History of Gold Coast surfing

In less than a century, the Gold Coast has evolved from a string of seaside villages to one of the most famous holiday destinations in the world. Much of that growth and success has been built on the city’s reputation as the preferred destination for the world’s surfers.

The Gold Coast’s prime surf conditions were recognised early. By 1917, Queensland’s southern coastal strip was being described as a ‘surfer’s paradise’. In 1933, the township then known as Eliston was officially renamed Surfers Paradise.

The growth in the popularity of surfing during the 1950s and 1960s went hand in hand with the development of the Gold Coast. From Southport to Coolangatta, holiday houses, motels and guesthouses were built to accommodate the droves of visitors wanting to enjoy our coast.

The 1970s saw the development of a strong surfing industry on the Gold Coast, and by 1977, the city was ready to take centre stage when it hosted the Stubbies Surf Classic at Burleigh Heads. This was the first event of the modern world surfing tour which was fittingly won by local surfing legend Michael Peterson.

Since then, surfing has become a huge part of our city’s lifestyle and economy. Our world-famous surf breaks continue to attract international surfers of all ages and skill levels, as well as regularly producing home-grown surfing world champions. The Gold Coast continues to be the home of surfing industry heavyweights, and regularly hosts national and international professional surfing contests.

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