

TRAVEL

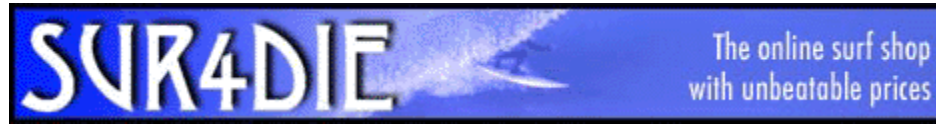
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Florianópolis/Nexussurf.com Trip

If you haven't heard of the island of Florianopolis, Brazil yet, you should look into this place and get yourself familiar. Locals call the place "Floripa" (pronounced flor-ree-pah) and those who have been there know it as "Ilha Magica", or "Magic Island". With high quality consistent surf year round, great weather, tropical temps, some of the best beaches in the world, natural Brazilian beauty everywhere you look, the best parties, the best food anywhere, and some of the best looking people in the world, it's hard to argue for a better place to take your next surf trip. Just about 100% of the people that travel to the Magic Island come back totally stoked and if you've been there before then you're probably used to hearing the same thing from everyone that is on their way home after the trip..."I'm bailing SoCal and moving to this place".



I've spent about one year total in Floripa over the last 5 years. When one of my closest friends called me from down there 5 years ago in February and said "It's overhead every day and going off here. Just

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pack some trunks, flip-flops, shorts and t-shirts and forget your board. Brand new boards are \$150 US here so just pick one up down here, and get on the plane". I gave the typical response of "I can't get off of work and where is this place again?" Two days later he mailed me a ticket and instructions for me to easily get my Brazil Visa in L.A. I bailed from work for a week, got on the flight, and ended up staying an entire month. My work had to send someone down there to bring me back home...and then he stayed a week too.



Floripa is a free standing island located just off the coast of Southern Brazil. It's connected by a one mile freeway bridge to the continent. The easiest way to get there is to book flights on Varig Airlines (www.varig.com). All US Airlines fly to Brazil. The most popular Varig route is LAX to Sao Paulo (GRU) to Floripa (FLN). It takes 11 hours from LA to Sao Paulo and then just a quick 45 minute flight to Floripa from there. The flights run about \$800 - \$1200 US depending upon when you go and all the planes are totally comfortable full sized jets. Here are a few travel tips. Fly midweek to save money and get more open seats on the plane to stretch out. Also, get a window seat on the left side of the plane from Sao Paulo to Floripa. As you're on approach and you look out the window, you'll already know you chose the right place to go to.



One of the first things I quickly learned on my first trip there was the gift to all Americans that is the "currency exchange rate". Bars are open all night there so my first night out we went at it pretty hard at this killer ocean view indoor/outdoor nightclub called Latitude. When I woke up the next morning, I had the \$35 receipt that covered the ENTIRE tab for 4 people all night long. Cut your wallet in half down there because one US dollar gets you 2 to 3 Brazilian dollars. You get higher quality food, killer entertainment, the same quality clothing, and more for 50 to 65% off what we pay here at home. You cannot beat that deal anywhere. You can exchange your US dollars at the airport when you get there.



The island is deceptively big but also totally peaceful. It's only 20 miles wide by 50 miles long but 350,000 laid back and insanely good looking people call it their permanent home Everything in Florida

stimulates your senses and is visually overwhelming. You're going to find yourself pretty hypnotized on a daily basis by the endless surf, the natural beauty, the clean beaches, the clean sand, the water color, and most of all, pretty much all Brazilian women...in small clothing... everywhere. I mean everywhere. You don't need to hit the beach or the clubs to check out this scenery. Just walk outside of where you're staying and take in the show...bus stops, gas stations, malls, restaurants...they're just walking the streets all day long, every day. It helps that there are 7 girls for every 3 guys in Floripa. Of those 7 girls, 75% or more of them are your type. Trust me on this. It's 100% guaranteed.



Floripa is a rare and unique combination of modern sophistication and tropical tranquility. Think the island of Oahu and replace the reefs with beach breaks. There's a large downtown area like Honolulu with tall buildings, modern apartments, killer views of water everywhere and big shopping centers with all the modern stores and movie theatres. The remainder of the island is spread out just like Oahu with 42 killer clean beaches with most all sand bottom breaks, and year round peaky swells out of the Atlantic. Because it's an island, it can be blowing onshore at one spot and then it's offshore at another spot just 20 minutes away. You can surf a different spot, virtually un-crowded, every day of your trip. Water temps average 65 to 70 in the winter and 70 to 80 in summer. I've put on the 3/2 only one time there and it wasn't even a full. A cold summer day at Porto is their winter water temp with some rare isolated exceptions during big storms. On or close to most breaks on the island there are little towns nearby where you can stay in Pousadas (tropical island hotels), rent houses, or just grab some of the best healthy seafood and a glass of almost freezing Skol (one of the best beers in Brazil). Even if you stay in a Pousada or rent a house in a small town at a break, you're never even more than 20 minutes from nightlife. Restaurants and bars are spread out really well all over the island so you can get that rare combination of a killer day at the beach where it's pretty secluded and peaceful, you get to have a normal shower and siesta and then it's just a quick ride to go out at night. This is a rare combo to find when leaving town for waves. Usually, if you get the surf, you don't get the modern conveniences

and if you get the modern conveniences, you usually sacrifice the surf. In Floripa, you get it all.



In the US, ESPN shows daily highlights of the NFL, NBA, MLB and NHL. In Southern Brazil and more specifically Floripa, the main sports are Soccer, Surfing, and UFC and not in that particular order. The surf gets as much coverage there on the radio and news as we get here in L.A. when Kobe drains over 50 against the Heat. In Floripa, most of the guys rip and rightfully so. They get to surf year round beach break peaks with many beaches that have some punch and get consistently hollow over constantly shifting sandbars due to quick weather changes. Floripa hosts a ton of surf competitions each year, including the only WCT stop in all of South America at the end of October each year. It's common to see Slater, Irons and other tour vets out at the club at night after a long day of surf during October.



Some popular spots on the island include Praia Mole, Galheta, Mocambique, Santinho, Brava, and Joaquina. Size is very similar to SoCal at all the spots. Praia Mole is home to WCT events and it's by far the place to be seen. Like on many Floripa beaches, there's a few kickback bars on the beach to grab some really good food and drinks and watch all the action. There's about 1/2 mile of powerful peaks up and down the beach, endless visuals of Brazilian girls hanging out all day long, and the most festive vibe in Floripa when on vacation. It can get crowded here on weekends but if you hit it during the week just after the Brazilian summer, you've got a great shot at un-crowded barrels to yourself. Next to Mole is Galheta. You take a quick 10 minute hike on a path around a small point just north and you'll get super long lefts and rights that break into the middle of a big bay, totally un-crowded. Aside from the short hike, you've also got a little of the Blacks element there in San Diego hanging out in seclusion if you get my drift. They don't go in the water so you're ok to drop in on 200 yard rides in safety. Mocambique is a place that has every element of the perfect surf experience. It's 2 miles of white sand beach without buildings or paved roads, see through water, photo ops everywhere, and waves so far down the beach that the entire island can find their own peak if they wanted. Santinho and Brava are 2 more pristine beach breaks 20 minutes toward the north side of the island, they can easily hold up to double overhead with shape and juice, and they are rarely crowded during the non summer months. Santinho has a killer vacation resort there and both places have good accommodations, close to nightlife, and great places to eat. As always on every beach, there is the Brazilian scenery. Joaquina is a popular left peak that bowls and breaks off of rock formations and is one of the more crowded spots on the island. Locals prefer this spot. But, like most of Floripa, there's always a good thing to every beach. Start walking south of this peak and you've got 2 more miles of un inhabited beach break with more rights and lefts. Aside from surf specifically on the island, there are a dozen other quick surf destinations on the continent, just a short drive of less than an hour to

all the spots. Each spot has its own character, nightlife, typical Brazilian scenery, and good accommodations.



For the rare days that you're surfed out, have to entertain the sand you brought to the beach, or you're just into culture, there's tons of other stuff to do on the island. The city happens to be an action sports capital and there's 3 large lagoas (lakes) on the island. You can rent motorcycles, you can go kite surfing, sand dune boarding, paragliding, kayaking, wind surfing, and snorkeling. You can also take a river rafting trip and there's horseback riding on the beach too. For those of you that didn't bring the sand to the beach, another great thing to do is grab a bunch of the Brasilieras (Brazilian girls) you met the night before at the bar and rent a boat that takes quick 30 minute trips to little deserted islands off the coast of the main island. You can chill on white sand beaches there, hike to waterfalls, swim in crystal clear water, or just bring some cervejas (Brazilian beer) and your IPOD and have your own little festa (party). Brazilians live for parties, food and music. If you've brought your significant other, take her on a tour the historical city center, take a Portuguese lesson or two, and of course, take her shopping at one of the huge US-like malls to remind you of home.



I'm fortunate enough to be dialed in when I'm in Floripa. My girlfriend was born and raised there, I've learned to speak Portuguese, and it's another world down there that's become my second home away from all the things many of us don't like about having to paddle out at Porto on any given day of slop after watching any recent surf DVD to get fired up to get wet. I say toss the DVD's, check out Floripa, and get the real thing.

Since most of you probably aren't fortunate enough to have had the "in" that I have to Floripa, there's a great way for you to get the total experience that I have from a short trip down there. There are two US native SoCal guys that live full time in Floripa and run a first class, top of the line travel experience called NEXUS SURF (www.nexussurf.com). Both guys and their entire Nexus English speaking staff are super cool locals and surfers, professional and detail oriented, and basically do everything they can to make sure you get everything you want out of the trip to Floripa and you walk away planning to come back. So far, 100% of their clients have said they're coming back.

Nexus has set up a Floripa trip the right way. Unlike many other surf-travel vacations that promise "paradise" and give you "survivor", this is the real thing. We all know that getting surf is all timing and luck so if you save your dough, roll the dice on a "surf adventure" and you get skunked, it's not very cool if you took time off work to roll the dice. With Nexus Surf in Floripa, you're GOING to get waves, and there's nothing "survivor" about it. Whether you want to stay in a 5 star modern high rise or a tropical beachfront paradise with plenty of hammocks, Nexus will set you up. The Nexus guides take you to all the best spots that have the best conditions for that day. The guides will take beginners to the right spots and for the rest of us "experienced" guys, Nexus offers daily guided surf trips to every break on or around the island, including boat trips to the lesser known and hard to find breaks only reachable by boat where it's never crowded.

Nexus also has connections locally with the organizers and operators of the WCT, WQS and other local surf competitions, so any time there's a surf event, Nexus clients can be backstage in the booth or out at the victory after parties. Finally, Nexus can setup other details for you that you won't find on other trips such as surf photographers to come out in the water with you and take shots. Nexus also has a deal to get you new boards at discounts from Tropical Brasil, Brazil's version of Channel Islands.

Because Nexus offers a complete vacation package, they don't just finish with you after a long day of surf. Nexus continues to host the trip at night for you. Every night on the island, usually one or two different nightly spots go off year round. Nexus takes you through the night, all VIP. Transportation, no lines, no cover charges, reserved tables, introductions to locals and Nexus guides hang with you during the night.

Aside from taking you to great surf, hosting great nightlife, and providing great accommodations, Nexus can get you setup with a few more cool things including wireless internet, U.S. phone lines, big screen TV's, houses with pools, and more. They can hook you up with rental cars if you want to be more independent and check things out on your own, breakfast service delivery in your house each morning, and local cell phones to stay in touch with people you meet on the island and the Nexus staff.

All the info you need can be found at www.nexussurf.com. They can even help you with finding low cost and fast itinerary flights to Brazil. If you want to be more independent and just cruise down to explore on your own, check out www.floripavacationhomes.com for really good and reliable accommodation packages run by one of the same SoCal guys.

MD, www.swellmagnet.com's own surf doctor gets regular updates on Floripa from me so talk to him about the experience as he's on his way down there with Nexus for his next trip out of Porto. You simply will not have a bad time on a Nexus trip to Floripa. Bring your digital camera and the biggest memory card you can find. You're going to blow up the memory on that thing from the minute you look out the window on the left side of the plane as you're on approach to FLN airport. And if you end up bringing a Brazilian girlfriend back to the US with you, I'm gonna say I told you so.

Boas Ondas!
(Good Surf)

Article by Michael Roth pictures courtesey of nexussurf.com

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