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Life's a Beach! The World's Finest Seaside Towns **HD**

These are some of the world's most famous places, their names inextricably associated with a yearning for the sea, sand and sunshine. People have been drawn to these locations on the shores of the world's oceans for generations: Initially, well-heeled visitors came for the health benefits and to stroll along the promenade. But nowadays, people come to coastal resorts for other reasons – many of them of a sporting nature. Places that began life as simple fishing villages have now become prime real estate with grand villas, exclusive restaurants and chic hotels. But despite the rapid pace of development, much of the old charm still remains.

01 Biarritz – French Sophistication and Sporting Style

Biarritz is undoubtedly stylish and sophisticated, but it also has a wild side. The luxury hotels and pretty villas lining the clifftops overlook the tempestuous waters of the Atlantic Ocean. French Emperor Napoleon III spent his honeymoon here. These days Biarritz is more relaxed and mellow: it has become a paradise for surfers.

02 Hua Hin – Preferred Destination of Thai Kings

Hua Hin is Thailand's oldest seaside resort. The royal family came here to escape the heat of Bangkok in the 1920s, injecting Hua Hin with international flair. The town now hosts a well-known jazz festival every year in June. Local people who used to earn their living fishing or farming now run hotels and restaurants.

03 Usedom – Welcome Escape from the German Capital

Its proximity to the German capital earned Usedom the nickname "Berlin's Bathtub". For more than 100 years holidaymakers have been drawn to the island's long sandy beaches. While restored villas and quirky wicker beach chairs are a feature of the resorts on the German side of the Baltic island, beaches on the Polish side are the domain of kite surfers.

04 Forte dei Marmi – Bathing Culture and Italian Dolce Vita

For generations, Italian aristocrats, tycoons and intellectuals have flocked to Forte dei Marmi in Tuscany. The waterfront is lined with bagni, private beach clubs or bathing establishments complete with bar and changing cubicles, sunloungers and parasols. The atmosphere is relaxed, and guests often remain loyal to "their" bagno throughout their lives.

05 Sochi – The Russians' Number One Spa

Sochi is a Black Sea resort many Russians dream of visiting. It has everything: Sun, palm trees and invitingly warm sea water. Sochi enjoys a long tradition as a health spa resort offering a range of treatments and massage; its beaches are always full during the high season.

06 Western Cape – South Africa's Natural Paradise

Surfers and adventurers have always been drawn to the coastline of South Africa's Western Cape province, a region characterised by rough winds and rugged landscapes. It all began in Muizenberg, a fishing village discovered by wealthy residents of Cape Town in the late 19th century. Many of their villas and brightly-colored beach huts remain to this day.

07 Copacabana – Bossa Nova and the Body Beautiful

It is said that for many Brazilians, beauty is the key to happiness. In Copacabana, bodies are tanned, honed and presented for all to admire. Whether you live in a favela or an exclusive neighborhood, on Rio's most famous beach, everyone is the same. Out of this cultural mix there emerged a musical genre that took the world by storm: Bossa Nova.

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