



The surf's up in Ucluelet!

By AMY HANCOCK

It feels as though you are sitting right on the horizon. You float on the water, perched on your surfboard looking out into the forever of the open Pacific Ocean. The air is as fresh as it gets as you listen to the sound of breaking waves between you and the sandy shore. Then you see a line of smooth waves come in from the outside. It's a set.

The first wave rolls under you. Bobbing over it you catch a smile from the surfer beside you. The second wave is approaching and she gives you a nod. This wave is for you to catch!

Pointing your board towards the shore you watch the wave over your shoulder and start to paddle into position. Suddenly you feel the wave pick up your board. You know the time is right when you push down on your board with your hands and quickly pop onto your feet.

It feels like you are cutting through glass as your board carries you along the smooth green wall of the wave. Gently, you peel down the line and in this moment you are completely one with nature. The exhilaration that comes with being moved by the greatest force of nature on earth makes you feel as big as the ocean itself! The shoulder of the wave crumbles into white wash behind you. Your free ride to the shore is nearly complete.

What a feeling! When you get off the wave the first thing you do is turn your board back towards the horizon and start paddling out passed the break to catch another wave ... and another one ... and another. They told you that once you catch your first wave, even if it is a small one, you will be hooked. They were right, and now you are a Vancouver Island surfer!

It sounds awesome doesn't it? Have you ever been surfing before? You might think that it is an activity set aside for the elite group of hardcore sports and adventure seekers, but it is not. Regardless of your age, size, fitness level, or experience, surfing is an activity that can be (and maybe even should be!) enjoyed by everyone.

Surfing in Ucluelet on the west coast of Vancouver Island is quickly becoming a favourite activity for locals and an exciting draw for visitors from all over Vancouver Island, the Mainland and even abroad. The along this section of the coast beaches are frequently chosen locations for surf com-



On the west coast of Vancouver Island, it's possible to surf year-round, and Ucluelet's beaches present perfect waves for surfers of all ability levels.

Top: Surfing Barkley Sound

Right: Surfing is an activity that can be enjoyed by everyone in the family.

Above: Surf lessons are available to help everyone become a Vancouver Island surfer

Photos courtesy Tourism Ucluelet



petitions, both professional and amateur. The Pacific Rim National Park Reserve boasts kilometres of untouched surf swept beaches. With several surf spots to choose from located just a few moments from Ucluelet, there are waves breaking for every level of surfer.

Florencia Bay, Wickaninnish Beach, and Long Beach offer a selection of safe beach breaks year round. In most cases, beginner surfers will be able to find smaller waves close to shore every month of the year. For those who are more advanced surfers, all three of these beaches can also pump out big surf, especially in the fall and winter months.

These beaches are affected by marine weather and wind differently. This means that a wind direction, or certain swell can create different waves at each beach. While one beach may be producing messy waves, another just down the road could be sheltered and clean. How will you know which beach is breaking best?

Ucluelet has several outfits

offering surf board and gear rentals, surfing lessons, and they are always up-to-date with the latest surfing conditions. Check in with one of the surf shops and they can give you insider tips and the latest report, sending you directly to the best waves based on what you are after.

Surf lessons with experienced instructors head to the beach daily, showing visitors of all ages and skill levels the basics of catching and riding waves, including safety instructions and local knowledge. Surf lessons are available year round. You can book a private lesson or a group lesson. Most shops provide packages that include your lesson, gear, and sometimes your ride to the beach. It is guaranteed you will have a great time in the water and it is very likely you will catch waves on your first day!

If it is not your first time surfing, you are feeling confident and want to paddle out on your own, be sure to check the surf shop for local weather and surf reports. Not only will they help you with a wet suit and board rentals, they will point you towards the right

beach depending on that day's conditions and answer any questions you might have.

In the winter months, intermediate surfers should ask a local surf shop about the reef breaks located in Barkley Sound. In ideal conditions these breaks produce clean and consistent sets that come towards the shore in glassy lines. When the swell is up an advanced surfer can expect double, even triple overhead waves and even might ride through a barrel or two.

So what are you waiting for? Visit Ucluelet, go for a paddle, and catch yourself some waves. When you are standing on the beach after an afternoon in the ocean, look out into the water once last time. Taste the salt water on your lips and breathe in the fresh, salty air. You are now part of a small group of western Canadians that have found a way to connect with nature, stay active and have an absolute blast doing so!

Your surfing holiday is closer than you think. Surf on the Edge in Ucluelet and discover that you are, after all, a Vancouver Island surfer!

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