

SINGLES SCENES

The locals are restless and eager, and they're waiting for you.

Santa Cruz, California

If you dream of paddling out to glassy waves alongside your hard-bodied babe, you can make it a reality here.

With 11 world-class breaks, towering redwoods a few miles inland, and more state parks than any county in California, Santa Cruz is a popular place (and one of the six most expensive U.S. housing markets). Transplants come for the setting, the surf, and the beautiful people.

Here's the thing: To meet the most spectacular girls of the bunch, you gotta surf. "At most beginner breaks," says Dylan Greiner, owner of the Santa Cruz Surf School, "eligible women surfers outnumber eligible men two to one."

Population: 54,213
 Median Household Income: \$56,891
 Median Home Price: \$720,000
 Average High/Low Temp: 78°/39°

If you can learn the pecking order, and then, when it's your turn, rip it up at storied, fast-moving breaks like Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point, you'll earn the esteem of the locals. If not, you'll tire of

sitting on the beach, acting as if you're about to go in while the better gender paddles out of earshot.

Unlike their SoCal counterparts, women surfers here read books, ride bikes, and don't undergo cosmetic surgery. UC Santa Cruz brings in cultural events — perfect for dates with grad students or Silicon Valley entrepreneurs — and a tech-related job in San Jose or San Francisco will keep your entertainment budget high. —SAM MOULTON



Checking out the scene — and the waves — in Santa Cruz, a down-to-earth paradise for the unattached surfer

Eugene, Oregon

Population: 142,681
 Median Household Income: \$36,956
 Median Home Price: \$234,200
 Average High/Low Temp: 81°/34°

In Eugene (dubbed "Tracktown USA" in the 1970s, when Prefontaine made his name here), pickup lines are delivered at a jog. After work in this shady college town (the University of Oregon is a major employer, and several tech start-ups have sprouted here), hit the lighted Adidas Amazon Trail and ask for advice while stretching. Need more structure? The Eugene Running Company organizes group runs. —S.M.

Fruita, Colorado

Population: 6,816
 Median Household Income: \$33,623
 Median Home Price: \$172,700
 Average High/Low Temp: 91°/15°

Usually, after a mountain-biking queen zips past you on the trail, you'll never see her again. Not so in small-but-booming Fruita (in 10 years, telecom and manufacturing have nearly doubled the population), where local legend Troy Rarick has socialized the sport: He organizes riding pub crawls from his bike shop to nearby Grand Junction. There, you can compliment the queen on her rear derailleur. —S.M.

Asheville, North Carolina

Population: 70,400
 Median Household Income: \$32,976
 Median Home Price: \$166,000
 Average High/Low Temp: 84°/26°

The region's rivers are ready for skilled watermen, and the women are too. Local pro kayaker Anna Levesque runs a group of female paddlers, most of whom, she says, "are looking for a good catch." Think of it: Right now, women in idyllic Asheville — a great music scene with good government and health care jobs — are working on their Eskimo rolls while they wait for you to show up. —S.M.

ISLANDS

Four towns off the mainland



Mount Desert Island, Maine

Population: About 10,000
 Median Household Income: \$42,350
 Median Home Price: \$270,600
 Average High/Low Temp: 80°/12°

Acadia National Park's cliffs and forests draw visitors like John Travolta and Walter Cronkite to this 108-square-mile isle. Avoid posh Northeast Harbor; live in Bass Harbor alongside boat builders and folk musicians. And hey: It's pronounced "dessert."

Grand Isle, Vermont

Population: About 2,200
 Median Household Income: \$56,011
 Median Home Price: \$257,500
 Average High/Low Temp: 81°/8°

Grand Isle, 30 minutes from Burlington, is as sophisticated as any big city. One in a long chain of islands in sparkling Lake Champlain, the town is crowded with summer tourists but inhabited year-round by fourth-generation islanders, furniture craftsmen, and organic farmers who stock five-star restaurants on the mainland.

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

Population: About 15,000
 Median Household Income: \$46,713
 Median Home Price: \$533,100
 Average High/Low Temp: 79°/22°

Tyra Banks might trail you on your morning run, but scrimshaw and porch-side poker still rule parts of MV. The island is bipolar: Houses range from \$290,000 to \$10 million, and the population swings from 14,000 in winter to 110,000 in summer. Local service workers favor the beaches near Edgartown.

Orcas Island, Washington

Population: About 4,500
 Median Household Income: \$44,387
 Median Home Price: \$385,800
 Average High/Low Temp: 72°/34°

The tech millionaires who spend summers on this hilly San Juan island haven't ruined it. Islanders still get around by foot, kayak, and bicycle, and residents of the down-to-earth village Eastsound include Seattle symphony musicians, Sub Pop record execs, and ski-film baron Warren Miller. —LOLLY MERRELL