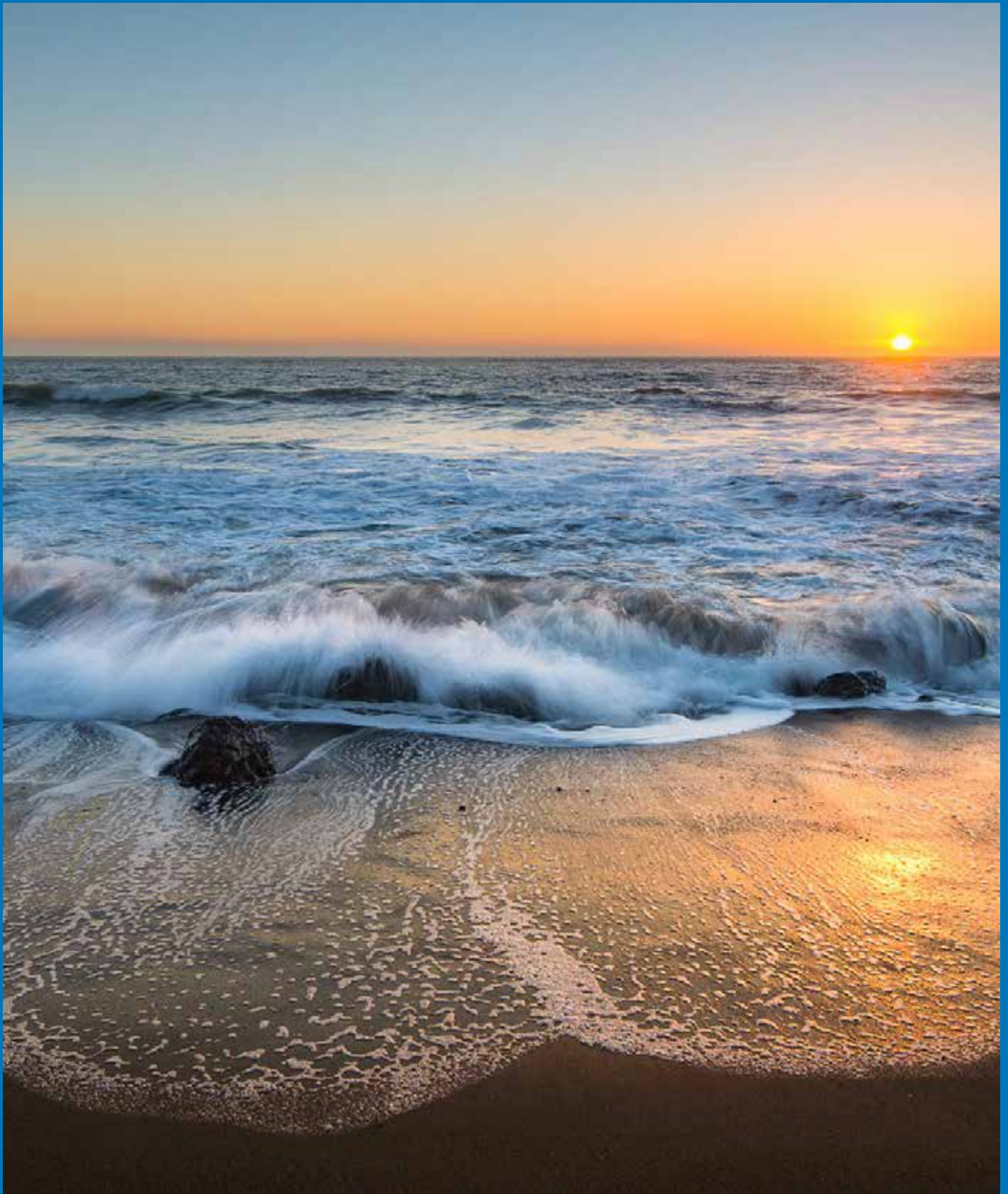


ENJOY AND PROTECT

Day at the beach





ABOUT ENJOY AND PROTECT

The Clean Coasts programme works with communities to help protect and care for Ireland's waterways, coastline, seas, ocean and marine life, by organising hundreds of beach clean-ups each year, mobilising thousands of volunteers, and removing large quantities of marine litter from our coastline.

The Irish coast offers breath-taking views, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs, and more, and its unique beauty and character has been attracting visitors from all over the world - did you know that some of the coastal areas in Ireland have been named top tourists' attractions in Europe, ranking higher than other famous landmarks including Buckingham Palace, the Eiffel Tower and the Leaning Tower of Pisa?

The Irish coast also presents its visitors with numerous opportunities to have fun. With the nice weather on the way, we expect that more people will be visiting the beautiful coastal areas around the country, whether it is for sea swimming, water sports, or simply to enjoy the stunning landscape.

With our 'Enjoy and Protect' campaign, we are asking people to enjoy and celebrate our stunning coastline, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs and all outdoors areas, but also to protect these natural treasures. Get out and make the most of Ireland's wonderful coast, but also do your part to preserve our marine environment and keep it safe and beautiful for future generations to enjoy too.

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1. Ireland's Coastal Natural Heritage

1.1 Coastal Biodiversity

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2. Marine Litter

3. Getting to the beach

4. Make a beach day difference

5. Safety Guidelines

6. Beach Activities

7. Day at the beach checklist

The Clean Coasts programme is proudly sponsored by
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Fáilte Ireland.



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing,
Planning and Local Government



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

SECTION 1

IRELAND'S COASTAL NATURAL HERITAGE

1.1 COASTAL BIODIVERSITY

In Ireland, we are fortunate to have a spectacular coastline and a vast marine territory that stretches out over 200 nautical miles past our landmass. This expansive area has many fascinating habitats, from the bustling rockpools of our rocky shoreline, out to the eerie depths of the Porcupine Abyssal Plain. It is also teeming with life, playing host to 24 species of whales and dolphins, 35 species of sharks, 2 species of seals, 24 species of seabirds, over 250 species of marine plants and hundreds of species of fish and invertebrates.



Other common species that you may come across on the rocky shore include:
Shore crabs, beadlet anemones, blennies, bladder wrack, and limpets



When you are at the coast, keep an eye out for these common bird species:
Herring gull, ringed plover, heron, oystercatchers, and cormorants





You may notice these '**sand casts**' on the beach that are deposits made by lugworms that burrow under the sand. Other sand creatures include sand hoppers, that will jump around when disturbed, and sand mason worms.



As the famous diver and explorer Jacques Cousteau once said “people protect what they love” so if you submerge yourself in the marine environment, and learn about its inhabitants, you are more likely to want to help to protect it! You can learn about marine habitats and species on our website at <https://cleancoasts.org/marine-biodiversity-in-ireland/>

and invest in some books or ID keys to help you identify coastal species when out in the field. If you would like to go one step further and help researchers monitor our precious coastal habitat, you can take part in one of the many citizen science projects available along Ireland's shoreline (see section 4)





SECTION 1.2 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

We have diverse and beautiful habitats around Ireland's coast that need to be protected. EU legislation designates certain areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protected Areas (SPAs), under the Birds Directive.

Special Areas of Conservation

The habitats and species within SAC sites are important not only from an Irish perspective but also at a European level. There are 159 marine SACs in Ireland including Dublin Bay and Cork Harbour. The Directive lists certain types of habitats and species that must be protected within a SAC. Marine habitats include sand dunes, machair, estuaries and inlets, and species include salmon, otter and bottlenose dolphin.



Special Protected Areas

SPA designation is specific to the protection of birds and focuses on listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetland habitats especially those of international importance. Marine SPAs along the coast are vital to wintering birds as they are a source of food and protected marine waters are important to seabird colonies breeding along the coast.

When we are at the beach, it is important to be aware of these habitats and take extra care to make sure they are protected. If you are looking at wildlife in rockpools, make sure to leave everything as you found it and be careful when turning rocks over! Whilst sand dunes can be a fun area of the beach, it is important to remember that they are particularly susceptible to coastal erosion, so we don't want to contribute to this. We should take care if we are walking on them and make sure not to remove any vegetation.



SECTION 1.3 ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE

Seals

While exploring Ireland's scenic coastlines you may be lucky enough to spot some of our most iconic marine animals: seals! There are two seal species native to Ireland, the Common Seal (born June-August) and the Grey Seal (born August-February).

While it is an exciting experience to spot a seal, it's important to respect them from a safe distance, particularly during their pupping seasons. Seals must come up on land to rest and rear their pups, and this is when they are extremely sensitive to disturbances by humans or dogs, which can result in their being abandoned by their mother, thereby jeopardising their survival.

If you see a seal in the wild:

- Never approach, touch or disturb a seal, as it can cause harm or injury to them. Seals are protected under both Irish and EU law. Remember to observe quietly from a safe distance (at least 100m), keep a low profile, keep children away, and keep dogs on a lead at all times.
- Never put a seal in the water; injured, sick or newborn pups are on land for a reason. Also, a seal pup alone on the beach is not necessarily abandoned; mothers can sometimes leave them for hours at a time but will return to care for them.



- If you think a seal may need help or are concerned about a pup with no mum in sight, please contact Seal Rescue Ireland's 24/7 Rescue Hotline at 087 1955 393. Take photos using the zoom function on your camera and send them through to help SRI quickly determine the seal's condition, and if necessary, a rescue can be organised promptly.
- If you find a dead seal, please take photos and report this to SRI's Rescue Hotline or through the Online Reporting Form found on the website: www.sealrescueireland.org
- If you see an ID tag on the rear flipper of a seal (either dead or alive) please take photos and send them to SRI, as this data is invaluable.

Although SRI can provide care for rescued seal pups, nothing compares to their mother's care in the wild. Therefore it is vital to prevent circumstances where pups end up needing to be rescued.

Seal Rescue Ireland (SRI) is a Registered Charity (RCN 20108519) that works around the clock to rescue, rehabilitate and release seal pups found sick, injured or orphaned across the coast of Ireland. As the only seal rescue centre within the Republic of Ireland, they respond to reports nationwide and aim to rehabilitate the pups back to full health so they can be returned to the wild. SRI promotes ocean conservation and sustainability through proactive education, research, community engagement and habitat restoration programmes, in order to protect our seas and all life within.



Animal Stranding Contact List

During beach cleans or when spending time on our coast, some volunteers may come across stranded animals.

Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead animal as they carry diseases that are potentially transmissible to humans.

You should note the location and report the findings to the following contacts:

Dead/ Sick Birds:

Department by Avian Influenza Hotline at 076 106 4403 (office hours) or 1850 200 456 (outside of normal office hours).

Marine Mammals

Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises (Cetaceans)

- If you find an animal **Alive:**

If the animal is still alive please [ring your local National Parks and Wildlife Service](#) ranger for advice on the best course of action to take.

- If you find an animal **Dead:**

You can report stranded dead animals to the [IWDG here](#).

If you are having trouble reaching the contacts above you should also contact your Local Authority's Environment Department.

This [document by the Irish Whale and Dolphin group](#) gives good advice on what to do in the event you come across a stranding.

Seals

You can contact Seal Rescue Ireland at 087 1955 393 or the Irish Seal Sanctuary (www.irishsealsanctuary.ie) at 01 8354370 or info@irishsealsanctuary.ie

SECTION 2

MARINE LITTER

Approximately 10 million tonnes of litter end up in the world's oceans and seas each year. The term "marine litter" or "marine debris" covers a range of materials which have been deliberately discarded, or accidentally lost on shore or at sea, and it includes materials that are carried out to sea from land, rivers, drainage and sewerage systems, or the wind (European Commission, 2013).

In 2018, the IUCN found that plastics make up 80% of all marine litter from surface waters to deep-sea sediments.

What we find on our beaches is not the full extent of the marine litter, including ocean plastics, load in the environment. It is estimated that 70% of marine litter is on the seabed, 15% is floating in the water column and 15% is what we find on our shores (OSPAR, 1995).



SOURCES OF OCEAN PLASTICS & MARINE LITTER

- Litter dropped in towns and cities
- Overflowing litter bins
- Litter dropped at the beach
- Poorly managed industrial waste discharges
- Lost shipping containers
- Lost/discharged fishing gear
- Recreational litter blown by the wind
- Poorly managed landfill sites
- Microbeads from personal care products
- Sewage related litter



Perfect packing for a reduced waste beach day

Keep in mind that this summer many of our most popular beaches are going to be very busy due to the public health restrictions. You may arrive in an area where the bins are full or, if you visit more remote locations, there might be no bins at all. We find the best approach when packing for your day at the beach is that if you can bring it with you, you can bring it home. Remember to bring bin bags for recycling and general waste and if you can, limit your single use waste items by switching to reusable alternatives.



Need a packing checklist to help reduce your waste while at the beach?

Clean Coasts has you covered! Check out the last page of our guide for all your beach essentials to both enjoy and protect our coastlines.

SECTION 3

GETTING TO THE BEACH

As the intercounty travel restrictions lifted in 2020 and staycationers flocked to beaches around the country, we saw traffic chaos hit many of these areas. This summer, why not try some alternative beach day travel options?

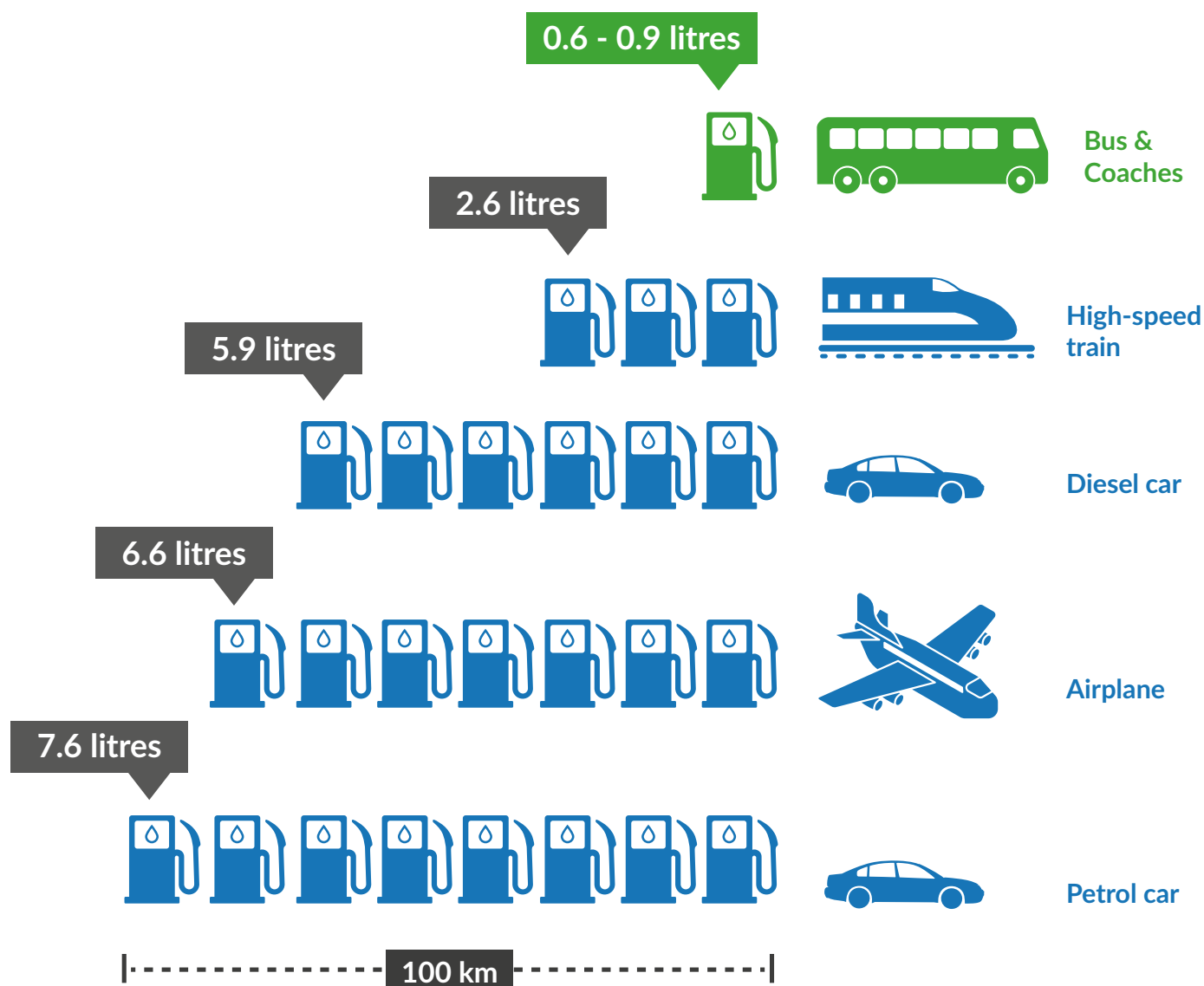
If you live very close to the beach, it is great to walk or cycle (or why not get creative and try something like rollerblading!) as you will avoid traffic and parking complications. If you are within

the local area of the beach, you could look at public transport to cut emissions and save on the hassle of parking! If you are travelling to a remote beach, it may be best to drive for safety purposes, but you could consider carpooling if you are going as a group.

We want to keep our beaches beautiful for everyone to use so it helps if we can reduce emissions and traffic in the surrounding areas.

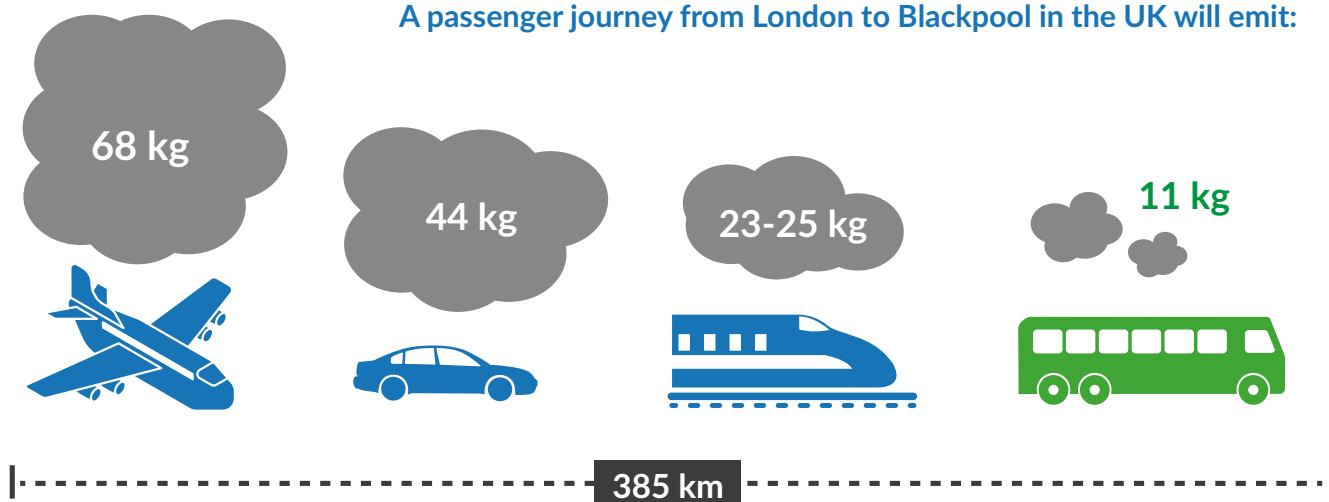


What does it take to carry one passenger over 100 kilometers?



So how much CO₂ are we talking about?

A passenger journey from London to Blackpool in the UK will emit:



SECTION 4

MAKE A BEACH DAY DIFFERENCE

Our coastal resources offer a wealth of activities and experiences for all. From surfing world renowned waves on the Atlantic coast to a refreshing dip in the Irish Sea, there is something for everyone. It is important, however, that we not only enjoy the wonderful

experiences our coastline has to offer but we also protect our shoreline habitats. We have inherited this wonderful natural environment and it is important that we take on the responsibility of its success and future improvement.



Good news!

Protecting our shorelines can be achieved with some simple activities while you are enjoying your day at the beach (see overleaf).



Do a #2minutebeachclean

We have all seen the evidence of marine litter along Ireland's coastline and now for all you beach lovers out there here's an opportunity to do something about it in just 2 minutes!

We are asking everyone who goes to the beach to do their very own #2minutebeachclean. Take a snap of the litter you collect and post your snap on Instagram/Twitter/Facebook with the hashtags #2minutebeachclean and #cleancoasts.

For more details:

<https://cleancoasts.org/our-initiatives/2minutebeachclean/>



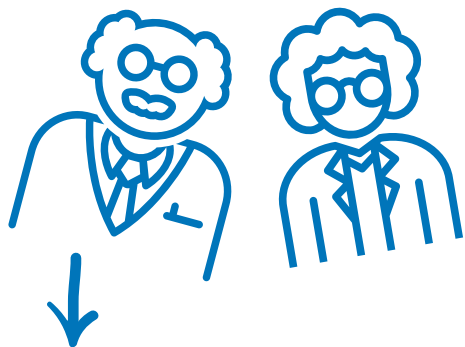
How to take part in the #2minutebeachclean?

- Follow Clean Coasts – @CleanCoasts on Instagram/ Twitter/Facebook
- Do a #2minutebeachclean
- Take a snap of the marine litter you collect
- Post your snap on Instagram/ Twitter using the hashtag #2minutebeachclean and tagging @CleanCoasts so we can reshare them
- Dispose of the waste you collected properly, recycle it/bin it!
- Be safe when you do your #2minutebeachclean

Why should you do a #2minutebeachclean

- It will have an immediate positive impact on our environment
- You will be an example and inspire other people to take action too
- You will contribute to creating a more sustainable community
- It's an easy way to be active and exercise
- A cleaner environment means better health
- Spending time by the sea and outdoors is good for the body and for the mind
- You will help protect the ocean and marine life
- You will also help protect all life on land





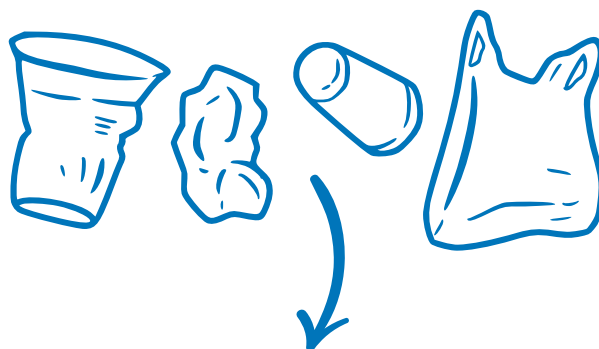
Become a citizen scientist

Participating in citizen science is a simple and effective way to protect our coastal habitats. It allows researchers to gather substantial amounts of data and offers the participant a greater connection with the environment and biodiversity.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre offers a variety of projects that are open to all. Seashore Spotter is an entry level survey designed to collect casual species records from anyone who is out and about on our coastline. No matter what you are doing at the coast, you can always submit a marine species record using an online app. Just record your details, your location and the species – please include a photo to help verify what you saw.

For more details:

<https://exploreyourshore.ie/>



Help the global fight against marine litter

Gathering litter data gives a global snapshot of ocean trash, providing researchers and policy-makers with much needed insights to inform solutions. Join a global movement to keep beaches, waterways and the ocean trash free. Head out to your favorite beach and use the app to easily record each item of trash you collect. Then share your effort with family and friends.

For more details:

<https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/cleanswell/>



SECTION 5

SAFETY GUIDELINES

Whilst we want to enjoy the beach, it is important that we remember to stay safe and be prepared for any safety concerns in advance of your day trip.

Beach safety

Make sure you have a fully charged phone or power bank with you so you can call the emergency services if you need to.

You could also **pack a small first aid kit** with antiseptic wipes, plasters, and pain relief.

General sun protection such as sun cream, sun hats and sunglasses are

essential during the summer months and make sure you pack enough water for the day or locate a nearby shop so you can buy water if you run out (take your empty bottles home with you!)

Any first aid or water related issues can be handled by lifeguards so make sure you take note of where they are stationed when you first access the beach.





Swimming safety

Whether you are going for a dip or an open water swim, being in the water has both physical and mental health benefits. Many swimmers in Ireland use sea swimming to help clear the mind of worries and some studies suggest it can help to alleviate physical ailments.

Despite all these benefits, it is important to consider the safety aspects before diving in!

Most beaches, particularly Blue Flag beaches, will have signs at the entrance to the beach. **Make sure you read these signs as they will contain essential information in relation to local tides and currents.**

You may also notice flags on the beach that will be explained on the sign and indicate where it is safe to swim. **If in doubt, always check with the lifeguards on duty. If there is no lifeguards to ask, and if you have any**

doubts regarding your safety, do not swim!

You should never swim alone and should make sure that you can be seen from the shore by wearing a brightly coloured swimming cap or using a swim buoy. If you do get into difficulty whilst swimming, it is important to remain calm and try to float, or tread water, until you can either swim back to shore or are rescued.

Even during the summer months, your core body temperature decreases when you are in the water so you should leave the water when you start to feel cold. **After a swim, it's important to keep warm so make sure you have a towel with you and some warm clothes.** Even when the sun is out you may need a jumper! If you have a flask, it would be good to bring a hot drink with you for after your swim.

JELLYFISH STINGS

– very controversial as most people will tell you different cures for a jellyfish sting (do not pee on the sting!) The best method to ease a sting is to wash it with saltwater as much as possible to remove any remaining stinging cells. Then you can apply hot water to the area to relieve the stinging sensation.

Check local news for increases in jellyfish numbers before you go for a swim.



WEEVER FISH STING – immerse the affected area (usually foot) into very hot water for at least 30 minutes, then try to remove any spines and wash with soap and water.



SECTION 6

BEACH ACTIVITIES



Sand art exhibition

Start by drawing a large square/rectangle on the sand – this will be your frame. Now it's time for your beachcombing. Go on a wild scavenger hunt for items to place within your frame. Examples of things to find include driftwood pieces, seaweeds, seashells, plastic/rubbish, sponges, stones, smooth sea glass, and lots more. Spend some time to arrange your artwork within the frame. Perhaps there are a few people on your beach trip who can make an exhibition with you, or compete by each drawing a frame and then have an adult to judge for the winner. Your frame(s) will make great photos to remind you of your beach trip. Safety tip: Be careful not to touch sharp objects, e.g. broken glass, sharp seashells, or a nail on driftwood. Use gloves if you can, particularly if you are handling any rubbish.

Rock-pooling

If you are by a rocky beach area – ideally at low tide, there will be varying sized rock pools. Quietly crouch or lie beside the pool, careful not to cast a shadow over the pool. Take a close look at the pool. With your finger or a stick gently and slowly push aside the seaweed. Maybe tempt crabs to move by moving a stone. Look out for sea anemones, shrimp, starfish and seashells. It is like a miniature wildlife world to discover! Safety tip: Rocks can be slippery, so be very careful if you are walking between rock pools. Leave anything you find. Be aware of changing tides so you don't get cut off by water.

Target games

On firm sand it can be easy to draw. Create a target using an inner circle, followed by an outer circle, then another outer circle, etc. Draw numbers within the circles with the inner circles having the largest numbers, and also draw a standing line away from the target. Gather some stones, then take it in turns to calmly throw the stones towards the target to see who gets the most points. This game is a cross between Boules and Darts, and you can make up various point scoring competitions. Safety tip: Throwing stones can be dangerous, so take great care to stand back when someone is throwing a stone and make sure there are no other beach users near your target.



Trick photos

Using photography, you can have fun trying to make optical illusions. Capture on camera objects close up and far away making it look like something impossible, e.g. making a large object look small and a small object look big. Sunny days are best for this, and look out for far away objects like landscape buildings/objects like boats, clouds, islands, etc. Safety tip: Be aware there may be other beach users that might wish their privacy, so do not intrude your photography on strangers.

Battle board games

As a sandy beach can be great for drawing on, maybe you can create some board games. You will need to gather stones – preferably white and dark ones for the counters of your games. The sand nearer to the sea will be firmer so this would be better than soft sand near the dune. There are lots of games you can challenge each other on – for example: Connect Four, Checkers, Noughts and Crosses, maybe even Chess (depends on the stones you gather).



Towers and Jenga

A shingle (stony/pebble) beach is best for this activity, but a lot of sandy beaches still have a stony section. Whether for art, or for a competition, stacking stones can be fun and skillful. Take your time, and place the largest and flattest stones at the bottom and slowly stack higher with smaller stones. Who can build the tallest? Which one can survive a high tide? Play a game of Jenga where the loser is the person whose tower topples over. Safety tip: Careful not to stack large stones that might be dangerous if they fall. Careful not to drop stones on your feet. Make sure no-one is sitting near the tower in case it falls.

Shadow fun

You can create shadows on beaches, particularly when it is later in the day and the sun is low – though you will have to be quick as the shadows may not last for long and will be constantly changing. You can use stones, sand, driftwood and seashells to create shadow scenes. If you stand still, maybe your friends can add objects to your shadow – add feathers as hair, seaweed for a beard, stones for eyes, etc. Or maybe you just draw on facial features on the shadow. Make sure you have a camera ready to capture your creations.

Giant feet

As a sand sculpture, make some large feet with perhaps seashells for nails. Create your funny, giant feet a bit away from your base on the beach and see who passes by and tries them out. You may be surprised how many will stand by them for a photo!



Kite-flying

The beach is usually a good place for a breeze, and perfect for kite flying. The kite

does not need to be large to have fun and can also be made at home quite easily. Using the open space of the beach you may need to run to get lift-off and keep running to keep it up, but sometimes you won't need to run at all.

Use the power of the wind currents and take time to develop skills to control your kite in the air. You can progress to double cord/string kites for more control. There are a huge variety of kites to buy of all kinds of shapes, and home-made ones can be fun to decorate.

Safety tips: Make sure your kite is far away from other users so it won't crash down on them. Be aware of the string/cord length and distance from you.

Don't leave any part of your kite at the beach, you don't want to endanger beach users or marine wildlife with your string/cord or kite material.



DAY AT THE BEACH

CHECKLIST

Enjoy

- Beach bag
- Swimming togs
- Towels
- Sun-cream
- Water
- Bag for wet togs
- Warm layers
- Waterproof jacket
- Fully charged mobile
- Phone
- Hand sanitizer

Protect

- #2minutebeachclean kit
- Bag for general waste
- Sealed box for composting
- Bag for recycling

Extra Bits

- Picnic blanket
- Wind breaker
- Camping chairs
- Small folding table
- Goggles/snorkel
- Beach games
- Water sports gear
- Books
- First-aid kit

Eating

- Cooler box
- Snacks and meals
- Reusable cups, plates and cutlery (even for takeaways!)
- Fabric napkins



