



ROAD LESS RIDDEN

A DIGITAL SURF MAGAZINE

BOCAS DEL TORO

A journey into Panama's
Caribbean gem.

CANARY ISLANDS

A strike mission to one of
Europe's best waves.

GERMANY

Chasing novelty in central
Europe.



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Welcome.

Hello, and welcome to the first-ever edition of Road Less Ridden. (A free digital surf magazine). First, I want to say thank you! Thank you for finding and consuming my content. Whether you found me on YouTube, Google Search, or Social Media, I hope the information has helped make your next surf trip happen.

If it has in any way, then I am stoked and can rest easy! This free digital surf magazine is just a thank you. Whenever and however you consume my content, it helps me make more content, and the more content I make, the more I can help you get more waves in more places. So enjoy, be inspired, and dive into a couple of stories from yours truly...



A CARIBBEAN DREAM

By Dan Harmon

It's a wonderful feeling; pacing your way through the jungle, board under each arm, a backpack full of snacks, howler monkeys overhead before the sun has even broken the horizon. It's the addictive anticipation that keeps us all addicted to this "sport" we call surfing.

My legs are burning from the 45-minute walk, and the heat is already in the in the high 20s. It's 5.00 am, still dark, but I push on using my phone torch to illuminate the path ahead. With the thick jungle canopies covering any moonlight, darkness in the jungle is always particularly black.

The darkness and monkey's howls add to my pre-surf nerves. But more than anything I am excited. Excited to surf a wave I'd been dreaming of for years. The wave in question is a pristine beach break, we're talking lushes 3-4 a-frame barrels unfolding onto sand, mere metres from the shore—my wet dream.

As I push on, I can hear waves breaking through the trees and the path winds its way ever closer to the patch of sand I'm chasing.

It's getting light, and I can make out whitewater between the palms. I can hear breaking waves and begin to dream up visions of myself slipping under the hood of those oh-so-lovely shore-break wedges.

Twilight is now in full swing, and as I reach the point where the thick jungle foliage gives way to sand, I'm greeted by a long stretch of beach and the Caribbean sea.

I walk out onto the sand and am greeted with shore break breaking straight onto the sand. Shit, this can't be the main peak! I look to my left and the beach stretches for maybe a mile northward, and so I begin marching down the sand, on close lookout for those tepee shaped lines.

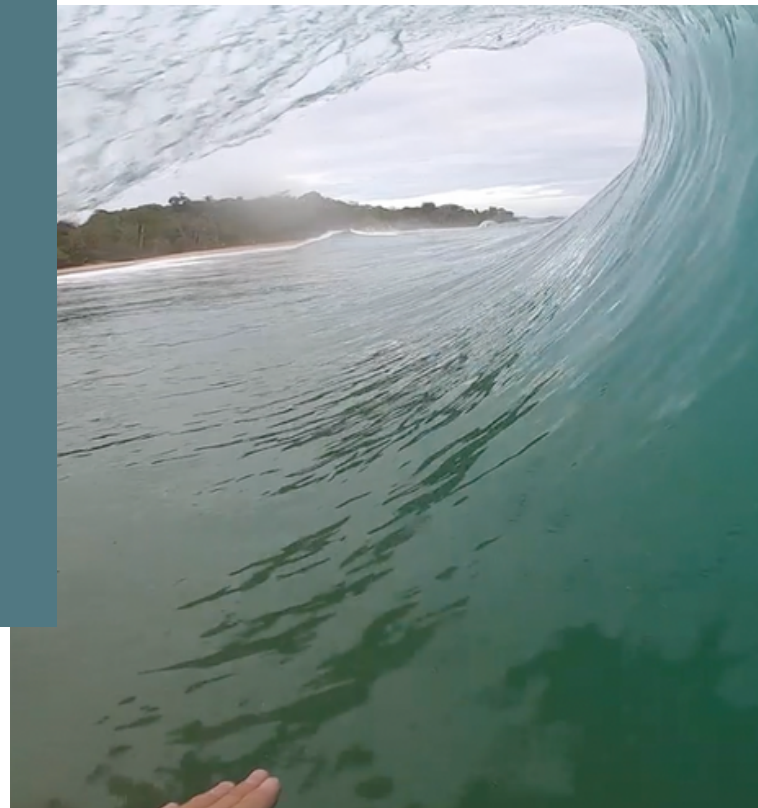
I walk, and walk and the sun is breaching the horizon. I can make out some rights a few peaks down the beach and I see what I think is spray coming out from inside of the tube. You can always tell "spit spray" as it flows out the back of the wave and dissipates. I plod on and sit down in front of where I think the next set will break.

I hasten my walking speed into a run as I see another set approaching, it's still dark, and no one is out; I am now running, shouting down the beach, hollering and cheering, making profanities in childlike excitement.

The next wave of the set rears up into tantalizing wedge—the shape we dream of. The first one is a perfect a frame, right and left—both spit at exactly the same time. I'd arrived!



3-4ft a-frames unloading onto the sand.



I hurry to wax up, whip on my boardies, and slap some sunscreen on my nose, intending to surf until I can't anymore. A couple of guys are paddling out down the beach, but my peak remains empty.

It's a flawless Caribbean morning; zero wind, glassy ocean, a salmon sky, and temps already comfortable for shorts only, even at dawn. As the first set approaches, I swing around, push my chin into the nose of my board, and take off; as I pop up, the wave drops out from beneath me. I must abort. I am forced to jump into the trough a few feet beneath me. Damn it.

I come up, take a set on the head, paddle the 5 meters or so back out to the line-up and take off again, this time a little more behind the peak. This time around, I make the drop, but as I pull up underneath the lip, the wave clips my head, and I am drilled into the sand. Shaken but not yet stirred, I paddle back out for more, this time with a different approach.

This time, I sit behind the peak and take off where traditionally, in non-barrelling waves, you'd position to go left, only I would be going right. I hoped this approach would position me in the optimum spot to drive duck under the lip, drive through the tube and make it to safety. Not air drop from the apex.

The third set of the morning approaches; the sun is up, and I can feel the heat kissing my back. I turn, take a few strokes, breathe deeply, push my nose down with my chin, pop up, look right, and knife the rail of my board into the face of a gaping wide face, a perfect A-frame with a clear view of the exit. The view is beautiful, round, and green, and I hear the rushing sound you only feel inside the barrel—a feeling to which I am not a good enough writer to find the words for.

The ride is over before I even realize what's happened, but I'm in the channel, and someone on the opposite peak is throwing a shaka. Success this time. Once I learned my lesson in taking off behind the peak, I got used to surfing waves of this nature, and alongside a few more wipeouts, I spent the morning ducking in and out of tubes. This is what I'd come here for, and at this moment, it was all coming together. I proceeded to do this for the next 5 hours until the midday onshore started shutting down waves that were previously round and open.

It was in a similar routine that the following six days played out in Bocas Del Toro, and it's the kind of waves you dream of, hollow, and getting steadily more confident in riding them as the week progressed.

But eventually, the swells dropped, my muscle soreness increased, and my boardshort rub became unbearable. I won't even mention the sunburn. By the end of the week, full exhaustion had set in. Sunburned. Surfed out. Stoked. How all good surf trips should be. The following week, the swell backed off and transformed Bocas from a surfer's paradise to a Caribbean lake. I filled my days with true surf athlete recovery, sipping beers, reading, and checking Surfline for when the next installment of tubes would happen.

A week later, another swell was filling into the Caribbean coast. Only, this time, something is different. The sky was dark, it rained more heavily, and my beloved A-frame beach break had turned into a cross-shore, close-out shore break. The change in swell direction and sandbanks had turned last week's wedgy dreams into an un-surfable nightmare.

I was devastated. But at the same time, I felt a sense of gratitude and was grateful that I'd gotten to experience a wave I'd dreamed of for so long in all her glory. The dream was over surf-wise, at least in this part of Central America. The season swell window was nearing close, and I had already achieved what I wanted to come for.

Bocas gave me memories that I will remember forever, and it is, by far, the best beach break I have ever had the pleasure of riding. But for now, it was time to head north. North through Costa Rica, onward to Nicaragua and beyond.



PUERTO ESCONDIDO

01

Get There

Getting to Puerto Escondido is easy! You can fly to Puerto from any major city in Mexico. Check flights [here](#). You can also take the bus from just about anywhere in the country. The bus systems are great throughout the country. I always sue Busbud for bus tickets.

03

Tips

The waves in Puerto are incredibly heavy. Zicatela, the main beachie attraction, is super powerful, shallow, and intimidating.

Crowds - As you'd expect from such a surfer/backpacker hotspot, the crowds are intense at all the spots in Puerto.

02

Stay

There are heaps of accommodation options in Puerto as it's a large town. If you're on a budget but want somewhere wicked to stay, check out [Casa Daikiri](#). It's clean, affordable, and just a 2-minute walk from Playa Zicatela. Alternatively, stay at [Selina](#), another epic hostel for digital nomads and surfers.

04

Costs

Dorm room at Daikiri - \$12 per night

Flight Mexico City - Puerto \$300

Beer and Tacos \$6-7

01

Playa Zicatela

Playa Zicatela is Puerto's main draw. A heaving beach break that draws big-wave madmen and tube-hungry travelers every year. Super heavy, shallow, handles swell, and a place where you could get the wave of your life.

02

La Punta

If you're after something less adrenaline-inducing, check out La Punta, a super fun left-point break at the southern headland of Puerto. However, the point's forgiving nature means crowds!

03

Playa Carazillo

If you're a beginner, head to Carazillo, a super forgiving left reef that's perfect for beginners learning to ride unbroken waves. The beach is also stunning!



GO THERE

PUERTO ESCONDIDO

THRILL OF THE CHASE.



I'm standing, feet in the dust, placed perfectly between a scattering of sharp rock pebbles, the horrible volcanic rocks that dominate the coast here. The sun is touching my shoulders, not too hot, not too cold, just perfect. I pull out a block of Sex Wax and begin rubbing it into my 5'9 Mayhem, which is smudging because I have been too lazy to remove the wax after far too many sessions.

A 4ft set shapes up out back, angling just a little too wide for the pack. Five empty waves go unriden, and I start waxing, more aptly, eyes on the waves. As the set dissipates, I eye up my line through the maze of rock, stupidly sharp lava reef, tidal pools, and channels, finding where might be the least painful to walk over and which port of entry would give me the least opportunity for stacking it.

The wave in question is one of the best waves in Europe, a perfect, non-scary, rippable right-hander; crowded but perfect azure walls in relatively warm water are the reward for the mission to get to the wave. Another set walls up. The lines begin to hug the contours of the reef and start to unload at the top, then fold over as the line moves down the reef. I tug the rest of the wetsuit and rip the head hole over my head. Ready to go. I hop, skip, and jump over sharp sections of the reef separating me from the oh-so-beautiful peelers. So close, but still so far!



I try to stay calm and pick a route through the reef mazes while keeping an eye on the whitewater walls that just love to knock unwitting foreigners off their feet and humiliate them in front of the whole line-up. While this time I time my jump well, I can't help but think of the many occasions at this same wave where things haven't gone so well, cuts, blood, knocked out fins, dings-Kookslams style. This time I'm lucky and jump, fins first, to begin my paddle out.

It's not my first time to the wave; in fact, I've been here on countless occasions, and it is one of my favorite waves on Earth. I'm yet to have it mastered, far from it, but I love the wave and feel comfortable out there. Two days previously, I was visiting my parents in England's East Midlands, wondering if I should make the call and meet the swell. It was raining and cold, and I hadn't surfed for a week, so despite my less-than-favorable bank balance, it was an easy call. I knew the waves could be pumping, and I had a friend already on the island to eliminate any swell chart-induced. A text was all it took to confirm the waves would indeed be pumping.

The day of the swell was getting closer, now only 24 hours away, so I open Skyscanner and see flight prices for less than \$50. I knew I'd spend the last of my savings, but I couldn't afford to miss surfing one of my favorite waves in the world. The chart had also improved in my favor; bigger swell height, a tad more offshore, and perfect angle.

With a few more swell confirmation texts and accommodation price checks on incognito mode, I was going the next day. With a lift from Mum, I made it to the airport, drank terrible coffee, spent an hour attempting to connect to non-existent wifi, then eventually checked in for my Ryan Air flight. After a board bag sting, of exactly \$68, and four hours on a cramped plane next to a screaming baby and some of the loudest conversations I've ever had the displeasure of hearing, I arrived in Fuerteventura.

4FT REELING RIGHTS.

Upon arrival, there was some confusion with my hire car; by trouble, I mean they gave my car away because my flight was delayed, and I had no way of informing them; I then booked another car in the airport, an out-of-pocket expense putting me dangerously close to my credit card limit. Three hours later than planned, I was on my way, my first time driving a manual on the right side of the road and in the dark. But I made it to the apartment and finally checked in around 11 pm; the waves would be cooking in the morning.

After a few hours of sleep, it was the big day, the day I had come here for. The day of the swell. After meeting with some friends and jumping on the short passenger ferry to the island from which the wave breaks, I find myself standing on the reef.

I jump in, start paddling, and flip my board tail first until I am deep enough so my fins wouldn't scrape the reef. I sneak out back before the next set arrives as hoots and hollas fill the air, VAL! A local calls their mate into the best wave I've seen all morning; it's chaotic, with dozens of surfers, many with questionable surfing ability for a spot of this quality.

I paddle for an inside position, just behind the main pack but inside of the non-local-looking group, in other words, inside from the guys who look like they won't punch me when I snake them, and far enough inside of the ones who do. A few waves come through, for which I'm beaten to the post, but suddenly, someone falls on a set, and I'm next in line.

A beautiful three-foot A-frame stretches down the reef before me. I turn, paddle, and take 6-7 strokes to get to where I need to be to make the wave. I pop up and pump to the top of the waves; I angle down the face, repeating the same motion several times in order to beat the outstretched section before me—driving down the line. I manage to squeeze past it and perform a swooping carve back to the whitewater. I come off the top bottom again, tap the lip, perform a few more cutbacks and kick out before the wave closes out on dry reef. It's a blissful moment.

My joy would be short-lived, though, as the next 4 hours are spent paddling between angry-looking locals, dodging chicks on mals, and trying to stay in surfing incognito mode to avoid being screamed at by an angry Spanish man. I get my share of inside scraps and have a decent surf. Sunburned, surfed out, and stoked, I return to the ferry for some rest, recovery, and an ice-cold beer.

As I get back to the apartment, all stoked and exhausted, I can't believe I'm here; I made it; I successfully made the call, scored waves, linked up with friends, and the waves actually pumped! I won't remember the exact digits in my bank account before that trip, but I'll sure remember those oh-so-perfect blue walls. Thank you, Lobos, and thank you, RyanAir, for taking me there!



BUDGET SURF TRAVEL TIPS

01

Be a Minimalist

Traveling with next to nothing not only makes things easier living out your board bag but there is less potential for losing stuff. It also gets you used to living with less and takes you away from wanting to buy things you don't need.

02

Use These Websites

For flights, I always use [Skyscanner](#). I find they always have the best prices. For accommodation, I flick between [Hostelworld](#) and [Booking.com](#). Booking.com is epic as they offer free cancellation for most bookings.

03

Choose The Right Destination

For budget surf travel, the amount of waves you get for your money depends on location. Choose destinations such as Nicaragua, Ecuador, El Salvador, Indonesia, Mexico and Morocco.

04

Use Buses

For traveling long distances in some countries (particularly South America), I use buses. Overnight buses are an excellent way to tick off transport and accommodation costs for one small ticket price.

WHAT IF YOU COULD TRAVEL THE WORLD AND SURF FULL- TIME?

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OR HAVE RICH PARENTS. WITH A
COMBINATION OF INFORMATION,
PLANNING, BUDGETING, AND ONLINE
SKILLS, YOU CAN TRAVEL, SCORE WAVES
AND THRIVE FINANCIALLY.

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THE NOVELTY FACTOR

MUNICH, GERMANY



CHASING NOVELTY IN THE MIDDLE
OF A LANDLOCKED CITY.

MUNICH, GERMANY

My leg strikes something solid, and my lungs expel the only bit of air they have left, and a jolting pain shoots up my leg. I'm tumbling underwater, being spun around as a scratch at the surface. I come up and take a huge breath. I am now flowing downstream. Fast. The water is carrying me at an alarming rate, so I swim for the river bank while my board is dragging me, pulling me further downstream via the leg rope.

I make it to the edge and attempt to hurl myself onto the concrete wall that runs parallel to the water flow. I try to grip, but as I do, my wetsuit glove slide across a thick layer of ice. I fall back down and attempt the same maneuver again. I slide back down. And again. Third time. In my fourth and last attempt, before I hopelessly surrender myself to defeat and flow forever through a German river, never to be seen again, I make one last effort to pull myself up.

This time, success, but not without a 5-meter belly slide across the ice and the rail of my board slamming into the wall. Rail cracked and exhausted; I lay there for a second. It's at this moment I contemplate why the fuck I'm wearing a 6mm wetsuit, hood, boots, and gloves, lying face down on an icy riverbank in the middle of a snow-covered park in Germany.

I'm here on self-assignment to surf the Esibach. The infamous standing river wave in the heart of Munich; a spectacle that creates one of the most unique surf cultures in the world. I'm here to create content around the joint, but mostly to surf a wave I've been intrigued about for years. And eat Pretzels. The wave is a freezing cold, a fast-flowing lump of water from which an entire surf community has risen in landlocked Munich.

I retrieve my board, catch my breath and limp my way back to the lineup; or should I say jump spot; the concrete wall in front of a bridge, from where the action starts. It's -6 and snowing, and the park which hosts the wave is bright white and a small piece of refuge from an otherwise huge modern city. It's almost unbearably cold. Much too cold to consider putting on a wetsuit to surf a wave that isn't even a wave. As I stagger and slip my way back to the take-off spot, I take a moment to regather my energy, take a few deep breaths and join the queue of five local surfers. River riders, a dedication to surfing I have not yet seen.

Everyone is taking turns jumping in and riding the river, as orderly as you'd expect from the Germans. "IZ Yah First Time Here, Yah?" A local says as I join the queue, "Yes" I respond, "But fuck I can't believe how difficult it is to surf compared to the Ocean". "You are doing very well for your first time yah", he replies. I think he is just being polite. After my first few waves and wipeouts to river floats, I manage to ride the waves for a few seconds and then perform a few little half-turns.

The Eisbach is unlike any wave in the Ocean. The water flows against you, meaning you are not moving with the wave, like in the sea. Instead, you have to maintain your speed with the flow of the river, keep your nose above the rush of water and move across the wave efficiently and with good foot placement to keep your speed. The already difficult task of riding the wave well is made more so by the army of spectators lining the bridge directly in front of the wave. Despite the added pressure and surprising difficulty of the wave, you can't help but enjoy the stadium-like atmosphere of the wave-surrendering yourself to being a beginner again is also pretty cool!

My turn comes around just in time before my fingers start to numb. I jump in and keep my nose above the flow, just about managing to trim across the opposite side of the narrow river; I fade abc left and stand for a second, taking in the moment that I'm actually standing on a wave, in a river, in Germany. Incredible. I take a look up at the bridge to further appreciate my surroundings and nose dive. Haha!

After my initial session of wipeouts and seconds-long rides, the next few days, I managed to ride a few waves for much longer, do some turns, and even score the spot to myself. While riding the Esibach is unlike anything you'll surf in the Ocean (it may as well be a totally different sport), there's just something special in the novelty. Something that makes riding a tiny river wave in a landlocked city in a new country more enjoyable than surfing 2ft onshore slop at your overcrowded local. Will I be moving to Munich anytime soon? No. Will I be chasing more novelty waves from now on? Certainly.



Gallery.





Victoria,
Australia



St Ives,
Cornwall, UK



Somewhere in
New Zealand



Manu Bay,
Raglan, New
Zealand



Raglan, New
Zealand



Barra de la
Cruz, Oaxaca,
Mexico



Urban Surf,
Melbourne,
Australia



Tel Aviv, Israel



Somewhere in
South Chile



The Cave,
Ericeira,
Portugal



**Taranaki, New
Zealand**



**Supertubos,
Peniche,
Portugal**

ESSENTIAL

SURF TRIP RESOURCES

Flights

[Skyscanner](#)

Accommodation

[Hostelworld](#)
[Booking.com](#)
[Book Surf Camps](#)

Transport

[Busbud](#)
[Rental Cars](#)

Work Online

[Cambly Tutor](#)

Money

[Wise Card](#)

Insurance

[World Nomads](#)



Ericeira,
Portugal

Outro.

I hope you've thoroughly enjoyed reading this first and perhaps only edition of Road Less Ridden. I certainly enjoyed writing and creating it. Please let me know what you think in the website comments, or drop me a comment on YouTube.

If this edition is well received, I will create some more down the track, but for now, it's goodbye from me and time to hit the road again. I hope this read has inspired you to dream. Dream of waves in foreign lands and give you a few useful tips to turn those surfing wet dreams into reality. If so, I've done my job and can rest easy.



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Dunedin,
New Zealand