

Italy

Where the delicious roots of Western culture meet the sea

Italians have an uncanny ability for making masterpieces of the mundane. This is evident in the simplicity of Italy's national dish, *pasta al pomodoro*, the most perfectly comforting balance of tomatoes, pasta, and olive oil. And it is true of surf culture, elevated with Italian style and flair. What could be more memorable than alternating between surfs and meandering the storied streets of Rome?

Now is a fascinating time to witness the blossoming of a distinctly Italian take on surf culture, as it catches hold along the nearly 5,000 miles (8,047 kilometers) of the peninsula's coastline. Even during prime surf season, the Mediterranean is known for being fickle, but the rising intensity of climate change means that oceans and seas will warm, primed for increased surf action. Italy may emerge as a major surf destination of the future.

Wind swell is the primary source of wave action, and the short fetch of the Mediterranean means that the surf is usually smaller and user-friendly, though bigger surf isn't unheard of at more exposed beaches, like those on Sardinia's west coast. While its coastline boasts plenty of potential surf set-ups, from pointbreaks on Italy's islands, like Sicily and Sardinia, to slabs and abundant beachbreaks along the Mediterranean coast, it really is the culture of Italy that makes it so special. It is a sensuous one that still values the handcrafted and the well-made items that adorn our daily lives.

Community, and especially family, are core values of Italian surfing. Traveling surfers often find deep familiarity in the Italian proclivity for quality of life; where work fits in around family life, friends, eating, and surfing, not the other way around.

The Tuscan coastline is considered the heart of Italian surfing, as well as a center for organic farming. And though its beaches are known for being high density, the cold mistral winds that bring bigger surf also send beachgoers packing. ■

01 Italy's thousands of miles of coastline mean that there's no shortage of set-ups when swell arrives.

