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U.S. Surfing

# The Best North American Beginner Surf Spots

Northeast

By Ben Marcus

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Gary Kohner, the brains behind *Horny for Surf*, catches a break off Nantucket. (Christian del Rosario-Nantucket Island Surf School)

### Robert Moses State Park—Long Island, New York

**Surf Report:** The break near the Field 5 parking lot is newbie-perfect in summer.

**Scene:** Gothamites escaping the heat (you're just 48 miles from Manhattan) and, in August, hundreds of (mostly) benign jellyfish.

**Bonus:** Great angling for striped bass.

**Wax Run:** Bunger Surf Shop, 800-698-7873 [www.bungersurf.com](http://www.bungersurf.com)

### Sea Isle City—New Jersey

**Surf Report:** Seventy-five miles from Philadelphia, off the Garden State Parkway, and over the marshlands on Route 625, Sea Isle City looks southeast into the Atlantic Ocean, soaks up whatever energy is out there, and spreads it over long, sandy beach breaks that are perfect for beginners.

**Scene:** Bustling all summer, with visitors from Delaware and Pennsylvania banging rails with the local rogues. Lots of accents, people, and attitude.

**Bonus:** Sea Isle is one of the only shore communities to establish a surfing beach every block or so. With several surfing beaches spread out throughout the town, crowds aren't as much a problem.

**Wax Run:** Heritage Surf and Sport, 609-263-3033, [www.heritagesurf.com](http://www.heritagesurf.com)

### Nantucket—Massachusetts

**Surf Report:** There are 14 miles of beach breaks on Nantucket's south-facing shore that pick up any hint of south windswell when much of New England is flat. The surf is easy, with rolling beach break waves along the south shore, and proximity to the Gulf Stream means water temps close to 70 in the summer.

**Scene:** Think of the beaches in the movie *Jaws*, (no, not the shark attack part). Kind of like that, but 30 years later and a lot more surfers. Beautiful girls in the summer and the occasional celebrity or two at the beach.

**Bonus:** Check out the local surf video *Horny for Surf* to see Nantucket at its best, year around. Fine dining all around the island and all the charm it's known for.



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**Wax Run:** Force 5 Watersports, 508-228-0700, [www.force5watersports.com](http://www.force5watersports.com); Nantucket Island Surf School, 508-560-1020, [www.surfack.com](http://www.surfack.com); Nantucket Surfari Surf Camp, 508.228.1235, [www.nantucketsurfari.com](http://www.nantucketsurfari.com); Indian Summer/Upper Deck, 508-228-3632

### Coast Guard Beach, Cape Cod National Seashore—Massachusetts

**Surf Report:** Nearly 400 years ago, the *Mayflower* crew first sighted land here after 65 days at sea. Now it's a family beach that fills with visitors at the height of summer. Onshore and sideshore breezes during bouts of hot weather push temps as high as 70 degrees and the waves tend to be mushy and forgiving. If the wind blows hard offshore, cold water is pulled from the deep and temperatures can drop to 50 degrees overnight.

**Scene:** Beginners, longboarders, spongers, skimboarders. Restrooms and showers are available but no food. In season regular shuttles make the one-mile run from the Little Creek parking lot to the beach. **Bonus:** Intermediate surfers can head just one mile north to Nauset Light Beach for faster, more hollow waves.

**Wax Run:** Pump House Surf Co., 508-240-2226, [www.pumphousesurf.com](http://www.pumphousesurf.com); Nauset Sports, Orleans, MA, 508-255-4742, [www.nausetsports.com](http://www.nausetsports.com)

### Narragansett Town Beach—Rhode Island

**Surf Report:** Only seven miles from the University of Rhode Island and 14 from Newport, Town Beach is a beautiful stretch of white sand backed by a wildlife refuge. Local instructor Peter Pan has been teaching surfing since 1978 and recommends the easy-breaking, mostly sand-bottom rights and lefts. Facing southeast, Town Beach is protected from the wind and there is almost always something to ride. Ideal for beginners: long, rolling waves with a fairly-easy-to-paddle-out lineup.

**Scene:** Narragansett Town Beach is the mecca of New England surfing. No real localism at all. Surfers come from three surrounding states to catch waves here.

**Bonus:** Lots of room to spread out. Relief from intense inland summer humidity, typical to New England with enough local flavor to give you a complete New England experience.

**Wax Run:** Gansett Juice Surf Shop, 401-789-7890, [www.gansettjuice.com](http://www.gansettjuice.com);

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*Wetsuit-clad surfers wait to catch a low-tide break at North Beach. (Rodd Halstead)*

### North Beach—New Hampshire

**Surf Report:** The Wall on Hampton's North Beach is so-called because of the 1.5-mile-long concrete seawall that extends from Boars Head north to Plaice Cove. With a wide, sandy bottom, the beach has a few exposed rocks at low tide and gets washy at high tide, but the waves here are generally long, easy, and forgiving—ideal for beginners.

**Scene:** New Englanders cherish summer and make the most of every hour of every day and that makes for a jumping beach scene. More experienced surfers go elsewhere, so the Wall is set aside for beginners.

**Bonus:** During winter storms, "Wall-Nuts" risk drenching and death putting the Wall between them and massive waves that batter the coast.

**Wax Run:** Cinnamon Rainbows Surf Company, 603-929-7467, [www.cinnamonrainbows.com](http://www.cinnamonrainbows.com)

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*Post surf, hit Ocean City's famous boardwalk for crab cakes and a cold one.  
(Ocean City CVB)*

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### **Ocean City—Maryland**

**Surf Report:** Situated on a barrier island in the middle of more than 100 miles of beach breaks from Assateague Island, Virginia, in the south to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, in the north, if you can't find your own peak here, you might want to take up snowboarding. During summer months, the pacified Atlantic offers small and easy rolling waves up until hurricane season.

**Scene:** A tourist town packed with people from June through Labor Day. Learning to surf in Ocean City can be intimidating at times due to the crowds, so making the 15 minute drive south to Assateague Island is well worth it if you catch the right tide.

**Bonus:** There is always something to do if the waves are flat. Great fishing, boating, wind surfing, jet skiing, parasailing. Surfing continues to grow through the area, and there are a growing number of locals who can rip.

**Wax Run:** K-Coast Surf Shop, 410-723-3330, [www.kcoast.com](http://www.kcoast.com); 24-hour surf report 410-524-SOUL; O.C. Groms Surf School, 443-880-0905

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