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**Our  
(Soul &) Surf Guide  
to the  
Surf Spots  
of Kerala**

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Sofie & I first arrived in Varkala in December 2009. We had been dragging our surf boards down the west coast, by train, from Goa to Kanyakumari looking for a spot to settle and surf for a month or two. Goa was too small, Karnataka too quiet, Kovalam too busy... we were a right pair of picky goldilocks-es ( I know that's not a word). It was probably just random luck, but when we arrived in Varkala there was a solid swell running, there were waves hoofing into main beach and there was a little corner between main beach and temple beach (Papanasam) where it was peeling for a bit before closing out.

We rented a pink house with a goat. I surfed Varkala main beach every day, almost always on my own. One of the umbrella-men on the beach, Mujeeb, had a couple of battered old surf boards to rent out as well as some body boards and umbrellas but that was it. Main beach, more often than not, is a close-out shallow dump of a wave but there were a few banks here and there that worked and I could see the potential. So I got some bungees and a scooter and explored up and down the coast.

The January day I surfed Edava for the first time, with a super clean shoulder-high swell running off the point was most probably the catalyst for us coming back the next year and opening up Soul & Surf. It was pretty magical, and I surfed alone all morning until the wind came up at about 11am. The fishermen collared me afterwards, examining the board, asking if it had a motor and concluding that it was 'manual'. I felt like a full-on 60s surf explorer discovering new breaks.

Of course people must have surfed around the area before, but it was rare enough for the local fishing crew not to have come across it before. So I wrote a tongue-in-cheek blog post about how to name spots and called this wave Ed's which to my deep embarrassment stuck around for a while until common sense prevailed.

I kept on the prowl in the following weeks for more breaks and found a few beach breaks and groynes that were better than main beach but that was that before we headed off to Indonesia to continue our trip.

Until, that is, a few months later when we decided to start a little guesthouse called Soul & Surf and began taking bookings. With the pressure of paying guests

coming to surf with us I began to scour Google Earth for other likely candidates and spent the first few seasons loading our Hindustan Ambassador with boards and checking them out in real life.

The below list is a combination of that research (including a few killer spots I had to name but that have since been lost to coastal development) and a number of new spots that our surf teams have added to the Soul & Surf arsenal.

With the right swell though, the right sand banks, the right season, the right winds, a bit of luck and an explorer's spirit there's more to find out there.

Keep 'em peeled.

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## Jay Bay

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A two season wonder that popped up when the backwaters escaped into the sea forming a horse-shoe bay with a left and a right either side of the mouth and a rolling white water wave on the inside. It felt like a gift from the gods to be given a consistent wave for every level. Then one autumn we came back after the monsoon and the government had rebuilt the sea wall and the bay was gone.



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## Rod's Right

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In the very early days we had a Brazilian surfer called Rodrigo who came to stay. He pioneered a barrelling shore-dump wave that distributed sand into places you'd forgotten existed.



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## River Temple

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A sluice gate empties the backwaters into the Arabian sea at this river mouth. When the flow isn't too strong the sandbar creates a beautiful A-frame which gives us some much needed rights and some fast lefts that reel and race down the line. Be careful of the fast-flowing outflows and rocks on the inside. Late season, the sand builds up and makes this a great all-levels break. Just to the south is another outer bank A-frame peak that only works on really big days.





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## Cowies

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It took a few years of persistent checks (thanks Franco) and revisits to this spot before it came into its own. It's since become a firm favourite for lessons of all levels set against a beautifully remote stretch of coast.



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## Kappil Mouth

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It's rare as a hen's tooth to find the southern end of Kappil Lake open but just south of Kappil Bridge, the lagoon there sometimes breaches the sand. If it does, it could be party time down there. Spitting barrels have been seen...



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## Edava Point (né Ed's)

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Cringingly named after myself and a navel-gazing blog post I wrote upon discovering this little rocky point break. Blushes aside however, this is a local classic. When the sand is right and the swell direction is direct south this little beauty is a ripper. It's fast, it barrels on take-off and delivers a super-fun race down the line before depositing you in ankle-deep water. Watch out for the fishing boats coming and going all morning and, these days, the crowds. Oh, and I don't know who, but some idiot stuck a rock right in the take-off zone. Great tea and doughnut shop on the beach.



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## Black Beach

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This beach break at the northern end of Varkala Cliff works pretty consistently in the early season, before the sand disappears up the coast. Fun & peaky up until about December.



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## Varkala Point

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There's an infamous Youtube clip showing a beautiful looking wave at the foot of the cliffs. It starts to work (sometimes) just before the monsoon hits in April or May (or June...), breaking off the northern headland of Varkala main beach. Just watch out for the rocks that you have to weave in and out of all the way down the line.



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## Varkala Beach

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This is where all the tourists in the area sit and sun themselves, where men in budgie smugglers strut about taking photos of their bikini-clad girlfriends writhing in the shoreline like they're doing a Playboy shoot and where you can rent some foam boards from the umbrella men. It can be good fun to surf here, it certainly picks up the swell and if the banks align it can be really good. Usually better either end of the main monsoon.



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## In-Betweeners

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In front of the rocks between Varkala beach and Temple beach, where the magical cousins Praveen, Sujith & Jithu live, the banks sometimes line up to produce more than just close-outs. My first winter here I got a month of great, fast lefts here. Fickle f\*\*ker though.



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## Temple Beach (Papanasam)

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I always overlooked this spot, where the swamis sit and pilgrims do puja. But we drive past it regularly so finally one November the stars aligned, the banks sat up and the swell angle contrived to give us a month or more of consistent, fun, walled up lefts. Who'd have think eh? It keeps on delivering sporadically.

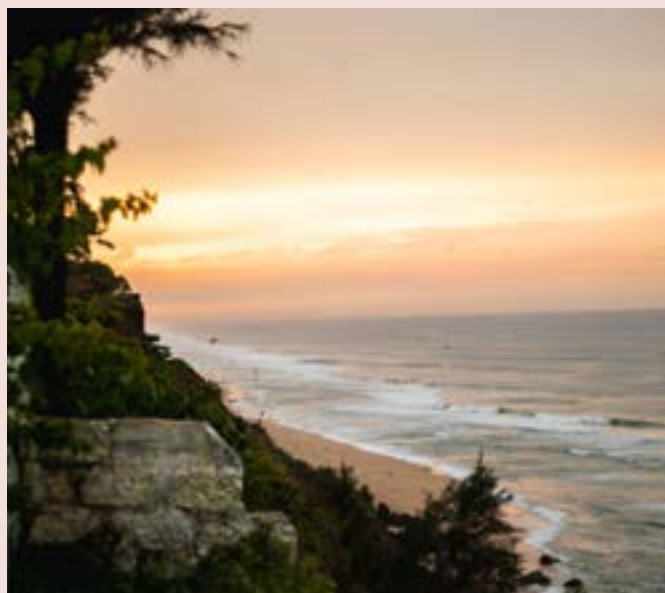


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## Golden Beach

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The beach break at the bottom of our steps. It's not often a classic, but keep an eye on it. If the sand banks and swell angle get it together you can have some really fun rides here and it's literally a stone's throw from our gardens. Some classic September to November sessions have been had here.





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## Shirley's

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Named after the small temple at the top of the hill here, Shirley's used to be a good bet if it was small. Until a few years ago there was a series of small boulder jetties and one of them usually produced a workable bank to groom the swells. Such a beautiful location too with the red cliffs, palms and hilltop mosque. Now it's just another random beach break, but sometimes the banks align and a wave pops up for a few weeks.



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## The Ali

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We were surfing so much at Shirley's so we often got caught out by that 'greener-grass' syndrome – looking up or down the beach thinking the waves look better over there. Well one time, Varghese put his money where his mouth was and paddled down the beach from Shirley's – and for once the grass was actually greener. For a month one November, a perfect bank formed, an A-Frame appeared and we had a right old time of it... then it was gone. Worth checking regularly.



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## Jengos

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A couple of weeks after we first opened our doors a swell appeared on the charts. I'd marked a large jetty on Google Earth as a potential spot and our guests were game. When we breached the large sand dune the sight of big, long, walling, point-break style waves reeling down from the head of the jetty proved the gamble to have paid off. When it was on here, boy was it on. Then they finally started work on a what looked like a long-abandoned bridge-building project across the river, and to protect the bridge they extended the jetty by about 50-100m and killed the wave.



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## Jengos South

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A monsoon special. As the swell shifts about and starts coming from the north, this little corner to the south side of the south jetty arm starts to work. Great rights, which are a rarity around these parts.



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## Moustachios

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It was right under our nose. That's why our friend Jay named it that, and we like it. It's a river mouth just outside Trivandrum. It's not always open, but when there's a flow it's such a fun wave. It's a bit rippy, shore-dumpy at the end, stinky on a dropping tide, no good for beginners but it's really worth a trip when it's on.



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## Kovalam

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The only place in the region where you used to encounter a crowd, until Edava stole that crown. Many people used to think Kovalam 'WAS' Indian surfing so they didn't travel elsewhere. It's worth a visit for the variety: the left off Lighthouse rocks, the artificial reef that doesn't break, Hawa beach if the swell angle changes, but otherwise we tend to leave the crowds to themselves and surf our own spots.





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## Secret Spot

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It's been on the cover of Surfer magazine, any pro in India surfs it, it's been named and shamed in surf press all over, but we promised the Kovalam crew we wouldn't name it. So we haven't. If we told you, we'd have to kill you. In fact I don't even know where it is or what you're on about.



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If you've got this far we must have whetted your appetite for a surf in the area.

Lucky then that you'll **find us here** in Varkala, and that we've prepared this map for you – in case you're out and about in a tuk tuk and fancy taking a look...

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● *Kollam*

Jay Bay

Rod's Right

River Temple

Cowies

Kappil Rivermouth

Edava Point

Black Beach

Varkala Point

Main Beach

Inbetweener

Temple Beach

Golden Beach

Shirleys

The Ali

Jengos

Moustachios

● *Paravur*

● *Varkala*



# Kerala Surf Map

A Work in Progress

● *Thiruvananthapuram*

Kovalam

● *Kovalam*

Poovar

*Arabian Sea*

