

Introduction

A short history

The Hawaiians were the first people to invent surfing. Their surfboards were made of large slabs of hardwood, much bigger and heavier than the boards used today. When the explorer Captain Cook arrived at the islands of Hawaii in 1778, a Hawaiian paddled out to greet him on a surfboard.

Where it all began

The sport of surfboarding began in Hawaii and California in the United States. But the official start of surfing was in 1907 at Redondo Beach in Southern California where it was introduced by George Freeth. In the same year, in Hawaii, the Outrigger Canoe Club was formed and surfing was one of the activities they offered. Australia was introduced to surfing in 1915, when Hawaiian Olympic swimming gold medallist, Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, visited New South Wales and was asked to give a surfing exhibition. By doing so, he captured the imagination of sporting Australians.

Duke Paoa Kahanamoku
at the Surf Board Swimming
Championships in Honolulu in
1924. He is in the foreground.





Australian surfers
in the 1950s.

Better boards

As the design of the surfboards changed, they became lighter and easier to carry and manoeuvre. As a result, the sport became more popular. By the 1930s, the boards were made of plywood and **balsa**, and **fins** were added to help with steering. An American, Tom Blake, designed and rode the first light, hollowed-out surfboard in 1928 off the Californian coast.

Later developments

The boards continued to become lighter, and the sport more popular. Also, surfers were beginning to perform more and more manoeuvres on their surfboards. By the 1960s, the boards were made of **styrofoam** and **fibreglass**. Surfing became particularly popular in Australia and the United States, especially at Malibu beach in California.

The first World Amateur Championships were held in 1964 and the sport turned professional in 1970, when the first World Professional Championships were held.