

SPORTS

# Surfin' Superior



**WATCHING** good waves roll ashore can make a surfer forget almost anything — like the awkward waddle that comes with wearing a neoprene wetsuit or even a dusting of snow on the beach. It takes a splash of frigid fresh water to realize that between Wawa and Thunder Bay, along the north shore of Lake Superior, there is surf to be had all winter long.

Superior's scenic and rugged north shore produces a range of waves, including occasional powerful barrel waves topping three metres in height. Many are concentrated around Terrace Bay and Marathon. People have been surfing Lake Michigan and the south shore of Superior, around the cities of Duluth, Minn., and Marquette, Mich., for decades, but it has been only about six years since surfers stumbled across perfect waves in northern Ontario. With the scene on the north shore still in its infancy — there are fewer than 100 regulars — surfers don't have to fight crowds or the aggressive posturing they might find on the coasts.

"The vibe is totally different," says surfer Jaakko Natri of Thunder Bay. "On the ocean, you get bad attitudes, but on the lake, everyone's welcome and locals are friendly."

Lake Superior is large enough that wind crossing its surface generates swells. When a swell hits the right contours or structures, such as rocks, on the bottom, it creates surfable waves. In general, the heavier and colder the air, the harder it "digs" into the water and the larger the waves.



With the right insulation and board, surfers can ride Lake Superior waves all winter.

Superior surfers wear thick wetsuits with gloves, booties and hoods. Lake waves tend to be weaker and are less buoyant than ocean waves, so most locals choose boards that offer more flotation and paddling power, such as longboards and fish boards, which are wider and thicker than conventional shortboards.

Superior in winter is no Florida beach vacation, but between the "stoke" of riding waves, the exercise of paddling and the insulation of a good wetsuit, says Natri, two-hour sessions in  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  temperatures are not uncommon. "You don't really get cold, unless you're sitting on the beach."

— Jan Dutkiewicz

THERE IS NO EASY OIL. MUCH OF IT IS SCATTERED IN HUNDREDS OF ISOLATED POCKETS. AND ENVIRONMENTALLY OR ECONOMICALLY. THEN SHELL ENGINEER JAAP VAN BALLEGOOIJEN WATCHED FROTH FROM THE CORNERS OF THE GLASS WITH HIS BENDY STRAW. HEY PRESTO, THE SNAKE CORNERS AND SNAKE FROM SIDE TO SIDE TO REACH THOSE SCATTERED POCKETS OF OIL, ALL WORLD. [WWW.SHELL.CA/REALENERGY](http://WWW.SHELL.CA/REALENERGY)