Oregon Surf Break Exposure and Cold-Water Wetsuit Thickness Chart

Companion Reference Sheet for: Oregon Surf Beaches: Compare Breaks and Coastal Conditions
Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. Verify local conditions and manufacturer specs before use.

Key Takeaways

- **What is the best surf beach in Oregon?** There is no single best choice for every surfer. Pacific City, Short Sand, and the south coast each offer different settings, and the best option depends on the day's conditions and your experience.
- **Which spots are better for beginners?** Look for smaller, more manageable surf, a clear route back to shore, and a lineup that matches your ability. A beach's reputation does not make every swell or tide suitable for a new surfer.
- **How should you compare breaks?** A beach break changes with its sandbars, while point, reef, and jetty breaks are shaped by headlands, rock, or built structures.
- **What should you check before paddling out?** Compare the surf forecast and buoy report with wind and tide information, then watch the water from shore.
- **Where can you compare coastal options?** Browse the Oregon beaches listed for surfing alongside location and access details.
- **What belongs in your gear plan?** Bring a wetsuit suited to the water and session, plus the layers and supplies you need to stay warm before and after surfing.

Know the Break Types Before You Choose a Beach

Coastal area and beach	Known setting and access details	Surf comparison and planning notes
North coast, Short Sand Beach	A cove in Oswald West State Park, reached by a scenic 10 minute forest trail.	The trail is part of the trip plan, and assess the surf on arrival to decide whether it suits your ability.
Central coast, Pacific City Beach	A wide, sandy shore with a large dune and dory fishing boats that launch directly from the beach.	A known surfing destination. Give boat activity and other beach users room, and assess the surf zone independently of the beach's popularity.
Central coast, Neskowin Beach	A quiet shore with the Ghost Forest and Proposal Rock visible or accessible at low tide.	Tide changes affect shoreline walking routes. Assess conditions at Neskowin independently of nearby Pacific City, even when both beaches appear calm from the road.
North coast, Manzanita Beach	A 7 mile stretch of sand with views of Neahkahnie Mountain, described as less crowded than many popular Oregon beaches.	The wide shoreline offers room for a beach visit, but crowd levels do not predict wave conditions. Inspect the surf and currents before entering.

Know the Break Types Before You Choose a Beach

A **beach break** forms where waves break over sandbars. Its shape can change as sand shifts, so a familiar beach may have a different takeoff zone, channel, or closing section from one visit to the next.

A **point break** wraps along a point of land, while a **reef break** breaks over rocky or reef structure. A **jetty break** forms around a jetty and nearby sand, where currents and rocks can add hazards.

Those names describe how a wave forms, not how safe or easy it is. A sheltered looking cove can still have strong surf, and a sandy beach can have powerful currents. Check the break in front of you rather than relying on a label.

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