

GATE TO SURF

20
Best

Beginner Surf Destinations

Verified schools, real prices, wave forecasts
in plain English, and the best season for each spot.

YOUR FIRST WAVE STARTS HERE

gatetosurf.com

COMING SOON

Ready to Plan Your Surf Trip?

Gate to Surf is building the only platform you need to find, compare, and book your perfect surf experience.

1

Live wave forecasts in plain English

Updated daily for every destination

2

Verified surf schools with real reviews

Book with confidence, not guesswork

3

Board rentals at transparent prices

Compare options before you arrive

4

Trip planning tools

Everything in one place, zero overwhelm

gatetosurf.com

100% free. Launching 2026.

ABOUT US

We believe planning a surf trip should be as easy as paddling out.

Gate to Surf was born from a simple frustration: planning a surf trip shouldn't require 15 browser tabs, a PhD in oceanography, and a healthy dose of blind trust.

We're building a platform that makes surf travel simple — one place to find the best spots, verified schools, fair rental prices, and forecasts that actually make sense.

"This guide is our first step. We hope it saves you the hours of research we wish someone had saved us."

This guide was made for you.

You want to learn to surf — or get better at it. You want warm water, friendly waves, and a school that won't rip you off. But every Google search gives you a different answer, and surf forecast websites look like they were designed for NASA engineers.

We did the research so you don't have to. Inside you'll find:

- **20 destinations** rated by difficulty — from gentle ankle-high waves to head-high beach breaks
- **Verified surf schools** with real prices and honest reviews — no more sketchy websites
- **Wave forecasts decoded** — we translate "1.2m @ 14s SSW" into "waist-high, beginner-friendly"
- **Best season for each spot** — so you book when the waves are good, not when the airlines want you to
- **Packing checklist, budget breakdowns, etiquette guide** — everything else you need to know

Pick a destination. Book a school. Catch your first wave.

It really is that simple.

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Southeast Asia & Pacific

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MA Taghazout, Souss-Massa	September – April
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ZA Muizenberg, Western Cape	Year-round (summer Dec–Feb is warmest)
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Bonus Sections

- Wave Forecast Decoder
- Complete Packing Checklist
- 3 Budget Breakdowns
- Your First Surf Lesson
- Surf Etiquette 101

How to Read This Guide

Difficulty Levels

Beginner

Gentle waves, sandy bottom. Perfect for your first lesson.

Beginner-Intermediate

Slightly bigger waves. Good if you can already stand up.

Season Calendar



Best time



Okay



Avoid

"Best time" means good waves + good weather + manageable crowds.

Budget Levels

\$

Budget-friendly. Under \$50/day including accommodation, food, and surf.

\$\$

Mid-range. \$50-150/day. Comfortable surf camps and nice restaurants.

\$\$\$

Premium. \$150+/day. Boutique hotels, private lessons, the works.

Crowd Level

Rated 1-5 waves. 1 = empty lineups (you'll have waves to yourself). 5 = popular spot (expect company). Even a 5 is manageable — just go early.

Prices and school details are accurate as of early 2026. Conditions change — always check gatetosurf.com for the latest verified info. Surf schools and rentals listed here are based on ratings and reviews, not paid placement.

Southeast Asia & Pacific

5

DESTINATIONS

\$

AVG BUDGET

2

HIDDEN GEMS

ID Kuta & Canggu, Indonesia	May – September	\$
ID Kuta, Indonesia	May – September	\$
LK Weligama, Sri Lanka	November – April	\$
PH Siargao, Philippines	September – November	\$
AU Byron Bay, Australia	March – November	\$\$

Kuta & Canggu

Where half the world catches their first wave

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – September	26–29°C	Beach break	Sandy	4/5	\$ \$25–40/day

Bali is where half the world catches their first wave. Kuta Beach is gentle, sandy, and has surf instructors every 10 meters. Canggu is hipper, with longer rides and better coffee. Both are perfect for beginners — warm water, soft sand, and waves that forgive every mistake.

INSIDER TIP

Skip Kuta Beach at midday (tourist chaos). Go to Batu Bolong in Canggu at 6am for clean waves and empty lineup.

Kuta & Canggu — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Odysseys Surf School

\$20-30/lesson

4.8/5

"Best first lesson I could have asked for — patient instructor and perfect waves"

— Sarah M.

Rip Curl School of Surf

\$25-40

4.7/5

"Stood up on my first try thanks to their teaching method"

— James K.

Pro Surf School Bali

\$15-25

4.6/5

"Affordable and effective — great for budget travelers"

— Emma L.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$5-10/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

8ft+ foam top (soft-top)

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist-high, gentle and peeling

Wind Light offshore (perfect)

Verdict: Dream conditions for beginners

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, consistent swells, smaller waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Kuta

Bali's quieter neighbor with uncrowded waves

Beginner

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – September	27–30°C	Beach break	Sandy	2/5	\$ \$20–35/day

Bali's quieter neighbor. Kuta Lombok (not the same Kuta!) has crescent-shaped bays with mellow waves and a fraction of the crowds. The town is sleepy, the sunsets are unreal, and you can get a full lobster dinner for \$8.

INSIDER TIP

Rent a scooter and check Selong Belanak — 15 min drive, even mellower waves, stunning white sand.

Kuta — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Kuta Lombok Surf

\$15-25

4.7/5

"Way less crowded than Bali, same quality teaching"

— Tom R.

Mana Retreat Surf School

\$20-30

4.8/5

"Yoga and surf combo was exactly what I needed"

— Lisa P.

Surf Shack Lombok

\$12-20

4.5/5

"Super affordable, friendly local instructors"

— Mark D.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$4-8/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

8ft+ foam top

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Chest-high, mellow and consistent

Wind Light offshore mornings

Verdict: Perfect for progressing beginners

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, consistent swells

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Weligama

Where the bay curves like a smile

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
November – April	27–29°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$ \$20–35/day

Weligama Bay curves like a smile. The waves break gently over sand, the water is bath-temperature warm, and a two-hour surf lesson costs less than your morning coffee back home. The town is colorful, the food is incredible (try the kottu roti), and the stilt fishermen make for unforgettable sunsets.

INSIDER TIP

Stay near Mirissa end of the bay for fewer crowds. Walk 10 minutes along the beach and you'll have waves to yourself.

Weligama — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Surf Lanka

\$18-28

4.7/5

"The instructors genuinely care about your progress"

— Anna B.

Ceylon Sliders

\$20-35

4.8/5

"Best surf camp experience — small groups and great vibes"

— David W.

Sri Lanka Surf Club

\$15-25

4.6/5

"Great value and they take you to the best spots"

— Sophie T.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$4-8/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

7-9ft foam top

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to shoulder-high, mellow rollers

Wind Light offshore mornings

Verdict: Ideal beginner conditions

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, clean waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Siargao

The cheapest surf destination on earth

Beginner-Intermediate

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
September – November	28–30°C	Reef break & Beach break	Sand & Reef	2/5	\$ \$20–35/day

Cloud 9 is famous, but it's an expert-only barrel. For beginners, check the nearby breaks like Jacking Horse and Stimpy's – much mellower, still beautiful. Siargao is the cheapest surf destination on this list. You'll spend more on sunscreen than accommodation.

INSIDER TIP

The secret beginner break is at Pacifico – a long, gentle left-hander. 30 min ride from General Luna.

Siargao — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Kermit Surf School

\$15-25

4.7/5

"Best pizza on the island and great surf lessons too"

— Chris H.

Harana Surf Resort

\$20-30

4.8/5

"Stay and surf package was incredible value"

— Rachel N.

Island Surf Philippines

\$12-20

4.5/5

"Super friendly local instructors, very affordable"

— Jake M.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$4-7/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

7-8ft foam top or funboard

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Shoulder-high, playful waves

Wind Light to moderate

Verdict: Fun conditions for progressing surfers

WHEN TO GO



Best swells, dry season

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Byron Bay

Iconic Australian surf culture at The Pass

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
March – November	20–26°C	Point break & Beach break	Sandy	4/5	\$\$ \$80–120/day

The Pass at Byron Bay is one of the most iconic beginner waves in the world. A long, gentle right-hander that peels across the bay for 200 meters. The town has an amazing surf culture, great food, and more yoga studios than you can count. It is expensive, but the experience is worth every dollar.

INSIDER TIP

The Pass gets crowded after 8am. Be there at dawn for near-empty waves and dolphins in the lineup.

Byron Bay — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Mojosurf

\$45-65

4.7/5

"High energy lessons that actually work — stood up first day"

— Olivia S.

Lets Go Surfing

\$50-70

4.8/5

"Professional instructors and perfect wave selection"

— Ben C.

Byron Bay Surf School

\$40-60

4.6/5

"Great for families, patient with kids"

— Michelle F.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$20-35/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top or mini-mal

Yes, spring suit (2mm) in summer, 3/2mm in winter

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to chest-high, long peeling rights

Wind Light offshore mornings

Verdict: World-class beginner wave

WHEN TO GO



Consistent swells, mild weather

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Americas

5

DESTINATIONS

\$\$\$

AVG BUDGET

1

HIDDEN GEMS

CR Santa Teresa, Costa Rica	December – April	\$\$
CR Nosara, Costa Rica	December – April	\$\$
MX Sayulita, Mexico	December – April	\$
US Waikiki, USA	May – September	\$\$\$
CA Tofino, Canada	June – September	\$\$

Santa Teresa

Pura vida lifestyle meets perfect waves

Beginner-Intermediate

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
December – April	27-29°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$\$ \$60-100/day

Santa Teresa is where surfers, yogis, and digital nomads collide. The main beach is a long stretch of sand with waves for every level. Morning sessions, smoothie bowls, sunset yoga — then do it all again. The pura vida lifestyle is real and contagious.

INSIDER TIP

Walk 15 minutes north past Playa Hermosa — fewer people, same quality waves. Bring water.

Santa Teresa — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Del Soul Surf

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Amazing instructors and the perfect vibe — learned so much"

— Alex G.

Nalu Surf School

\$35-50

4.7/5

"They really care about ocean safety and technique"

— Maya L.

Pura Vida Surf Academy

\$30-45

4.6/5

"Great value and super friendly local guides"

— Ryan P.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$10-18/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

7-9ft foam top or funboard

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Chest-high, consistent beach break

Wind Offshore mornings

Verdict: Perfect for progression

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, offshore winds

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Nosara

Surf and wellness capital of Costa Rica

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
December – April	27-29°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$\$ \$60-100/day

If Santa Teresa is the party, Nosara is the meditation. Playa Guiones is a wide, sandy beach with some of the most consistent beginner waves in Central America. The town revolves around surf and wellness — think morning surf, afternoon yoga, and dinner at a farm-to-table restaurant.

INSIDER TIP

Take a yoga class at Bodhi Tree — it works muscles you never knew you had and makes surfing easier the next day.

Nosara — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Safari Surf School

\$45-60

4.8/5

"Best surf school I've tried — progressed faster than expected"

— Lauren K.

Nosara Surf Shop

\$35-50

4.7/5

"Great local knowledge and equipment"

— Matt B.

Corky Carroll Surf School

\$50-65

4.8/5

"Legend teaching legends — incredible experience"

— Jessica R.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$12-18/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to shoulder-high, consistent peaks

Wind Light offshore

Verdict: Beginner paradise

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, consistent waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Sayulita

Colorful Mexican surf town with \$1 tacos

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
December – April	24–28°C	Point break & Beach break	Sandy	4/5	\$ \$40–65/day

A colorful Mexican surf town that feels like it belongs in a movie. The left point break at the main beach is perfect for longboarding beginners. The tacos are \$1, the margaritas are cheap, and the sunsets turn the sky orange every single evening. It is touristy but in the best way.

INSIDER TIP

The left point gets crowded. Cross the river to the right side — same size waves, way fewer people.

Sayulita — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Lunazul Surf

\$30-40

4.7/5

"Incredible patience and great wave knowledge"

— Carlos M.

Sayulita Surf School

\$25-35

4.6/5

"Perfect for first-timers, very encouraging"

— Emily W.

WildMex

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Multi-day package was amazing value"

— Tyler J.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$8-15/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

8-9ft longboard or foam top

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist-high, gentle left point

Wind Light

Verdict: Perfect longboard wave

WHEN TO GO



Dry season, smaller waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Waikiki

Where modern surfing was born

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – September	24–27°C	Reef break	Reef (deep, safe)	5/5	\$\$\$ \$150–250/ day

This is where modern surfing was born. Duke Kahanamoku rode these waves a century ago, and the gentle rollers at Waikiki are still the best beginner waves you will ever find. The water is warm, the waves are long and forgiving, and Diamond Head watches over every session.

INSIDER TIP

Book a lesson with a beach boy (local instructor) directly on the beach — skip the big companies and you get a more personal, cheaper experience.

Waikiki — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Hans Hedemann Surf School

\$80-120

4.7/5

"Expensive but worth it — learned proper technique"

— Kevin T.

Ty Gurney Surf School

\$75-100

4.8/5

"Amazing instructors with deep respect for the ocean"

— Amanda H.

Faith Surf School

\$60-90

4.6/5

"Great for families, very safe environment"

— Patricia L.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$25-40/day

Wetsuit needed?

No

Recommended board

9ft+ longboard

Not needed — water is warm year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist-high, long gentle rollers

Wind Light trade winds

Verdict: Classic beginner wave

WHEN TO GO



South swells, smaller waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Tofino

Cold water surfing at the edge of the world

Beginner–Intermediate

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
June – September	10–14°C	Beach break	Sandy	2/5	\$\$ \$80–130/day

Cold water surfing at its finest. Tofino sits on Vancouver Island surrounded by ancient rainforest and wild Pacific beaches. The water is cold (you will need a good wetsuit), but the scenery is absolutely unreal. Eagles fly overhead while you surf. Bears walk the beach at low tide. It feels like surfing at the edge of the world.

INSIDER TIP

Long Beach gets the most hype. Try Cox Bay instead — it is more sheltered, holds its size better, and the parking is easier.

Tofino — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

- Surf Sister**
\$60-80 4.8/5
"Best all-women surf school — empowering and fun"
— Sarah J.
- Pacific Surf Co**
\$55-75 4.7/5
"Great gear and patient instructors for cold water"
— Mike D.
- Tofino Surf School**
\$50-70 4.6/5
"Learned to surf in a rainforest — bucket list checked"
— Natalie P.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental	\$20-30/day
Wetsuit needed?	Yes
Recommended board	8ft+ foam top or funboard
Yes, 4/3mm with booties, gloves, and hood	

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Chest-high, consistent peaks
Wind Variable

Verdict: Beautiful wilderness surfing

WHEN TO GO



Warmest water, smaller swells

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Europe

6

DESTINATIONS

\$\$

AVG BUDGET

1

HIDDEN GEMS

PT Algarve (Lagos/Sagres)- Portugal	May – October	\$\$
PT Ericeira, Portugal	May – October	\$\$
PT Peniche / Baleal, Portugal	May – October	\$
FR Hossegor / Capbreton, France	June – October	\$\$
ES San Sebastian / Zarautz, Spain	June – October	\$\$
ES Fuerteventura, Spain	September – April	\$\$

Algarve (Lagos/Sagres)

Europe's surf paradise with golden cliffs

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – October	17–22°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$\$ \$50–80/day

The Algarve is Europe's surf paradise. Golden cliffs, turquoise water, and dozens of sandy beaches with waves for every level. Lagos is the fun party town, Sagres is the quiet surf village at the edge of the continent. Both have world-class beginner waves, amazing seafood, and the kind of sunsets that make you forget to check your phone.

INSIDER TIP

Praia do Amado near Sagres is the most consistent beginner beach in the Algarve. Works on almost any swell direction.

Algarve (Lagos/Sagres) — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Algarve Surf School

\$35-50

4.7/5

"Great instructors and beautiful locations every day"

— Hannah M.

Surf Academy Lagos

\$30-45

4.6/5

"Perfect for beginners, very patient teaching"

— Lucas F.

Extreme Algarve

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Multi-sport packages are incredible value"

— Claire B.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$12-18/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top

Yes, 3/2mm spring through fall, 4/3mm in winter

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to shoulder-high, clean peaks

Wind Light offshore mornings

Verdict: Consistent beginner conditions

WHEN TO GO



Warm weather, consistent swells

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Ericeira

World Surfing Reserve near Lisbon

Beginner-Intermediate

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – October	15–20°C	Beach break & Reef break	Sandy & Rocky	3/5	\$\$ \$50–80/day

A World Surfing Reserve just 45 minutes from Lisbon. Ericeira is a whitewashed fishing village with cobblestone streets, fresh seafood restaurants, and some of the best surf in Europe. For beginners, Foz do Lizandro offers gentle sandy waves. As you improve, there are reef breaks nearby for your next challenge.

INSIDER TIP

Stay in Ericeira but take the bus to Lisbon for a day trip. Best of both worlds – surf village and European capital 45 min apart.

Ericeira — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Na Onda Surf School

\$35-50

4.8/5

"Fantastic instructors who love what they do"

— Pedro S.

Ericeira Surf & Yoga

\$40-55

4.7/5

"Perfect combination of surf and wellness"

— Nina R.

Boardriders Ericeira

\$30-45

4.6/5

"Great local vibe and affordable lessons"

— João P.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$10-18/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

7-9ft foam top or funboard

Yes, 3/2mm in summer, 4/3mm rest of year

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Shoulder-high, playful beach break

Wind Offshore mornings

Verdict: Great for progression

WHEN TO GO



Warm weather, fun waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Peniche / Baleal

Surf camp capital with waves on every side

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
May – October	15–20°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$ \$40–65/day

Peniche is a peninsula, which means there is always a wave somewhere. When one side is big and messy, the other is clean and mellow. Baleal is the surf village connected by a sandy causeway — it's the surf camp capital of Portugal. Dozens of surf camps cater specifically to beginners, and the beach is sandy and forgiving.

INSIDER TIP

The north side of Baleal (Cantinho da Baia) is the most sheltered. Check here first when the south side is too big.

Peniche / Baleal — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Baleal Surf Camp

\$30-45

4.7/5

"Best week of my life — surf, friends, and Portuguese sunshine"

— Marie D.

Peniche Surfing Academy

\$25-40

4.6/5

"Super affordable and great instruction"

— Tom V.

Ride Surf Camp

\$35-50

4.8/5

"Amazing community and perfect beginner waves"

— Isabella C.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$8-15/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top

Yes, 3/2mm in summer, 4/3mm rest of year

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to chest-high, forgiving beach break

Wind Variable but sheltered spots always available

Verdict: Always a wave for beginners

WHEN TO GO



Warm weather, consistent waves

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Hossegor / Capbreton

France's answer to Hawaii with world-class food

Beginner-Intermediate

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
June – October	16–22°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$\$ \$60–100/day

France's answer to Hawaii. Hossegor hosts world-class competitions in autumn, but summer brings mellow, fun waves perfect for learning. The food alone is worth the trip — fresh oysters, duck confit, and pastries that will ruin you for every bakery back home. Capbreton next door is slightly mellower and less crowded.

INSIDER TIP

Capbreton has a long jetty that creates a sheltered corner. Perfect beginner waves when Hossegor is too powerful.

Hossegor / Capbreton — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Jo Moraiz Surf School

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Top-level instruction from a former pro surfer"

— Antoine L.

Quiksilver Surf School

\$45-60

4.7/5

"Great equipment and experienced instructors"

— Camille M.

Hossegor Surf Center

\$35-50

4.6/5

"Good value and they know the best spots"

— Hugo B.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$15-22/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

7-9ft foam top or funboard

Yes, 3/2mm in summer, 4/3mm in shoulder season

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Chest-high, powerful but manageable

Wind Light offshore mornings

Verdict: Fun progression waves

WHEN TO GO



Summer swells, warm weather

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

San Sebastian / Zarautz

Surf and pintxos in Michelin star capital

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
June – October	15–22°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$\$ \$60–100/day

Surf and eat. Eat and surf. San Sebastian has more Michelin stars per capita than anywhere on earth, and the surf is world-class. La Zurriola beach in the city center has consistent beginner waves. Zarautz, 20 minutes away, has Spain's longest beach and even more wave options.

INSIDER TIP

Hit the pintxos bars in old town after your sunset session. Order txakoli (local fizzy wine) and point at whatever looks good.

San Sebastian / Zarautz — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Pukas Surf Eskola

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Legendary surf brand with legendary instruction"

— Iker A.

La Zurriola Surf School

\$35-50

4.7/5

"Perfect city surf school — beach is steps from old town"

— Emma G.

Zarautz Surf School

\$30-45

4.6/5

"Great for families and longer lessons"

— Marta S.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$15-20/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top

Yes, 3/2mm in summer, 4/3mm rest of year

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to shoulder-high, clean beach break

Wind Light offshore

Verdict: City surfing at its best

WHEN TO GO



Warm weather, consistent swells

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Fuerteventura

Year-round waves on volcanic island paradise

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
September – April	18–23°C	Beach break & Reef break	Sandy & Volcanic rock	2/5	\$\$ \$55–85/day

Year-round waves, year-round sunshine. Fuerteventura is a volcanic island off the African coast that catches every Atlantic swell. The north shore has powerful reef breaks, but the sandy beaches on the east coast are beginner heaven. The landscape looks like Mars with an ocean attached.

INSIDER TIP

Cotillo has two sides — the village side is calm lagoons (swimming), the open coast side has perfect beginner beach breaks.

Fuerteventura — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Flag Beach Surf

\$35-50

4.7/5

"Great spot selection and patient instructors"

— Lars H.

Riders Surf Camp

\$40-55

4.8/5

"Week-long packages are incredible value with accommodation"

— Sophie K.

Watersports Fuerteventura

\$30-45

4.6/5

"Multi-sport options — surf, kite, windsurf all available"

— Andreas M.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$12-18/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8ft+ foam top

Light 2mm or rashguard — water is mild year-round

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to chest-high, consistent

Wind Trade winds (can be strong)

Verdict: Year-round surf destination

WHEN TO GO



Best swells, mild weather

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Africa

4

DESTINATIONS

\$

AVG BUDGET

2

HIDDEN GEMS

MA Taghazout, Morocco

September – April \$

MA Essaouira, Morocco

Year-round (best waves
Sep – Mar) \$

ZA Muizenberg, South Africa

Year-round (summer
Dec–Feb is warmest) \$

ZA Jeffreys Bay, South Africa

June – August \$

Taghazout

Fishing village turned surf mecca

Beginner-Intermediate

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
September – April	16–22°C	Point break & Beach break	Sandy & Rocky	3/5	\$ \$30–50/day

A sleepy fishing village turned surf mecca. Taghazout is where European surfers come for warm water, consistent waves, and tagine dinners that cost \$4. The point breaks are famous, but the beach break at Tamraght (5 min south) is perfect for beginners. Rooftop terraces, mint tea, and call to prayer as your alarm clock.

INSIDER TIP

Book a surf and stay package — many camps include accommodation, meals, and lessons for \$300–400/week all-in.

Taghazout — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Surf Maroc

\$35-50

4.8/5

"All-inclusive surf camp experience was incredible"

— James W.

Taghazout Surf Waves

\$25-35

4.6/5

"Super affordable and authentic local experience"

— Leila B.

Amouage Surf

\$30-40

4.7/5

"Great mix of surf and Moroccan culture"

— Daniel K.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$8-12/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

7-9ft foam top or funboard

Yes, 3/2mm — water is cool despite the African sun

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Shoulder-high, consistent point and beach breaks

Wind Offshore mornings

Verdict: Amazing value surf destination

WHEN TO GO



Best swells, warm days

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Essaouira

UNESCO medina meets perfect beach breaks

Beginner

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
Year-round (best waves Sep – Mar)	16–21°C	Beach break	Sandy	1/5	\$ \$25–45/day

The windiest city in Morocco — which makes it amazing for kitesurfing but also means the waves are often cleaned up by cross-shore wind. The ancient medina is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the beach stretches for miles in both directions. Far fewer surfers than Taghazout, way more culture.

INSIDER TIP

Combine surf and windsurf or kitesurf. The bay has perfect conditions for both — surf in the morning, kite in the afternoon.

Essaouira — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Explora Surf

\$25-35

"Great instructors and beautiful setting"

— Fatima Z.

4.6/5

Essaouira Surf School

\$20-30

"Very affordable and good for beginners"

— Youssef M.

4.5/5

Ocean Vagabond

\$30-40

"Multi-sport school with kite and windsurf too"

— Nina F.

4.7/5

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

Wetsuit needed?

Recommended board

Yes, 3/2mm year-round — it is windy and the water stays cool

\$6-10/day

Yes

8-9ft foam top

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist-high, clean beach break

Wind Cross-shore (strong but clean)

Verdict: Great for wind sports lovers

WHEN TO GO



Consistent year-round

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Muizenberg

Iconic colorful beach huts and gentle waves

Beginner

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
Year-round (summer Dec–Feb is warmest)	12–18°C	Beach break	Sandy	3/5	\$ \$35–55/day

The iconic colorful beach huts. The gentle, rolling waves. Muizenberg is South Africa's beginner surf capital and one of the most photogenic beaches in the world. The wave is a long, mellow right-hander that breaks over sand. Cape Town is 25 min away for world-class restaurants and Table Mountain.

INSIDER TIP

Yes, there are sharks. But the Shark Spotters program has watchers on the mountain with flags. Green flag means safe.

Muizenberg — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

Surf Emporium

\$25-40

4.7/5

"Great local vibe and experienced instructors"

— Thabo N.

Gary's Surf School

\$20-35

4.8/5

"Gary himself taught me — legend and super friendly"

— Chloe R.

Stoked Surf School

\$25-35

4.6/5

"Great for kids and families"

— Pieter V.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$8-12/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

8-9ft foam top or longboard

Yes, 4/3mm year-round — the water is cold

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Waist to chest-high, long mellow rights

Wind Variable

Verdict: Classic beginner wave

WHEN TO GO



Consistent all year

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Jeffreys Bay

World-class point break with beginner sections

Beginner-Intermediate

Hidden Gem

SEASON	WATER	WAVES	BOTTOM	CROWD	BUDGET
June – August	14–20°C	Point break	Sand & Rock	2/5	\$ \$30–50/day

J-Bay is famous for Supertubes — one of the best right-hand point breaks on earth. But the inside section called Kitchen Windows is a gentle, long wave perfect for intermediate surfers. The town is small, friendly, and surf-obsessed. Winter brings the best swells and surprisingly mild weather.

INSIDER TIP

The inside section at Main Beach catches the same swell but breaks much softer. Perfect stepping stone before trying the point.

Jeffreys Bay — The Plan

WHERE TO LEARN

J-Bay Surf School

\$25-40

4.7/5

"They know every wave on the point — incredible local knowledge"

— Connor S.

Supertubes Surfing Foundation

\$20-30

4.8/5

"Non-profit teaching locals and visitors — amazing mission"

— Amy T.

Wavcrest Surf School

\$20-35

4.6/5

"Great for progression from beginner to point break"

— Sean M.

WHERE TO RENT

Board rental

\$8-15/day

Wetsuit needed?

Yes

Recommended board

7-9ft funboard or mini-mal

Yes, 4/3mm in winter, 3/2mm in summer

SAMPLE PERFECT DAY

BEGINNER FORECAST

Waves Shoulder to head-high, long point break

Wind Offshore in winter

Verdict: World-class wave for progressors

WHEN TO GO



Winter swells, best conditions

Get live forecasts and book directly at gatetosurf.com

Wave Forecast Decoder

Surf forecasts look like a foreign language at first. Here's how to read them like a local and know exactly when to paddle out.

WAVE HEIGHT

TECHNICAL	WHAT IT MEANS	BEGINNER RATING
● 0.3–0.6m (1–2ft)	Ankle to knee high	Perfect for your first lesson. Soft, gentle, forgiving.
● 0.6–1.2m (2–4ft)	Waist to chest high	Ideal for beginners with 2–3 lessons under their belt.
● 1.2–1.8m (4–6ft)	Head high	Intermediate territory. Work up to this over weeks.
● 1.8–2.4m (6–8ft)	Overhead to double overhead	Advanced only. Skip the lineup if you're learning.
● 2.4m+ (8ft+)	Double overhead and beyond	Dangerous. Watch from the beach with a coffee.

SWELL PERIOD

PERIOD	WHAT IT MEANS
● Under 8s	Choppy, messy. Waves like a washing machine.
● 8–12s	Clean, rideable waves. Nice shape and power.
● 12–16s	Long-interval swell. Powerful, well-formed waves.
● 16s+	Big energy from distant storms. Can be heavy.

WIND DIRECTION

Offshore	Blowing from land to sea	The golden ticket. Clean, glassy waves with perfect shape.
Onshore	Blowing from sea to land	Messy, choppy conditions. Still fun, just not picture-perfect.
Cross-shore	Blowing parallel to the beach	Mixed results. Can be clean or bumpy depending on angle.
No wind	Calm, flat conditions	Glassy perfection. Best for sunrise sessions.

Forecast Examples

Most beginner spots work best at mid to high tide — the waves break softer over deeper water. Low tide can expose rocks and create hollow, fast waves. Check with your instructor or local surf shop for the best tide times at your spot.

Raw: Swell: 0.9m @ 11s from SW, Wind: 5kt offshore

Translation: Waist-high, clean waves with light offshore wind. Long swell period means nicely spaced sets. Perfect for beginners. Go now.

Raw: Swell: 1.5m @ 9s from W, Wind: 12kt cross-shore

Translation: Chest to head high with medium period. Cross-shore wind will make it a bit bumpy. Intermediate day. Beginners should wait for calmer conditions.

Raw: Swell: 2.2m @ 14s from NW, Wind: 18kt onshore

Translation: Overhead waves with powerful long-interval swell. Strong onshore wind creating messy, dangerous conditions.

Stay on the beach. Not safe for learning.

The Ultimate Surf Trip Packing List

Don't overthink it. Here's what you actually need for a week-long surf adventure.

Surf Gear

- Rashguard (long sleeve for sun protection)
- Boardshorts or surf bikini
- Wetsuit (if going to cold water destination)
- Surf booties (for reef breaks)
- Reef-safe sunscreen (SPF 50+)
- Surf wax (if bringing your own board)
- Dry bag for beach essentials

Clothing

- 3-4 quick-dry t-shirts
- 2 pairs of shorts/skirts
- Light jacket or hoodie for evenings
- Flip-flops and water shoes
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Hat with strap (so it doesn't fly off)
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Light cover-up for sun protection

Tech & Travel

- Phone with waterproof case
- Portable charger
- Universal adapter (check your destination)
- Action camera (GoPro, etc.)
- Headphones for flights and downtime
- E-reader or book for beach reading

Health & Safety

- First aid kit (bandages, antiseptic)
- Zinc stick for face and nose
- Aloe vera gel for sunburn
- Insect repellent
- Motion sickness pills
- Personal medications
- Reusable water bottle
- Basic toiletries in travel sizes

Documents

- Passport (6+ months validity)
- Travel insurance details
- Flight confirmations (digital is fine)
- Accommodation booking confirmations
- Credit cards and some local cash
- Emergency contact list

PRO TIPS

Pack light. You'll buy stuff there and need room for souvenirs.

Put sunscreen in checked luggage. Airport security will confiscate big bottles.

Wear your bulkiest shoes on the flight to save luggage space.

Take photos of important documents and email them to yourself.

Bring a small microfiber towel — dries fast and packs tiny.

Real Budget Breakdowns

Here's what a week of surfing actually costs in 2026, from backpacker to luxury. All prices in USD.

The Backpacker

\$500/week

Best for: Bali, Sri Lanka, Philippines

Accommodation	Hostel / shared dorm near the beach	\$70–105
Food	Local warungs, street food, occasional beach cafe	\$56–84
Surf lessons	3 group lessons (2 hours each)	\$75–105
Board rental	Soft-top for 7 days	\$35–56
Transport	Scooter rental or local transport	\$28–42
Activities & extras	Snorkeling, temple visits, massage, beers	\$105–140

You'll eat incredible food, surf every day, and come home with money left.

Flights: \$400–800 from US West Coast, \$200–500 from Europe

The Explorer

\$1,000/week

Best for: Portugal, Morocco, Costa Rica

Accommodation	Surf camp or budget hotel with breakfast	\$280–420
Food	Mix of local spots and casual restaurants	\$140–210
Surf lessons	5 semi-private lessons (2 students max)	\$250–350
Board rental	Choice of soft-top or fiberglass for 7 days	\$84–126
Transport	Rental car (split with friend) or reliable shuttles	\$140–210
Activities & extras	Yoga, day trips, nice dinners, souvenirs	\$175–245

Comfortable travel with a mix of local experiences and creature comforts.

Flights: \$300–700 from US East Coast, \$150–400 from Europe

The Luxe Surfer

\$2,000/week

Best for: Hawaii, Byron Bay, Maldives

Accommodation	Boutique surf resort or beachfront villa	\$1,050–1,750
Food	Farm-to-table restaurants, smoothie bowls, fresh poke	\$350–560
Surf lessons	5 private coaching sessions with video analysis	\$600–900
Board rental	Premium boards (performance or soft-top)	\$175–280
Transport	Rental car or resort shuttles	\$280–420
Activities & extras	Spa treatments, boat tours, fine dining, photo shoots	\$560–840

Premium experience with private coaching, spa days, and ocean-view everything.

Flights: \$400–1,200 from US mainland, \$800–2,000 from Europe/Asia

What to Expect: Your First Surf Lesson

Nervous about your first lesson? Don't be. Here's exactly what happens from the moment you show up to the moment you stand up.

- **0–15 min Beach safety briefing and wave reading**
Your instructor will explain rip currents, how to spot them, and what to do if you get caught in one. You'll learn to read the waves and identify where they're breaking. This isn't boring theory — it keeps you safe.
- **15–30 min Pop-up practice on the sand**
You'll lie on the board and practice the pop-up motion over and over. It feels silly at first, but muscle memory is everything. Your instructor will correct your foot placement, hand position, and stance until it's smooth.
- **30–45 min Getting comfortable in the water**
Time to get wet. You'll practice paddling, duck diving under small waves, and turning the board around. The instructor will hold your board steady so you can feel the ocean's rhythm without fighting it.
- **45–75 min Your first waves (with a push)**
Here we go. Your instructor will push you into small waves while you focus on popping up. Most beginners stand up within the first 5 tries. Don't worry if you fall — everyone does. The soft-top board is super forgiving.
- **75–105 min Solo attempts and refinement**
Now you're paddling into waves yourself. Your instructor is nearby, shouting encouragement and tips. You'll catch more waves, fall less, and start feeling the magic. This is where it clicks.
- **105–120 min Cool down and debrief**
You'll paddle back to shore buzzing with adrenaline. Your instructor will give feedback, answer questions, and book your next lesson (because you'll absolutely want one). 90% of beginners stand up on their first lesson. You'll be one of them.

TIPS FOR YOUR FIRST LESSON

- Eat a light meal 1–2 hours before. You want energy, but you don't want to feel heavy in the water.
- Wear a rashguard under your wetsuit (if renting one). Prevents painful chafing.
- Don't compare yourself to others in the lineup. Everyone learns at their own pace.
- Ask questions. Good instructors love curious students.
- Expect to be sore the next day. You're using muscles you've never used before. Stretch and hydrate.

Surf Etiquette: The Unwritten Rules

Surfing has a culture built on respect. Follow these 5 golden rules and you'll be welcomed anywhere in the world.

- 1 Don't Drop In**

The surfer closest to the peak (where the wave starts breaking) has priority. If someone's already riding the wave, don't paddle in and steal it.

Like cutting in line at a coffee shop — universally frowned upon.
- 2 Don't Snake**

Snaking is when you paddle around someone to get closer to the peak and steal priority. It's sneaky and disrespectful. Wait your turn.

Imagine someone cutting ahead of you at the last second. Yeah, don't be that person.
- 3 Paddle Wide, Not Through the Lineup**

When paddling back out, go around the breaking waves — not through where people are riding. If you're in the way, you'll ruin someone's wave (and they'll remember).

Walking across a basketball court mid-game. Just... don't.
- 4 Communicate**

Make eye contact. Nod. Say "Go!" if you're giving someone the wave. Simple communication prevents collisions and builds good vibes.

Like using turn signals while driving. Basic, but it makes everything smoother.
- 5 Respect the Locals**

Locals surf that spot year-round. You're a guest. Be humble, be friendly, and don't paddle out to the most crowded peak on your first day. Earn your place in the lineup.

Showing up to someone's house party. You wouldn't raid the fridge first, right?

Follow these rules and you'll make friends, not enemies. Surfing is about sharing the stoke — there's plenty of waves for everyone if we all play nice.

Gate to Surf

MADE FOR SURFERS, BY SURFERS

gatetosurf.com