Cape Peninsula, Durban and Jeffreys Bay, which hosts the World Surf League's Annual J-Bay Open.

Oman: "Popular surf spots on the Omani coastline include Sur, Ras Al Hadd and Salalah, as well as the island of Masirah, where

Oman's first surf school was set up," says Maitha Al Mahrouqi, undersecretary for the Oman Ministry of Tourism.

Costa Rica: Sandwiched between two oceans, Costa Rica offers surf-friendly beaches including Playa Tamarindo and Santa Teresa (*below*) on the Pacific coast, and Playa Cocles in Puerto Viejo, on the Caribbean side.

