



SURFING SANTAS



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TRADING SLEDS FOR SURFBOARDS, HUNDREDS OF “SURFING SANTAS” TO AGAIN CATCH THE WAVES CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING IN CHARITY EVENT ON COCOA BEACH

***Outrageous “Ride of Christmas Magic” Makes Its Celebrated Annual Splash
Beginning 8 a.m. Dec. 24 at End of Minutemen Causeway; Costume Contest Added***

COCOA BEACH, Fla., - There’s a very good reason folks along Florida’s Space Coast flock to Cocoa Beach’s downtown oceanfront early in the morning on Christmas Eve. Everyone wants to stake out a prime viewing spot for what has become a wildly popular annual ritual in these sunny seaside parts: the celebrated arrival of the “Surfing Santas.”

If you’re anywhere near Cocoa Beach, the surfing capital of the East Coast, during Christmas weekend, you don’t want to miss this outrageous local holiday tradition. Last year, nearly 650 Surfing Santas showed up to catch some of Cocoa Beach’s finest waves, entertaining a beachside crowd estimated at more than 8,000.

The local buzz for the ninth annual Surfing Santas extravaganza this Dec. 24 dwells, as it always does, on just how many more Santas will take part, compared to the previous year. So far, the ranks of Surfing Santas have only gotten larger each holiday season. Organizer George Trosset, who started this tradition somewhat by accident eight years ago, recently predicted that at least a thousand surfers – dressed as Santa Claus, Christmas elves, Frosty the Snowman and other holiday characters – will show up “to ride the Surfing Santas wave” at Cocoa Beach this time around.

The 2017 event begins unfolding at 8 a.m. along the beach near 2 Minutemen Causeway (where the causeway intersects with N. Atlantic Avenue, also known as Florida Route A1A) and is expected to continue until early afternoon. Plenty of parking is available and numerous area restaurants will be open to serve Surfing Santas participants and spectators.

While not riding the waves all morning at this surfing hot spot, the legion of Surfing Santas will do yeoman’s work engaging the sizeable throng in attendance, cavorting barefoot along the beach and handing out candy canes to the kids.

“Since Santa has a busy night ahead of him on Christmas Eve, he likes to spend the morning enjoying his favorite pastime, which is surfing,” smiled Trosset. “And because Cocoa Beach is the East Coast surfing capital, it’s no surprise he comes here to catch the best waves and mix with his fans. Around here, this show the Surfing Santas put on is known as ‘the ride of Christmas magic.’ It’s very spirited and zany and diverse. This is Central Florida’s best Christmas party and there’s nothing else like it.”

All this beachy holiday merriment is for a good cause. Proceeds from donations and sales of the official Surfing Santas T-shirt commemorating this free event benefit two local nonprofit organizations, Grind for Life and the Florida Surf Museum. In 2015, approximately \$40,000 was collected for the two charities.

[Grind for Life](#) is a cancer support group whose mission is to provide financial assistance to cancer patients and their families when they travel long distances to visit doctors and hospitals. The 17-year-old [Florida Surf Museum](#) preserves

and documents all aspects of the unique history and culture of Florida surfing, exposing visitors to the heritage and traditions of the surfing community.

Since anyone of any age can participate as a Surfing Santa, exactly how many Santas will descend on Cocoa Beach this Dec. 24 remains to be seen. The only requirement is to show up with your board and dressed as Santa or his helpers or any other character depicting the spirit of the season. In the past, there also have been reindeer and Christmas tree Surfing Santas, Rastafarian Surfing Santas, and even a Batman Surfing Santa. There are no rules about costumes, organizers point out, as long as one remembers this is a family oriented event.

An actual costume contest open to the public has been added to this year's happening. Anyone in the crowd can participate by dressing up in a winter-themed outfit, e.g., Santa or Mrs. Claus, a snowman or gingerbread man, elves, reindeer, etc. The top prize in each division – men's, women's and children's – is a new, custom surfboard.

The first, very unofficial Surfing Santas event took place in 2009, when, on Christmas Eve, Trosset and his son, George Jr., and daughter-in-law Britteny thought it would be a kick to go surfing in South Cocoa Beach dressed up as Santa Claus and his elves. When a photo of their antics hit the front page of a Florida newspaper, others wanted to join the fun. Since then, the number of Surfing Santas – as well as the size of the decked-out beachside audience, which is usually a sea of red and green – has grown almost exponentially each year. This Christmas Eve, one can again expect a cornucopia of longboarding elves, paddleboarding toy soldiers and shortboarding Frostys, Trosset advised.

“Surfing Santas has evolved into this fantastic community gathering of surfing enthusiasts coming from near and far to this very popular surf spot, in celebration of Christmas,” Trosset said. “It's the one day a year that all surfers share all the waves and enjoy some fun in the sun on Cocoa Beach, in the spirit of the holidays.”

Additional entertainment scheduled for the Surfing Santas Cocoa Beach event Dec. 24 includes surf-roots band The Aquanuts, Balsa Bill and the Surf Chasers Band, singer-songwriter Sam Sims, and the Brevard Hawaiian Dancers. Also, singer-songwriter Anna Lusk, who has written and starred in recent Surfing Santas music videos, will perform a new, official anthem, “Oh, Surfing Santa.”

For more information, visit SurfingSantas.org.

ABOUT FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST

Florida's Space Coast is a family friendly destination located 45 minutes east of Orlando. Encompassing Cocoa Beach, Melbourne and the Beaches, Port Canaveral, Titusville, and Palm Bay, it is home to the world's second-busiest cruise port and 72 miles of beaches (the longest stretch in the state), as well as 190,000 acres of wetlands and waterways full of habitat found nowhere else. Florida's Space Coast is home to NASA's Kennedy Space Center, where rockets still soar into orbit. For more information, contact Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism at (877) 572-3224 or visit VisitSpaceCoast.com.

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