

BLOG



LIFE ON THE ROCKS

When the tide goes out, something magical is revealed along the rocky shore. Thousands of incredible creatures are exposed, some on the rocks themselves, some sheltering in the pools left behind by the retreating water. These pools are alive with scurrying, squirming, and swimming animals, as well as a jungle of colourful seaweed waving peacefully in the still water. If you kneel down beside a rockpool and watch really carefully, you might be able to imagine what life is like for the creatures living life on the tideline.

First thing's first though, you've got to track down a good pool. Although you can spot some amazing creatures on sandy or stony beaches, it's the jaggedy, rocky areas of the shore that you need for a great rockpool. These places can sometimes be slippery, so make sure you're wearing boots or wellies before you set off.

Now, you might be thinking that the bigger is better when it comes to rockpools. In fact, small or medium pools can hold just as much (if not more) life as the big ones. What you really want to look out for is **colour**. Usually if you spot a really colourful pool, with a rainbow display of seaweed, anemones and shells surrounding it, you're onto a winner.



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Remember, you won't be rewarded with amazing sightings straight away. The real secret to becoming a great rockpooler is **patience**. It will take a little time, once you've stopped moving around, for the animals to build up enough confidence to start moving around. After all, you could easily be a predator waiting for your chance to catch them out in the open.

Speaking of predators, many rockpool dwellers are expertly camouflaged, helping them to blend into their backdrop and stay hidden from hungry eyes. You'll have to look really closely, especially for some of the smaller creatures, to spot them amongst the seaweed. Are there see-through shrimps darting around in the shallow water? Is that really a periwinkle or is it a hermit crab? Only sharp eyes and plenty of patience will tell.



So, why are these creatures worth waiting for? A good rockpool has something for everyone.

We'll start with the stars of the show...The common starfish has 5 arms and is usually orange. Believe it or not, this iconic animal is actually an active predator, gobbling up mussels and clams by pulling their shells open and dissolving the creature inside with their digestive juices. It's not just common starfish around—spindly brittle stars, chunky cushion stars and spiny starfish can also be seen if you're very lucky!

Another favourite bunch of rockpool regulars are the crabs. Both shore crabs and edible crabs are pretty common, their sideways shuffle a guaranteed crowd-pleaser. Hermit crabs also bring their own charm to the pool, disguised in amongst the shellfish. They live in empty shells which protect their soft bodies, swapping each time they outgrow their current home.



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Common prawns and rockpool shrimps (which are virtually identical) are also a common sight in most rockpools. They are scavengers, eating anything from dead mussels to decaying seaweed and blend in perfectly due to their semi-transparent (see-through) appearance. They are so difficult to see that, unless you spot them on the move, they are virtually invisible.

If you're planning on dipping into the rockpool instead of just watching from above, you can find some top-tips on the equipment you'll need, what to look out for, and most importantly how to **rockpool responsibly** by watching our beginner's guide video in this pack. Remember, these delicate creatures rely on a healthy rockpool environment to survive, so always make sure you handle them carefully and leave the pool exactly as you found it. If you do, more people will have the chance to glimpse the amazing lives thriving along the rocky shore.

DO YOU ROCK(POOL) ?

Find out how much you've learnt by answering the following questions:

1. How do starfish hunt?
2. What do hermit crabs have to do as they grow?
3. How should you always leave a rockpool?

