



the Aleutian Islands gets great surf. I spent a long time obsessed with finding and mapping spots and understanding what brought them to life. After a time, though, this feeling wore off, and the destination became less important. I began to realize that perfection can be found anywhere, and depends on what you make of it. I would always be happier finding a wave with nobody around over a perfect, congested peak. If I surf with too many other people, I get distracted, and so now I covet weird waves, sometimes going to ridiculous lengths to experience them. It is a lonely pursuit, but a rewarding one, at least for me. Taking this approach has led me to extraordinary corners of the U.K. coastline and beyond, where I have come to understand the importance of truly appreciating the wonders of the ocean.

I have a lot of influences, including Irish surfer Easkey Britton, one of the most inspirational people I've met, who brings so much learning and experience from outside the surfing realm and applies it to her journey on the waves. Then there's Constantine Bay local and perennial traveler Neil Erskine, who has been my biggest inspiration for decades, and lives a simple life based around time in the ocean. He has a level of commitment and curiosity that makes most surfers look like dilettantes, myself included, and shows that if you really love something, you will make the necessary sacrifices.

In the beginning, surfing in cold water can feel impossible. Where I learned it was freezing cold in the winter and flat in the summer, and made wetsuits seem as if they were made of cardboard. I don't even think there were wetsuit gloves. Modern gear makes things much easier now, but my first piece of advice is to get a good suit, and then an appropriate board. Many people want to surf exactly on the same kind of board John John Florence surfs on, but it is generally better to start with volume and length and work your way down. Like surfing anywhere, it is important to make sure you understand the water a bit before you paddle out. Understanding basic ocean safety is an essential first step when surfing alone. Learn your comfort zone, respect the water and the other people in it. Above all else, recognize how lucky you are to have found this precious thing. Almost 30 years into my journey, I often find myself out there in the wind and rain still marveling at my good fortune. ○



Wild, rugged, and untamed, Norway's Lofoten Islands provide one of the most dramatic backdrops for cold-water surfing, with the beaches sometimes covered in snow and the sound of seabirds in the air.