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MOKEY SMITH



HOW TO SURVIVE WINTER

By Kat Dawes

The annual cool down is well underway, and we're all searching for ways to maximise surf time and minimise shiver time. Your winter routine needs some serious thought if you're to make the most of the winter swells. Here are a few ideas to jog your memory before a bout of hypothermia does it for you.

PRE-SURF WARMTH OPTIMISATION

"The body's ability to keep itself warm will also be affected by dehydration, hunger and lack of sleep". — So says Bear Grylls, author of *Born Survivor*. Give yourself a head-start by having a good night's kip and drinking plenty of fluids (preferably water) before heading out into the surf, and have a solid carbohydrate meal well beforehand. Even though surfing is known to be a great hangover cure, getting on it the night before makes you hungry, thirsty and sleep deficient next morning, so you can't expect to surf well and might put yourself in danger.

The coldest part of surfing is often getting changed. You will pike out easier if it's cold, so make sure you're amped with good tunes, dry equipment and mates to encourage (or goad) you out there. Most importantly, be sure you're there at the optimum time to score the waves at their best.

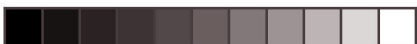
You should have dried your wetsuit and other gear as far as possible — rinse in clean water then hang near a source of indirect heat. Drive to the beach in your wetty if

possible, or at least with your Speedos/Borat thong on under your clothes. Crank up the car heaters.

Getting changed in a warm van is heaven; if this isn't an option, grit your teeth and get into a fast changing routine. Or buy a Robierobe — these allow fast changing with no bits exposed to the icy wind (www.robiesrobes.com). Parking so the boot of your car shelters you is a lifesaver. Keep your clothes dry; when you get changed after surfing, the last thing you want is wet clothes. "Sodden clothes conduct heat away from the body as much as 50 times faster than dry clothes," says Bear Grylls. Jog down to the beach so you're warm by the time you get to the waterline, then do a few stretches to further loosen you up.

IN THE SURF

Shivering is the first sign of hypothermia, and it's the body's way of warming itself up. Let it happen, but get out and get warm fast! It only takes a two degree drop in body temperature for you to become hypothermic. As you get cold it's not just your extremities that slow up; your brain function will become impaired and you can easily make bad decisions. Recognise the signs early. "When your core temperature drops, your own internal thermometer will allow your hands to get cold, as they are not vital to your survival, but it will not allow your head to get cold as the brain is critical to life," says Bear Grylls. So always keep your head warm with a good hood. Another good reason to splash out on headgear is surfer's ear, a bony growth which protects the ear canal from cold weather and water. Earplugs are a pain in the arse (well, ear), but better than having your ears drilled out.



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APRES-SURF WARMTH OPTIMISATION

Once you've wrestled the key out and opened the car, have a glug of tea or soup from a flask. This is magic. Use a changing mat to protect you from the worst of the ice and dirt and stop heat seeping from your feet. If you really want to be flash, take a portable camping shower (about a tenner from Argos) filled with warm water and sluice yourself with it. Peel off your suit and have somewhere ready to put it — struggling with bin bags while half naked in January rain is not ideal. A plastic stacker box and hanger in the back of the van is ideal. Start the car up early to give the heaters a chance (but not too early...carbon footprint and all that!).

REFUELLING

Hydration is important, and we're not talking sugary energy drinks. Drink water and lots of it, with some pure fruit juice too. Tea and coffee are okay in moderation, but nothing stocks you up quite like water. Load up with some carbs a good few hours before surfing so you have plenty of slow-release energy. Avoid processed foods like energy bars, or chocolate bars and go for the long-term benefits of something like a banana, many a pro's' fuel of choice. **C**



MICKEY SMITH

THE WINDCHILL FACTOR

It may be a nice sunny day, but when the wind starts blowing temperatures quickly drops to Baltic.

This is always exacerbated close to the coast, where there's less shelter. Weather reports often include an estimation of how the windchill will affect the perceived temperature, and this is very useful for surfers. If it's already zero, the wind could make the difference between a good surf and a miserable one.

On a calm day, a thin layer of air known as the boundary layer is trapped next to the skin by hair and clothing, and insulates the body. When it's windy, this layer is whipped away. If your skin is damp, even more heat evaporates away. (When you feel cold you're actually sensing the temperature of your skin, not the direct air temperature, so you can be shivering on a hot day.) It takes energy for the body to replace the boundary layer with more warmth, which is dangerous if the wind is constantly whipping it away. Wet bare skin is the worst combination possible, so dress warm and change fast!

—KD

