

**Below: Surfer Zach Humphreys in Bay Head.**

**Right: The New Jersey Surf Museum at Tuckerton Seaport.**



Jill Ocone



Ray Hallgreen

While the Jersey Shore might be known as the best vacation spot along the Eastern seaboard with its boardwalks and miles of pristine beaches, there's a unique element to the shore that locals have embraced for decades. With its sweet swells, beautiful breaks, and laid-back lifestyle, Jersey's coastline has inspired and driven a surf culture like no other in the country.

Surfing dates back to more than 4,000 years ago when islanders in the South Pacific floated on logs or reed bunches to travel from place to place. The father of modern-day surfing, original "Big Kahuna" Duke Kahanamoku, laid the foundation for New Jersey surfing in 1912 when he took to the waves off Atlantic City on his longboard. The five-time Olympic swimming medalist left an indelible footprint along the Jersey Shore as he started the movement that popularized surfing worldwide.

Surfing in New Jersey is unique for a number of reasons, one being its long-standing anonymity among the national and international surfing scenes. "The fact that New Jersey has some of the best surfing in the world surprises most," said Dr. William "Doc" Rosenblatt, cofounder of the Jersey Shore Surfrider Foundation chapter and cultivator of the 2013 TedX Talk titled *Surprises about Surfing in New Jersey*. "During the 1960s, media and films focused on the southern California and Hawaii surf scenes. It wasn't really until

Jersey surfers traveled out of state and hit the waves with that Jersey attitude that, little by little, Jersey surfers and its surf scene started to gain respect," he said.

The Jersey Shore surf scene today encompasses a lot more than scraping for a ride on a post-storm-swelled break at one of many iconic sweet surf spots. The unique culture that has evolved includes surfers as well as surf photographers and videographers, surf artists and writers, summer surf camps up and down the coast for all ages, surf festivals and music, lingo and fashion trends, and a whole lot of locals on dawn patrol no matter what the season or the temperature.

The short jetties and sandbars along the beaches in Monmouth and Ocean counties translate into awesome breaks and steady swells at the Jersey Shore, especially after approaching weather systems send in the larger wave sets. Ironically enough, the best waves typically arrive outside of the summer season.

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