

# COASTAL TOURISM: CAN IT BENEFIT THE ECONOMY WITHOUT HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT?

Many millions of visitors each year come to the coasts of South East England and North France, some just to lie on the beach, others to enjoy a more active form of recreation such as beach walking or wind surfing, or even to carry out educational fieldwork! All these activities can put pressure on fragile environments, especially sand dunes, vegetated shingle beaches, cliffs and shore platforms.

**THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT**

Recreation and tourism is very important to the South East of England. Large numbers of people depend on it for employment.

5 million people visit the Sussex coast each year, adding an estimated £2.4 billion to the local economy, about 13% of the income for Sussex. Tourism employs 100,000 people, about 17% of the employment in the two counties (East and West Sussex).

So it is very important that all the tourist attractions, both man-made and natural, are well advertised and continue to flourish.

Equally important is the need to protect the natural environment, the attraction that many people have come to see.

## 1. WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

### Activities

a) Working in groups, list all the activities in the table overleaf you and your group do on sandy beaches, on shingle beaches, on shore platforms, and in the sea. Use a separate line of the table for each activity. The first line has been filled in for you.

b) Do these activities harm the environment? Estimate whether you think they are slightly harmful, moderately harmful or very harmful, and in the right hand column write what sort of problems they could cause.

c) Be ready to report back to the class on visitor damage to coastal environments. During other groups' reporting back you could add to the table any activities and environmental problems you hadn't thought of.

### Group Assignment

d) Design leaflets that could be given to tourists, or notice boards to be displayed at vulnerable sites, to ask visitors to avoid damaging the coastal environment.



**BEACH ACTIVITIES: IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Symbols:**

- \* slightly harmful
- \*\* moderately harmful
- \*\*\* very harmful

Activity	On sandy beaches	On shingle beaches	On shore platforms	In the sea	What sort of environmental problems does the activity cause?
Picnics	**	**			Litter. Also encourages gulls to grab food!



## 2. TOURISM SURVEY AT THE COAST: WHAT QUESTIONS WOULD YOU ASK?

Imagine you are:

- **EITHER** - Employed in a Research and Database Company planning a survey of tourism
- **OR** - Preparing to carry out a tourism survey for a school field course.

**LOCATION:** A coastal area of high environmental value/importance.

**PURPOSE:** To help provide information for planning decisions about

- (i) how to improve the area and so help the economy, while
- (ii) protecting it from environmental damage.

a) Work in groups to agree on **10 questions**. (Tourists don't always want to spend long answering questions!). The answers to the questions should yield key information about the economic and environmental needs of the area:

- Write out your questions when you have decided the wording.
- Try to be tactful! It is not always a good idea to ask people directly what their age is! You could, however, ask them which age group they are in. What age ranges would you use to divide up the visitors?
- Decide how you could convert the information you obtain into graphs and diagrams.
- Write down what sort of graphs you would draw for each question.
- You might now wish to recast your questions slightly.
- Would you want to pilot your survey (i.e. just try it out on a few people first) before going ahead with a full survey? Why?
- How many people would you aim to question, and what sort of people?
- Where and when would you ask the questions? At the car park, people arriving? At the beach? At the car park, people leaving? On a wet day?

b) Be ready to share your answers and justify your choice of questions to the rest of the class.

Remember that you would need a polite, "Excuse me, please would you...." start to the survey. You should also be ready to explain what you are doing and why.



QUESTION	TYPE OF GRAPH

**c) POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS (for discussion)**

- What conclusions might you expect to be able to draw from the answers?
- How might more income be generated by the local tourist industry?
- How might the environment be threatened by any changes?
- How could it be protected from these threats?
- How could the environment be enhanced?

