

Tides

Practical skills

How tides work, and the risk they create for anyone on a beach.

Tides are the ocean's response to the gravitational pull of the moon and sun. Most coasts see two high and two low tides in about 24 hours and 50 minutes.

CYCLE
~12h 25m

DAILY SHIFT
~50 min

SPRING TIDES
full / new moon

- Spring tides — largest range — at full and new moon.
- Neap tides — smallest range — at half moon.
- The rule of twelfths estimates the rise between tides.
- An incoming tide can cut off a beach or cove very quickly.
- Tide times shift about 50 minutes later each day.
- Local tide tables are essential; general rules are not enough.

LOOK FOR IT

The rule of twelfths: the tide rises 1/12, 2/12, 3/12, 3/12, 2/12, 1/12 of its range in each hour.

Check tide times before walking on any beach with cliffs or a causeway. Being cut off is the commonest coastal rescue.