
Wish they all could be California girls

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The tanned, blonde, Californian beach girl is rarely what she seems. Many of the original beach babes who brought the bathing culture of the Pacific coast to the boil actually came from Idaho and Oklahoma. But, to be honest, who cares?

The good ladies of California were appreciated long before the Beach Boys

If we're to believe the well-researched opinions of the Beach Boys, as expressed in song in 1965, east coast girls are stylish, southern girls have the sexiest accents, mid-west farmers' daughters know how to make you feel good, while girls from the north are – apparently – the best at keeping their boyfriends warm at night. But none, they assure us, have quite the appeal of the tanned ladies of California.

“The west coast has the sunshine, and the girls all get so tanned – I dig a French bikini on Hawaii Island...” and so on. You can sing the rest in your head, no doubt. However, as our photo gallery demonstrates, the qualities of the good ladies of California were appreciated long before the Beach Boys. The Model Marcella Flood lolled about on Long Beach as long ago as 1937, while Liz Taylor got playful on the sand in 1947.



Surf's up!

It was in the 1950s and 1960s that surfing influenced the image of California around the world: wooden surfboards, colourful swimming shorts, surf rock – and bikini-clad surf girls. The girls weren't just ornamental, either – they rode the boards themselves. Take 16-year-old Kathy Kohner who, in the late 1950s, could be seen with her board almost every day on the beaches at Malibu. She was the inspiration for the character 'Gidget' in the novel 'Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas', written by her father.



Neoprene and hard work

In the 1970s, too, the surfboard was a popular accessory for the Californian beach girls – although a certain pragmatism had entered their dress code. The photos of Joan Jett and her band 'The

Runaways' shows them wearing wetsuits. In more recent decades, of course, Pamela Anderson and her buddies re-defined the career ambitions of a whole generation of young men, thanks to their day-to-day activities as lifeguards in TV's 'Baywatch'. Pam, however, was not raised in Malibu but in Canada. But it seems that she, along with everyone else, wished they all could be California girls.

Photos: Getty Images

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