

Rock Pools

Can be found at: Cromer , Hunstanton, Sheringham

West Runton Beach, Norfolk

Where is it? The beach is 5 miles west of the town of Cromer. The X5 bus travels from Norwich, through Cromer to West Runton.

Among the easiest to see, even in the highest rockpools, are serrated wrack, edible winkle, shore crab, common prawn and beadlet anemone. Finding black squat lobsters, long-spined sea-scorpions, velvet swimming crabs and common hermit crabs may require a lower tide and exploration of the lowest rockpools. Visit rockpools only on a retreating tide, wearing shoes with strong grip, and be prepared for the range of weather conditions which may occur in these exposed sites.

Step-by-step guide to rockpooling

- 1 Make sure you check the tide timetable beforehand - the best time to rock pool is at low tide.
- 2 The only equipment you'll need is a curious mind and sturdy footwear with a good grip. Flip-flops are useless on sharp stones! Don't forget sun cream and sun hats too. Maybe even a jumbo magnifying glass.
- 3 A bucket with some salty water in it is useful if you want to take a closer look at what you catch. Change the water regularly. You can also gently pull the bucket through the water to see what you can scoop up. Don't use a net, as you can hurt sensitive sea life.
- 4 The best, clearest rock pools are close to the sea edge – look at these first and move back with the tide. Don't be afraid to get your hands wet – gently turning over seaweed can reap rich rewards. If you pick up a crab do it from behind, with finger and thumb top and bottom of the carapace. But beware of red-eyed blue velvet swimming crab – they can nip!
- 5 Sit very quietly and make sure you don't cast a shadow over the pool – timid crabs and other inhabitants will know you're there.
- 6 Look out for transparent common prawns and shrimp (which often swim backwards), starfish, and brightly-coloured anemones waving its tentacles at you, mussels and whelks, as well as limpets, the lawnmowers of the sea which scrape algae off rocks with their large rough tongues. Just under the surface you might see goby, butterfish or blenny. You might also see a shell moving on legs – if you do, it's a hermit crab that's made its home in a disused periwinkle shell.
- 7 When you've finished and it's time to go, carefully return the contents of your bucket, salt water and all, to the rock pool.