Surfing in the Bay Area

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Surfing in the Bay Area provides one with perhaps the most varied experience in surfing possible. Sometimes all within the span of 10 minutes. The right swell, tide, and wind can align so sublimely that each wave offers you the ride of your life. You can also be caught in the worst situation in your life in the Red Triangle (a triangular area formed by Bodega Bay, the Farallon Islands, and Big Sur and “red” because of all the blood shed in the water from great white shark attacks) in what is essentially a seal costume (black wetsuit, booties, and hood). Although statistically speaking you are more likely to drown up here than be eaten by *Carcharodon carcharias*.

But with the right knowledge and respect, any surfer of any skill level can enjoy one of the most beautiful and stunning stretches of coast in the world.

For those that are experienced surfers, the coast is littered with an amazing array of set ups; beachbreaks, reefs, points, outer reefs, big wave hell man spots, waves under a world famous bridge painted International Orange. Along the spectacular Hwy-1 there are spots that offer unbelievable quality and solitude. Learning which spots break best on which swell, wind direction, and tide could take a lifetime to master. Actually scoring a spot at it’s best can motivate you to spend the rest of your life in passionate scholarship.

If you are just starting or wish to learn, a surf spot in Santa Cruz called Cowell’s is arguably one of the best beginner spots in the world. Along ice plant and bougainvillea lined cliffs you can catch long, gentle, and slow waves under the watchful eye of a surf instructor. There are dozens of surf schools nearby and wetsuits are so good nowadays that the cold is a non-factor.

For those that just like to watch surfing a 45 minute drive from The City offers spectators with one the Seven Natural Wonders of the Surfing World: Mavericks (aka Pillar Point). On big West or NW swells this reef break in Half Moon Bay produces world-class waves (wave faces up to 60-ft) with world’s best big wave surfers putting themselves in unimaginable situations. Truly spectacular.

If you don’t want to leave The City, Ocean Beach in the fall is magical. In the summer this beach is typically cold, gray and foggy, in the winter stormy and unruly, and a blown out and disorganized mess in the spring. But in the fall this wide and long beach is great for strolling, kite flying, lounging, bon-firing, picnicking, and if you are experienced enough, surfing. When it’s on, Ocean Beach is one of the world’s best beachbreaks. No question. Offering perfect A-frame barrels from 6-20 plus ft. On any day, regardless of the size of the waves, it’s waters demand the upmost respect; with the amount of water moving in and out of the San Francisco Bay on a daily basis extremely strong currents are the rule rather than the exception.