

COASTS:

Do we like to be beside the seaside?

Unit overview

In this unit, children will learn about the coast of the British Isles. The approach used is to provide a large number and wide range of visual images – we know the idiom that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ – as primary geography is such a visual subject. Children need to be able to visualise what they are learning about not just know its ‘word label’. If field visits are not possible the photographs can extend the children’s ‘virtual’ experience. Many children will have been to the seaside and may have enjoyed playing on the beach, although many might only have experienced a hotel pool. There is plenty of scope for building on their natural enthusiasm, especially if field work at the coast is possible. Children will consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of living by the coast, and how much of the UK’s coast has changed from a focus on fishing to one on tourism. Throughout the unit they will also be introduced to a few contrasting coasts around the world, and associated environmental issues, extending their coastal and locational knowledge and encouraging critical thinking and presenting an argument.

There is a great deal of material in this unit so, even if you are selective because of time, you could still deliver stimulating and challenging geography.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the local area to include more of the UK
- name and locate (some) counties and cities of the UK
- learn about key topographical or physical features of coasts to understand how some of these aspects developed, are hanging now and have changed over time
- understand similarities and differences through the study of human and physical geography of a region of the UK (SW England) and a region in a European country (Costa Blanca, Spain)
- describe and understand key aspects of the human geography of coasts, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity and safety
- consider tourism, as both an economic and a pleasurable activity
- think about the future and the effects climate change, rising sea levels and pollution, especially by plastics, are already having.

Cross-curricular links

- **English:** developing vocabulary; using descriptive language; using persuasive writing; reporting; labeling, annotating and writing succinctly (a postcard); giving and justifying opinions; presenting and argument.
- **Science:** learning about beach, cliff and sea habitats; forces (bridges); identifying and naming animals and plants in a marine environment (rock pools); fossils; the variety of rock types, especially by colour; recognize that environments change.
- **Art & Design:** drawing picture postcards; designing and creating posters and presentations to promote a coastal location; designing and making a classroom display; modelling a rock pool.
- **Computing:** using Google™ Earth to explore the world.
- **Music:** singing a song about the seaside; sea shanties; creating the sound of the sea.
- **History:** change (harbours, ports and docks to marinas; change of miners’ cottages into tourist accommodation), heritage (Jurassic Coast, Tin mining, fishing industry).
- **PE, Dance:** movement to reflect the tides, set to music.

Background information

The British Isles has a remarkably long coastline for its size. The interaction of the sea, rivers and different types of rocks has created a wonderful mixture of headlands, cliffs, bays, beaches, dunes, marshes and estuaries. As a maritime nation, Britain has always been strongly linked with the sea. The Royal Navy, overseas trade and a fishing industry have led to the development of docks, ports and harbours. Seaside resorts have existed since Victorian times, and have changed with the development of tourism. Throughout the lessons, make reference to the dynamic, changing nature of the coastline, which is due to human activity, tides, weather, and rising sea level.

Rather than select examples of coasts from all over the place, this unit focuses on the coast of SW England for coherence, to illustrate the concepts that children should learn about. However, it is recognised that some teachers will, if appropriate, prefer to adapt the ideas in this unit to their own study locality.

For comparison, and with all the world’s coastlines to choose from, a heavily populated coastal region (Costa Blanca, Spain), three environmentally sensitive coastal areas (Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Antarctica and low-lying archipelagos) and the land reclamation project of Hong Kong International Airport, have been chosen for cameo studies. Other localities you might like to look at include another area of reclaimed land (e.g. Netherland’s polders to compare with the flood-threatened east coast of England as sea level rises), a wild natural coastal area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), or a highly industrialised section of coast, perhaps one formerly associated with ship-building.

The Big Finish

The children will research a specific coastal area of their choice (possibly from the suggested list), and think about the sorts of people it is suitable for, who might be attracted to live there or visit it. They will then promote this coastal area by making either an estate or travel agent presentation (including a poster or brochure) aimed at these people or a promotional television advert.

Map work

The children should use a wide range of maps wherever possible, from informal maps in tourist attractions and brochures to OS 1:50 000, atlases, Google Earth as appropriate to the task, making their own decisions about which to choose.

Fieldwork

This unit includes opportunities for fieldwork such as a fieldtrip to a coastal area, possibly as an extension, if access to the coast is a possibility for your school.

If your school has a Beach School this unit would complement it.

Independent learning area

With the children's contributions from their own coastal visits, set up a coast display table, especially to display 'trophies' from a fieldtrip to the coast – beach material, seaweed, shells, photographs, sketches – if you are lucky enough to be able to go on one.

The children could also carry out an in-depth study of a familiar section of coast, perhaps because they live near it or visit it on holiday. Building on Week 2 on SW England, the children might like to research the 96 miles of the East Devon and Dorset coast, between Orcombe Point, Exmouth and Old Harry Rocks near Swanage, especially, as it is famous for its fossils, including dinosaurs. It has been designated the 'Jurassic Coast': a very special World Heritage Site.

Assessment

All children can:

- locate and describe a coastal environment in the UK
- use appropriate geographical vocabulary to describe significant human and physical coastal features
- talk about how coasts change
- identify human coastal activities.

Most children can:

- locate and describe several coastal environments in the UK and in other continents
- describe and explain how coasts change
- describe economic and leisure activities associated with the coast
- identify and explain some advantages and disadvantages of living by the coast.

Some children can:

- locate, describe and compare several coastal environments in the UK and elsewhere
- describe how and explain why the physical features of coasts change
- describe how coastal economic activities have changed
- identify some coastal hazards and how we can respond to them now and should in the future.