

Advice on Riding on beaches and estuaries

The law and management of public access rights vary widely between the four nations of the United Kingdom. Practical elements of the following advice apply in all but the legal requirements in Scotland and Northern Ireland may differ from those in England and Wales.

More advice is available on www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice.

IMPORTANT This guidance is general and does not aim to cover every variation in circumstances. Where it is being relied upon, The Society recommends seeking advice specific to the site.

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There are a number of beaches around England, Wales and Northern Ireland that allow riding (in Scotland most beaches are available to all non-motorised users), and some BHS Approved Centres that offer the opportunity to ride on a beach.

Few beaches are practical for use with a horse-drawn vehicle, or it is not permitted, so check specific sites with the local council if you wish to drive a horse. This advice note is therefore aimed at riders rather than all equestrians.

Beaches and Estuaries

There are many health benefits of riding on a sandy beach for both horse and rider. Long sandy stretches are good for building up fitness levels and often the sand can encourage muscle tone and strength. It can provide outstanding views of the sea and is a refreshing way to see areas of beauty throughout the coasts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Beach riding can be a wonderful experience for both you and your horse if you are aware of a few points of legality and safety, so please read all the guidance in this advice note.

Estuaries are where main rivers meet the sea and they are unpredictable places, requiring caution and respect for the variety of conditions underfoot, the special ecology and the potential risks in riding there. While large expanses of open ground look inviting to riders, some of the conditions encountered may be dangerous. However, with due care and knowledge, estuaries can provide good riding opportunities.

Is riding on the beach permitted?

Riding is not necessarily permitted on beaches so always check locally. The list in the appendix of this advice note may help, but local rules may have changed since it was updated. Access may be limited to specific times, days or areas and there may be byelaws. Permitted times will often be to riders' benefit, being at quieter periods such as early morning and late evening when there may be fewer other users to avoid.

If there are areas where riding is not permitted, be sure you are clear about their extent and avoid them carefully; their boundaries may not be obvious even if they are above high water because signs and fences tend not to last long on the shore or may not be permitted.

Always avoid disturbing wildlife and plants, paying particular attention to dunes, salt marshes and estuaries. Keep to designated paths in these areas. Sand dunes and salt

marshes are fragile environments and riding through or over them should be avoided for conservation reasons, even if riding is not specifically prohibited.

Some beaches are very important for breeding and feeding birds, which are already under threat and struggling to survive and are easily disturbed by human activity, including with horses. Always observe any areas that are fenced off or any signs which ask you to avoid the area; respect the wildlife. Wading birds flock to the shoreline at low tide to feed and as the tide comes in they are liable to take flight as a flock. It is important not to disturb birds when they are feeding at low tide, particularly during prolonged bad weather as adverse conditions will already have reduced the birds' opportunity to feed. If you are riding along the shoreline and see birds rising away from you, try to go higher up the beach for that stretch.

It is important that you observe restrictions as infringement could result in all equestrian access being prohibited.

Your horse's reactions

Horses that are not used to the beach may be excited by the different environment, even if they are normally calm. It is often breezy and the atmosphere is stimulating and very different. Humans are aware of it – why else have beach holidays always been so popular? Horses, too, will respond to the change and you should be prepared.

Be wary of faster paces, especially in company, as horses may be stimulated into racing by the atmosphere, even if they would not normally do so in other places. Being out of control could be particularly dangerous where there are people who may not realise that you cannot stop. There could be areas of softer sand, debris, holes or other hazards as well as people – you need to be able to avoid them.

People commonly exercise dogs on the beach, and the dogs can become excitable and more difficult to recall, so be particularly alert if you see dogs and keep to a walk near them.¹

Be cautious of the sea, and on first entrance ride slowly. Some shores are shallow for some distance, some shelve steeply or suddenly. Approach the sea at an angle rather than head on because if your horse spooks at the breaking waves, it is then more likely to shy away from the water than rear. Approaching alongside the shallows often encourages nervous horses to get their feet wet.

Be aware that loose horses (and other animals) entering the water tend to head straight out to sea which of course has a high risk unless they can be reached in time.

¹ bhs.org.uk/go-riding/riding-out-hacking/common-incidents/dogs/

Box parking

Check whether there is a car park near the beach before you go that is accessible with your vehicle. If the only parking is on the beach this may be impractical, particularly when towing with a vehicle that is not four-wheel drive.

Height barriers are common on many beach parking areas and can restrict horse transport.

Parking charges are common, though this may only be in the summer months. National Trust members may receive a reduced rate at the Trust's car parks.

Always park sensibly and do not cause an obstruction for access by emergency vehicles; this includes access to a slipway or other boat launching area, sometimes with big vehicles and trailers which need large turning circles.

Be people aware

Any unpopular behaviour by riders can lead to all horses being prohibited. Please act with care and courtesy at all times.

Some beaches require you to remove dung and it is good practice to do so on all beaches. Always go equipped with dung bags. Removing dung goes a long way to making horses more welcome.

If there are other people on the beach, ride past them slowly and sensibly, leaving plenty of room. Sand kicked up by horses' passing will be carried several feet with even a gentle breeze and could be unpleasant for people hit by it.

Some beaches are often used for kite flying, sand yachting, motorbike racing, parasailing and many other sports. Check with locals if possible so that you can avoid popular times or areas.

Be particularly alert for people with dogs. Many dogs will chase horses which are moving faster than walk, which can cause horses to bolt. Dog walkers should prevent their dog chasing, but they want their dog to have a good time too, probably off the lead, so 'share the beach' and avoid popular dog areas or times if possible. Keep an eye out for loose dogs and be ready to slow down or stop unless it is clear that the owner is in control.

Tides

Check tide times before you go. Awareness of tides is vital, especially if riding on a narrow beach with coves. Tides can come in very quickly and could cut off your route from the beach. Tide timetables are available online, from the council and often local shops. In

difficulties, call 999 to contact HM Coastguard, giving your position as precisely as you can.

On estuaries, the flatness of the area means that tides can come in fast and sometimes imperceptibly or along hidden channels, cutting off escape routes. Ebb tides may leave slippery conditions behind or increase the incidence of sinking sands.

Be aware of the sign of a rip tide, a specific current pattern close to the beach, which is strong and moving quickly away from the beach. They can look like a nice calm area to enter the sea! Rip tides are more common at some beaches than others, so check locally. There are many useful videos on the web which show what to look for.

Sand

Sand will vary in texture and depth. It may be harder closer to the water and softer further away, but that is not always the case. Sandbanks can go from hard to soft in less than a stride, especially on estuaries.

On many beaches, sand patterns, between hard and soft, can change with every tide, even more so after a storm, so even if you have ridden a beach before, do not rely on sand remaining the same and remain alert.

Quicksand, sinking sand or mud are common in some estuaries and may move around. They are unpredictable and extremely dangerous.

Deep, soft sand can cause injury to horses, especially at speed. If you want to ride fast, it is recommended to walk or trot the area to check the surface before returning at a faster pace.

Be aware of holes in the sand and streams running across to the sea. Streams may be deep or cause soft patches.

Do not ride in the water if you cannot see the bottom: there may be hidden debris or rocks.

On estuaries in particular be alert for varying surface texture and depth. Rocky surfaces can be low and difficult to spot, and are especially slippery when fine seaweed is left by the tide. There can also be very soft areas left behind.

High visibility

The BHS recommends that both horse and rider should wear 'hi-viz' clothing. This is particularly important when riding on estuaries, where tides can come in or mist can descend quickly. Make sure your horse can be easily spotted from above if you become separated; a hi-viz exercise sheet can be a benefit.

Litter and rubbish

The majority of sandy beaches are well maintained, but you should always be alert for washed up glass bottles, cans, chain, ropes, nets, general rubbish and hidden structures or rusty spikes protruding from the sand. Be aware of this risk, including in the water.

Dung

Go prepared to 'poop scoop'!

On some beaches you are required to remove droppings and it is good practice to do so on any beach, because dung is frequently given as a reason for prohibiting access with horses. Take a plastic bag with you, to collect and remove your horse's dung. The easiest way is to put your hands inside the bag, gather the dung into the plastic and turn the bag inside out around it, as people do with dog faeces. A piece of twine easily secures the bag to your saddle.

Dog owners are required to remove their dogs' faeces from beaches and many would say that riders should remove their horses' droppings. Even though the health risks from dung are negligible, it is not pleasant to find droppings on a beach where people may sit, picnic and play, or if it is washed into the water where people are paddling or swimming.

Salt

If you ride in the sea or there is a breeze blowing off the sea carrying moisture, the salt may dry leather and rust metals in your tack, so clean your tack after each beach excursion.

Salt can also dry horses' hooves so wash your horse's feet thoroughly after a beach ride. Salt water is good for healing and cleansing skin and can benefit injuries such as strains, but dried salt can cause irritation afterwards so you may need to wash it off with fresh water if your horse has sensitive skin.

List of Beaches

The list on the following pages gives details of beaches that welcome riders, along with any that have restricted times, other byelaws, or that prohibit horse riding. The information has been supplied by local authorities and **may have changed** since publication. The BHS does not accept any liability for the information provided and **strongly recommends** that you contact the listed authority to check before travelling any distance, or if you have any queries.

For further information about beaches in your area, or beaches not listed here, please contact the local council.

If you would like to contribute information to this list, email access@bhs.org.uk.

Please Note: Byelaws are in place on many beaches and commonly prohibit breaking-in or training horses or other animals; and intentionally or negligently riding or driving any horse or other animal in a race, or so as to cause danger or annoyance to any other person using the beach. All riders are strongly advised to observe these rules and always consider other people using the beach, as all horses may be prohibited if a few cause a nuisance.

For ease of reference, beaches in the list below are split into regions by country.

England – North East

Blyth and Seaton Sluice – Northumberland

Horse riding is permitted on the beach between Blyth and Seaton Sluice, but access through the dunes is via a well surfaced track, which is suitable for wheelchairs and buggies. Horses are not allowed on the track or dune system but there is horse access across the track to the beach at The Ranch car park and at Fountain Head. Contact the coastal warden: Tel: 01670 797323 Mobile: 07932440838

Druridge Bay – Northumberland

The County Council owns the upper beach and leases the foreshore for approximately 6.5km of Druridge Bay centred around Druridge Bay Country Park. Horse riding is permitted on this section of the beach. Parking and direct access to the beach from Druridge Bay Country Park (NE61 5BX), where there is a visitor centre with café/shop and toilet facilities. Parking charges are applicable. Contact Northumberland County Council on 0845 600 6400.

All within the district of Durham

There are no byelaws for any beach area with the district of Durham. It is worth bearing in mind that most of the beaches are rocky and shingle/sand backed by cliffs, with very little direct access from roads or bridleways. For further information visit durhamheritagecoast.org.

Hartlepool, including Seaton Carew – County Durham

Horse riding is permitted on beaches if the entry point used, is a location approved by the Council, for example at Seaton Carew 'Coach Park' where a ramp has been provided. There is a bye-Law in place stating that horses must not be ridden in a manner that would cause a nuisance to or be a danger to the public, e.g. by cantering or galloping. Those who ignore the bye-law could be prosecuted, and if convicted, issued a fine of up to and including £500. During the busy seasons of the year (bank holidays and summer holidays etc.); the Council requires horse riders not to use areas of beach that are specified as bathing areas or that are heavily populated at the time that they exercise their horse(s). Horse riders are also required to take care and not cause conflict with other beach users or to disturb shore birds. Beach Safety Customer Services Civic Centre Victoria Road Hartlepool TS24 8AY Telephone: 01429 266522 Email: customer.service@hartlepool.gov.uk

Marsden Bay – South Tyneside

Managed by The National Trust. The beach is inaccessible for horses due to steep steps. However, horses are allowed on the grass area on the cliff tops, known as the Leas.

Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Much of the inter-tidal zone on the Northumberland coast has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area for its importance for migrating and wintering birds. Horse riders should avoid disturbing flocks of roosting or feeding birds on the shore. Some beaches are better suited to riding than others and we would recommend the following:

- Cheswick Black Rocks/Goswick (limited parking for large trailers)
- Bamburgh
- Beadnell Bay north (from Beadnell village car park)
- Beadnell Bay south (Newton Links House), in the summer months Beadnell Bay hosts an internationally important seabird colony, please obey local signage and wardens
- Alnmouth
- Beadnell Bay North (from Beadnell Harbour Car Park - park in overflow area only) - Seasonal Restriction May-August
- Beadnell Bay South (Newton Link House Car Park) - Seasonal Restriction May-August
- Alnmouth (Boathouses Car Park)
- Warkworth/Buston Links (Warkworth Picnic Site Car Park and follow route to beach for horses)

Horses are allowed on Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve by permit from the NNR office on 01289 381470

For horse-riding information in the AONB northumberland.gov.uk

Contact Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership on 01670 620306.

Seaburn Beach and Roker Beach – Sunderland

Horses are permitted on the beaches during quieter periods. Horse owners are requested not to use the beaches when busy. All horses should be kept near the tideline and walked when next to other beach users. Riders must wear safety equipment. Bareback riding is not permitted. A Coastal Code of Conduct is available from the council. Contact Sunderland Resorts Office on 0191 553 2828.

Whitley Bay, Cullercoats Bay and Tynemouth Longsands – Tyne and Wear

As the beaches are in a very urban location, horse riding is not actively encouraged due to the numbers of visitors and residents who use them. However, horse riding is not banned

and it is recommended that you contact the council to gain permission beforehand. Those with permission are advised to take other beach users in to account and be aware that there are usually large numbers of dogs on the beaches, which may be a problem for some horses. Horse owners are also requested to use the beaches during quieter times, such as early mornings, and avoid times when the beaches are busy. It is requested that horses be kept near the tide line and galloping is not permitted when there are other beach users nearby.

It should be noted that the beaches in the area differ in accessibility and size:

- Whitley Bay beach is approximately 1.5 miles in length and is a mixture of sand and rocks
- Cullercoats Bay is small and is also used as a harbour so is not the best for horse riding
- Tynemouth Longsands is just short of a mile in length and mostly sandy, very popular for beach and water sports
- King Edwards Bay is not easily accessible for horses and is very small

For more information, contact North Tyneside Council on 0345 200 0103.

England – North West

Formby – Merseyside

Head to Lifeboat Road (L37 2EB) Bay 3 to park your horse box. Access to Lifeboat Road car park is via a narrow road with passing places. Lifeboat Road car park has limited space available for horse boxes and large vehicles. We recommend visiting on quieter days as we can't guarantee parking for horse boxes on busy days, which tend to be at weekends, during school and bank holidays or on hot, sunny days. Even on quieter days it's best to arrive as early as possible in the morning. The event field / overflow car park is currently closed as the condition of the ground is not suitable for any vehicles at this time. Thank you for being mindful of other visitors and parking your vehicle between the bay lines of one space if you can (the parking bays are standard 2.4 metres wide by 4.8 metres long). Please don't hesitate to contact the team before you visit to chat through access and parking. Call 01704 878 591 or send an email to formby@nationaltrust.org.uk. If you need help with parking when you arrive, see the welcome team in the National Trust van.

The only access to and from the beach for horses is via the Lifeboat Road path. This path across the sand dunes is marked by waymarkers and can be accessed from Lifeboat Road car park. Once on the beach, you can ride south as far as Altcar Rifle Range (red flags on the dunes mark the boundary of this live firing range) and north as far as Ainsdale. For an inland ride, there is a short section of public bridle path that runs through the woodlands from Lifeboat Road to Wicks Lane in Formby. To help protect all the wonderful wildlife at

Formby and prevent damage to paths horses are not allowed on any paths or areas other than those stated above and marked on the map. Please do not take horses on the Lifeboat Road beach boardwalk. Thank you for your support..

Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve – Wirral

The nature reserve has additional protected status and horse riders are requested to stay on the sandy areas, avoiding the main island and rocky foreshore around the islands. Contact Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Parks and Countryside Coastal Rangers, 0151 648 4371.

Morecambe and Heysham – Lancashire

The beaches at Morecambe and Heysham are accessible and the only restriction is that riders are not permitted to break in horses. Riders must also not ride in a way to cause danger or annoyance to others. For up-to-date information contact Lancaster City Council, 01524 582000 or info@lancaster.gov.uk.

Sefton – Merseyside

A Horse Rider's Code of Conduct is available from Sefton Council at sefton.gov.uk. There are a number of rules and recommendations so please check the Code before riding on the beach. All riders must have current and valid personal and third party liability insurance. Horse riders are not allowed on the beach at Sefton for 2 hours either side of high tide, all year round. This is to avoid disturbing flocks of wading birds which are of particular importance to the SSSI status of the Sefton Coast.

Warning: There are soft patches of sand that can cause severe problems for horses. You are strongly advised not to gallop unless you have first checked the surface. For further information, contact Sefton Council Coast and Countryside Service, 0151 934 2961 or coast.countryside@leisure.sefton.gov.uk

Wirral Coastline – Merseyside

Wirral has approximately 10km of coastline accessible for horse riding, from Lower Heswall to Hoylake. There are areas in between that should be avoided because of deep mud and soft sand. Areas along the Mersey Estuary are not suitable for horse riding and horses are not allowed on the embankment from Meols to New Brighton. Within the Dee Estuary SSSI and North Wirral Foreshore SSSI, horse riders are requested to avoid riding along areas of foreshore at high water during the winter months when large numbers of wading birds are gathered there, and to avoid disturbing birds and other wildlife at any time of year.

Areas for riding (and suitable access) are as follows: a large car park at Banks Road, Lower Heswall, with slipway access to the sandy and stony foreshore and is 150 yards from the Wirral Way horse riding route; Target Road; Heswall Fields (The National Trust) leading to the Wirral Way; Thurstaston (Dee Sailing Club Slipway, where there is parking

for horse boxes in the main Visitor Centre car park off Station Road); the slipway at Cubbins Green; Kings Gap slipway where there is plenty of parking for horse boxes along Kings Parade and three slipway access points along the length of Hoylake Beach.

Please note: Para-gliders and hang-gliders launch from the Dee Cliffs above Thurstaston Beach; West Kirby Beach is used during the winter months by power kites and sand yachts are used on an area adjacent to Hoylake Beach. The Wirral Way horse riding route is a concessionary route only.

Contact Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Parks and Countryside Coastal Rangers, 0151 648 4371.

England – Yorkshire

East Riding of Yorkshire

The exercising of horses/riders is permitted on all East Riding beaches under strict control, with the exception of the award winning beaches of Bridlington, Hornsea and Withernsea where horse riding is NOT permitted. Extended gallops or racing is not permitted in any area. Events and practice sessions of any nature require written permission and will only be permitted at certain times of the year, in designated areas, subject to controls and insurance. Horse owners are requested not to use the beaches when they are busy and to be aware of other activities in the area. Riders should dismount and horses should be walked when near other beach users and boat launching areas. A Coastal Code is available from The East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Contact The Foreshores Section, The East Riding of Yorkshire Council, 01262 678255.

Access is normally permitted to beaches with the exception of any resort award beaches during the bathing season (1 May - 30 September.) Horses are not permitted on promenades. Certain areas of the East Coast beaches contain debris from erosion and/or fragments of debris from Ministry of Defence (MOD) firing ranges. All riders are advised to check the area for hazards before taking their horses onto the beach. Added care is needed when walking or cantering through the surf or water's edge.

Filey – Scarborough

Use the car park at West Avenue and path to the beach at Martins Ravine. (Advisable to walk horses during busy periods.) Restrictions apply 1 May-30 September. No riding adjacent to the promenade from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Head south and enjoy five miles of sandy beach, but be aware of people, dogs and the tide. For more information call Customer First, 01723 232323.

England – East

Holkham Beach

Opening times: Due to the number of visitors to the beach, at certain busy times we introduce restrictions on weekends and holidays for horse riders.

Thursday 28–Sunday 31 March: Arrival between 6-9am (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 2 p.m. (leaving the car park by 5 p.m.).

Monday 1–Sunday 14 April: Arrival between 6-9 a.m. (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 4 p.m. (leaving the car park by 7 p.m.).

Saturday 4–Monday 6 May: Arrival between 6-9 a.m. (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 4 p.m. (leaving the car park by 7 p.m.).

Saturday 25 May – Sunday 2 June: Arrival between 6-9 a.m. (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 4 p.m. (leaving the car park by 7 p.m.).

Every weekend in June: Arrival between 6-9 a.m. (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 4 p.m. (leaving the car park by 7 p.m.).

Monday 1 July – Tuesday 3 September: Arrival between 6-9 a.m. (leaving the car park by 11 a.m.) and from 4 p.m. (leaving the car park by 7 p.m.).

Please be sure to check the tide times when planning your visit.

<https://www.holkham.co.uk/visit/activities/horse-riding/>

England – East Midlands

Skegness, Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea – Lincolnshire

Horse riding is permitted on Skegness, Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea beaches throughout the year, with the exception of the periods listed below.

- During the period between 1 April and 30 September horses are not permitted on the beaches between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- While the Blue Flag is flying at Skegness, Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea central beaches, horses are not permitted
- For the duration of any event being held on the beaches

Any ride must, at all times, be conducted in an orderly and responsible manner and must not cause nuisance or danger to any other persons using the beach. Horse riders are entirely responsible for removing all their horse's droppings from the foreshore area. The Council reserves the right to charge any rider/horse owner for the removal of droppings

from the foreshore area, should this not be carried out immediately by the rider/owner of the horse.

Permission is only granted in respect of the exercising of horses and ponies and does not allow the hire of animals on the beach for gain or any other commercial purpose of whatever nature.

No vehicles are permitted on the beaches or promenades.

Riders must indemnify the council against all claims, actions, damages, or proceedings of whatever nature arising directly out of the granting of this permission. The area south of Skegness central beach is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). As a nature conservation site, horse riding is not permitted here due to ground nesting birds and other animals that may be endangered. The land and beach area north of Mablethorpe central beach is designated as a Coastal Conservation Area (CCA1).

Horse riding is by permit only and restricted to the southern end of the beach and off all vegetated areas. Permits can be obtained from the site manager, Natural England Eastern Area Team enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk, 01205 723614.

England – South East

Arun – West Sussex

All of Arun's beaches have a similar amount of shingle at the top to form the sea defence and this could make it difficult to access on horseback. Sea Lane at Ferring is a favourite for horse riders because there is a local stables. You may wish to contact such local establishments to find out where they consider access to be the safest. Restricted Times: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact Arun District Council, 01903 737500, info@arun.gov.uk.

Camber Sands – East Sussex

Camber Sands during the summer season, i.e. between Easter and the end of September, there is a greater risk of horses causing danger or annoyance to persons using the Seashore. Horse riding for the summer season is restricted from the last Thursday before Easter Sunday to 30 September inclusive. During this period riding is permitted weekdays early mornings (off beach by 8.30 a.m.) and evenings (after 7 p.m.). Please be advised that during school holidays, there can still be large numbers of visitors using the beach during summer evenings. Riding is permitted around LOW tide hours only, (i.e. 2 hours before/after), all year round. Please check tide times before setting out. Riders arriving at high tide will not be permitted to ride on the beach. Horse owners should also be aware that winter weekends can still be very busy, and parking can be an issue during peak hours. Early mornings or late afternoons avoid such conflicts. Please note, traps or carriages pulled by horse or pony are not permitted on the beach. Any dung MUST be picked up and taken away. Please be aware that all horse riding is subject to change by

the Coastal Officer should there be high numbers of beach users early or late in the day. Rother District Council, 01424 787878.

Goring, Worthing – West Sussex

You can ride on the beach, except during the restricted times on the next page. The best parking for horse boxes is on Marine Drive, west of Aldsworth Avenue, from where horses should be led across the green to the beach. Restricted Times: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September (Worthing Borough Council). Leaflets on tide times are available from the local Beach Office (for a small charge), 01903 238977, beach.office@adur-worthing.gov.uk; Worthing Borough Council, on 01903 239999 or enquiries@adur-worthing.gov.uk.

1 October to 30 April: You may ride on the sand at any time (note: it may be easier to the west of Worthing, around Goring or Ferring where it is easier to park vehicles). For a list of all council byelaws, contact the Coastal Office, or see byelaws. Please be considerate 'under hoof' and help us preserve our native marine flora that compliments are shingle. Avoid damage or crushing of these plants by walking around any foliage. Please avoid walking or riding any horses or ponies over any part of the Shoreham boardwalk as the structure is not suited to excessive heavy loads.

Pagham Harbour and Shore Rd – Chichester, West Sussex

The beach is a great place to ride your horse on the sands at low tide. Horses are allowed on the beach at Bognor Regis under the following conditions. The current byelaws relating to seashores and promenades for horses state:

- No person shall on the seashore or promenade break in any horse or other animal or ride or drive any horse or other animal in a race so as to cause danger or annoyance to any person using the seashore or promenade.
- No person shall between the hours of ten in the morning (10.00hrs) and six in the evening (18.00hrs) on any day between the first day of May (1 May) and the thirtieth day of September (30 September) ride any horse or other animal on any part of the seashore and promenade.

Although the beaches of Bognor Regis, Felpham and Pagham have a large amount of flat expanses of sand at low tide, they do have shingle at the shore end of the beaches, which could make access on horseback more difficult than if it were sand. Much of the beach is covered in shingle, but at low tide there is an expanse of sand around Bracklesham and East Wittering. Access for horses is best at Bracklesham where there is a car park right on the seafront. From April to September the shingle is cleared to create a slipway at Bracklesham for boats, but this also provides easy access for horses. In the winter months you can still use the beach but many horses will struggle to access the beach over the shingle that builds up.

Rather than specifying times for horse riding common sense is expected. A wet day in August will result in very few people on the beach and horses would be acceptable all day, but on a busy hot sunny day in May it may only be appropriate before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m.. People who are travelling a significant distance should check the weather forecast or call the Foreshore Office 01243 672133 before setting out. There are also have many other activities on the beach such as kitesurfing and people walking dogs. Consequently, horses that are easily spooked are not advisable.

It is worth noting that many people will want to ride their horses around West Wittering and East Head. This is privately owned land but there are restricted times to do this during the summer period; visit westwitteringbeach.co.uk.

Shoebury East Beach – Southend, Essex

Restricted Times: 9 a.m. to after 9 p.m. in the summer. Contact the Pier and Foreshore Officer, 01702 215620.

Thanet (All) – Kent

Riding is allowed over Thanet's 26 miles of coastline outside of the restricted times below. Riders are expected to comply with the same regulations as other beach users, including clearing up after their ride. Riders are asked not to ride on the beaches at high tide to avoid disturbing the large number of wintering birds in the area, especially the shingle beaches between Minnis Bay and Reculver and at the Sandwich and Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserves. Restricted Times: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact Thanet District Council, 01843 577000, leisureservices@thanet.gov.uk.

England – South

New Forest National Park Coastline – Hampshire

The majority of the coastline within the National Park is saltmarsh and mudflats. We are not aware of any specific permissions, restrictions or prohibitions relating to horse riding on any of the beaches within the National Park, although there may be some local guidelines. Contact Countryside Access Officer, New Forest National Park Authority, 01590 646669.

England – South West

Berrow – Sedgmoor, Somerset

Access to Berrow and Brean Beach (Summer Opening 28 March – 3 November 2024)

Parking on the beach is permitted but there is a strict 15mph speed limit. The Road Traffic Act applies to the area and any speeding or dangerous driving will be reported to the police immediately. Please drive with extreme caution and be vigilant. The Beach Safety

Wardens will be on duty for safety and advice, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily, taking into account tidal conditions. Please see prices for parking. Please drive with extreme caution and be vigilant for exposed holes left by dogs and children digging and branches left by the tides. Never attempt to drive on the mud flats, even a 4x4 will get stuck, and recovery is very expensive. The Beach Safety Wardens will be on hand for safety and advice. Outside of these hours there are no beach safety staff on duty and the vehicular access gates will be closed. There are now permanent parking spaces on the access road to Berrow and at the nearby Berrow Dunes Nature reserve car park, for pedestrian access, and down at Brean Cove. There are disabled access points at nearby Burnham-on-Sea beach for those who are unable to use the pedestrian access at Berrow and Brean Beach

Card payments are preferred for parking at the beach (it is likely that there will soon be no cash option). There is a Seasonal Parking Permit covering Easter to October. You can apply for a Berrow Beach Parking Permit online. You can choose to either print out your proof of purchase yourself, or have it posted to you. Take it when you visit to show at the kiosk for entry onto the beach. The parking charges are detailed on the council's Beach Charges and Permits page.

Access to the Beach (Winter Opening 4 November 2024 – 4 April 2025) The Beach Safety Wardens will be on duty for safety and advice, Berrow is open between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily (closed on Christmas day), and Brean parking will be open Saturday and Sundays 10 a.m. till 3 p.m. and the bank holidays over Christmas and on New Year's Day, taking into account tidal conditions. Outside of these hours there are no beach safety staff on duty and the vehicular access gates will be closed. There are now permanent parking spaces on the access road to Berrow and at the nearby Berrow Dunes Nature reserve car park, for pedestrian access, and down at Brean Cove. There are disabled access points at nearby Burnham-on-Sea beach for those who are unable to use the pedestrian access at Berrow and Brean Beach.

Christchurch – Dorset

No person shall, between the Saturday preceding Easter Monday and 30 September (both dates inclusive) between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m., ride, drive or take any horse on the seashore. Highcliffe Cliff Top car park (BH23 5JE) is the most suitable for parking of horse boxes as there is no height barrier, parking charges apply April to September inclusive. For more information contact Christchurch Borough Council 01202 495000, beaches@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk.

Exmouth – Devon

Riding horses on our beaches is allowed, although not all beaches are suitable. A visit to the beach first is recommended.

The following points should be noted:

- Whenever possible, horse riding should take place when the beach is not busy, ie at the start and end of the day, and avoiding weekends and bank holidays
- The beach area must be left in a clean and tidy condition with manure removed
- Please give way to other beach users, and remember that not all members of the public are familiar with horsemanship. Be aware of pedestrians, small children and dogs.
- Avoid areas in which there is a lot of kite surfing since large kites can very easily spook a horse
- Act sensibly and with consideration for other beach users. Please do not jump over the beach Groyne when you do not have a clear visibility of what or who is on the other side, also be aware that some pools of water on the beach may be much deeper than they first appear.
- Please make sure you check the tide times before visiting.
- Horse boxes and other vehicles are not allowed on the beach at any time so please check the parking availability before visiting.

To discuss a potential horse riding event on a council-controlled beach, or for any further information, please contact Street Scene Services 01395 517528, streetscene@eastdevon.gov.uk

Sand Bay – North Somerset

Riders are permitted on Sand Bay. However, horses must ride along the tide line, avoiding pedestrians and the sand dunes at all times. There is good parking for horseboxes at the southern end of the bay, adjacent to the main car park.

Torbay – Devon

Horses are permitted to be ridden on the beaches for which the council is responsible. However, the council must also provide a safe public area. The following guidelines must be followed;

- Please give due consideration for the safety and comfort of other beach users, remember that not everyone is knowledgeable about horses and our beaches are open to the general public at all times.
- Be alert for other beach users; particularly children. Also be aware of the possibility that dogs may be running free on the beach.
- Riders using the beach must have public liability insurance and may be asked to provide evidence of this to Council staff.
- Riders must indemnify us against all claims, actions, damages or proceedings of whatever nature arising directly out of the granting of this permission.

- The beach must be left in a clean and tidy condition. All litter; including manure must be removed from the beach immediately and taken away with you.
- Be aware that during very low tides or where the beach has been scoured by rough weather, additional hazards may be uncovered.

Horses may be ridden on accessible beaches: 1 October to 30 April

Only at low tide during the early morning or late afternoon: 1 May to 30 September

Horses cannot be taken onto any beach with either a Seaside Award or a Blue Flag. Please check the council's Beach awards page for the most up-to-date list.

On any other beach, horses may not be ridden between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m..

Weston-Super-Mare – North Somerset

Horse riders should be mindful of other people using the beach. Where horse riding is permitted, the council recommends that you ride horses along the tide line and hold third-party public liability insurance to the value of £5m.

Allowed except from 1 July to 31 August from 10 to 6 p.m..

Sand Bay – Allowed on the beach at any time. Not allowed on the sand dunes at any time.

Clevedon – Not allowed at any time.

Channel Islands

Guernsey

Horses are allowed on the island's beaches outside of the restricted times below. However, horse riders are reminded of their responsibility towards all other beach users. Restricted times: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact VisitGuernsey 01481 723552, enquiries@visitguernsey.com.

Jersey

Restricted times: 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact Jersey Tourism, 01534 448800, info@jersey.com.

Wales

Amroth, Manorbier, Freshwater East, Whitesands and Newport Sands – Pembrokeshire

The foreshore (the area between mean low and mean high tide) can be ridden on, subject to there being lawful access to the foreshore. Some beach car parks may operate vehicular height restrictions. The following beaches are popular with horse riders, having

adequate parking and access. However, during the summer season they are very busy and it is advisable to ride in the early mornings or evenings: Amroth; Manorbier; Freshwater East; Whitesands; and Newport Sands. Contact Pembrokeshire Coast National Park 0845 345 7275, info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk.

Gwynedd

Horses are permitted on all beaches in Gwynedd, provided that they adhere to the byelaws (available from Gwynedd Council) and that they do not frequent the beaches during the summer, especially during warm weather, as the beach areas are very popular with the public, and the riding of horses on a busy beach could be a hazard. Please note: on Morfa Dyffryn/Benar, Dyffryn Ardudwy, horses are not permitted in the sand dunes or on the wooden board walks that are the only access to the beach. Contact Gwynedd Council, on 01758 704066, morwrol@gwynedd.gov.uk.

Pembrey Peninsula and Cefn Sidan – Carmarthenshire

Beach access to the forestry tracks and specific areas of the award winning beach can be attained via Pembrey Park Riding Centre, Pembrey Country Park, 01554 835191, riding@pembreyparkridingcentre.co.uk pembreyparkridingcentre.co.uk.

Saundersfoot and Tenby, Amroth to Giltar Point – Pembrokeshire

Restricted times: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact Pembrokeshire County Council, on 01437 764551, enquiries@pembrokeshire.gov.uk. Riding is not allowed during these times and dates.

Swansea Bay, Bracelet Bay, Limeslade Bay, Rotherslade Bay, Langland Bay, Caswell Bay – Swansea

Horse riding is permitted on the following beaches, outside of the restricted times below (with the exception of children riding ponies or donkeys led or attended by someone on foot): Swansea Bay (all); Bracelet Bay; Limeslade Bay; Rotherslade Bay; Langland Bay; Caswell Bay. Restricted times: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. between 1 May and 30 September. Contact City and County of Swansea 01792 636000.

Talacre – Flintshire

There is a public bridleway, along the beach in Talacre, from its junction with Public Bridleway No. 32, to the county boundary with Denbighshire with a total distance of just over 3.2 km.

Northern Ireland

Ballyholme Beach

Restricted to early in the morning or late in the evening.

Ballywalter BeachBenone Beach

From 1 May-30 September horses are not allowed on this beach between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m..

Castlerock

From 1 May-30 September horses are not allowed on this beach between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m..

Downhill Beach

From 1 May-30 September horses are not allowed on this beach between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m..

Groomsport Beach

Usage restricted

Helens Bay

By permit only. Permit available from meredith.thompson@doeni.gov.uk or by calling 02891 853621.

Millisle BeachMurlough Beach

No horses in the restricted areas between 1 April and 30 September when award flag is flying.

Newcastle Beach

No horses in the restricted areas between 1 April and 30 September when award flag is flying.

Portrush East Strand Beach

From 1 May-30 September horses are not allowed on this beach between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m..

Portrush West Strand Beach

From 1 May-30 September horses are not allowed on this beach at any time.

Portstewart Strand Beach

Horses are only allowed on the beach until 9:30 a.m.

Tyrella Beach

No horses allowed in the restricted areas between 1 April and 30 September when award flag is flying.

Waterfoot Beach

Riders must not ride a horse causing danger or annoyance to any other person using the beach.

For further information on places to ride and carriage drive in Northern Ireland, contact Susan Spratt, BHS Development Officer for Ireland, 02842 788681, susan.spratt@bhs.org.uk.

Scotland

BHS Scotland is in the process of creating a Scottish resource on beach and estuary riding – in the meantime please contact bhsscotland@bhs.org.uk.

Index of beaches

Below is a list of place names, being the locations of beaches featured in this advice note, unless otherwise stated.

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Amroth, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Arun, West Sussex, South East

B

Ballyholme Beach, Northern Ireland

Ballywalter Beach, Northern Ireland

Benone Beach, Northern Ireland

Berrow, Sedgemoor, Somerset, South West

Blyth, Northumberland. North

Bracelet Bay, Swansea, Wales

C

Camber Sands, East Sussex, South East

Castlerock, County Londonderry

Caswell Bay, Swansea, Wales

Cefn Sidan, Carmarthenshire, Wales

Christchurch, Dorset, South

Cullercoats Bay, Tyne and Wear, North

D

Downhill Beach, Northern Ireland

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Durham, North

E

East Riding, Yorkshire

Eastbourne, (all East Sussex), South East

Exmouth, Devon, South West

F

Filey, Yorkshire

Formby (Merseyside), North West

Freshwater East, Pembrokeshire, Wales

G

Goring Beach (Worthing, West Sussex), South East

Groomsport Beach, Northern Ireland

Guernsey (all), Channel Islands

Gwynedd (all), Wales

H

Hartlepool, North

Helen's Bay, Northern Ireland

Heysham, Lancashire, North West

Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve, Wirral, North West

Holkham, Norfolk, East

J

Jersey, Channel Islands

L

Langland Bay, Swansea, Wales

Limeslade Bay, Swansea, Wales

M

Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, East Midlands

Manorbier, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Marsden Bay, South Tyneside, North

Millisle Beach, Northern Ireland

Morecambe, Lancashire, North West

Murlough Beach, Northern Ireland

N

New Forest National Park, Hampshire

Newcastle Beach, Northern Ireland

Newport Sands, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Northumberland Coast AONB, Northumberland

P

Pagham Harbour and Shore Road , Chichester, West Sussex, South East

Pembrey Peninsula, Carmarthenshire, Wales

Portrush East Strand Beach, Northern Ireland

Portrush West Strand Beach, Northern Ireland

Portstewart Strand Beach, Northern Ireland

R

Roker Beach, Sunderland, North

Rotherslade Bay, Swansea, Wales

S

Sand Bay, North Somerset, South West

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Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, North
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Talacre, Flintshire, Wales
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Waterfoot Beach, Northern Ireland
Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset, South West
Whitesands, Pembrokeshire, Wales
Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, North
Wirral, North West

Estuaries around England, Wales and Ireland

The following list details major estuaries around the coastline of England, Wales and Ireland, together with advice given by local authorities in that area, with contact details for the local authorities.

Please remember that information may have changed since publication. You are strongly recommended to check with the local authority.

England – North

Solway Firth, Cumbria

The Solway is a large, complex estuary on the west coast of Britain. It is one of the least-industrialised and most natural large estuaries in Europe. Tidal streams in the estuary are moderately strong and levels of wave energy can be high. There is considerable seasonal fluctuation in water temperature, owing to the shallow nature of the estuary.

Morecambe Bay, Cumbria

Morecambe Bay in north-west England is the confluence of four principal estuaries, the Leven, Kent, Lune and Wyre (the latter lies just outside the site boundary), together with other smaller examples such as the Keer. Collectively these form the largest single area of continuous intertidal mudflats and sand flats in England, Wales and Ireland and the best example of muddy sand flats on the west coast. The unusual nature of the Morecambe Bay tides is for longer, slower ebb and a quicker and faster flood. Always check the prevailing and forecast weather. There are not only strong winds and seas, but also squally, foggy or misty conditions. Local knowledge is imperative when riding here. The area has sand and mud banks, channels and gulleys, some being quicksand/mud which is in a constant state of flux.

Once on the sands, you must know how to leave, in haste if needed. Appropriate clothing must always be worn, including footwear, bearing in mind the terrain.

Tell a relative, friend or even the Coastguard where you are going and what time you will be back. It is better for the emergency services to know sooner rather than later. A form of communication, such as a mobile phone, is always useful but do not completely rely on one. A whistle or some flares can be a life-saver. Tides and weather conditions can be obtained 24 hours a day on 0151 931 3341. Morecambe Bay lies across the county boundary of Cumbria and Lancashire. Contact Cumbria County Council, 01228 606336, enquiries@cumbria.gov.uk; or Lancashire County Council 01772 221600, enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk. In emergency, contact the Coastguard on 999.

North Drigg Coast, Cumbria

Drigg is an example of a small, bar-built estuary on the north west coast of England. It is fed by three rivers (the Irt, Mite and Esk) which discharge through a mouth that has been narrowed by large sand and shingle spits. The sediments within the estuary are largely muddy within the Rivers Irt and Mite, while those of the Esk are more sandy, particularly towards the mouth.

England – North West

Wirral

Within the Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and North Wirral Foreshore SSSI, horse riders are requested to avoid riding along areas of foreshore at high water during the winter months when large numbers of wading birds are gathered there and to avoid disturbing birds and other wildlife at any time of year.

Contact Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Parks and Countryside Coastal Rangers, 0151 648 4371.

England – South East

Thames

The estuary is one of the largest inlets on the coast of Great Britain and parts of it constitute a major shipping route. The term applies to the coast and the low-lying lands between the mouth of the River Stour on the Essex/Suffolk border and The Swale Estuary in north Kent. Saltmarshes and mudflats dominate the area, although much of the length has man-made embankments where the land behind is now cultivated or used for grazing.

Contact Medway Council, 01634 306000, info@medway.gov.uk; Dartford Borough Council, 01322 343434; Gravesham Borough Council, 01474 337000, info@gravesham.gov.uk; Swale Borough Council, 01795 417850, info@swale.gov.uk; Kent County Council, 08458 247247, county.hall@kent.gov.uk.

England – East

Suffolk

Suffolk has extensive areas of estuary on the Bluth, Alde and Ore, Deben, Orwell and Stour which are internationally important as areas for ground-nesting birds. Please note the advice from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in regard to the coastline and estuaries of Suffolk which is:

Ground-nesting birds may be present on coasts and estuaries from March-July inclusive, and may be vulnerable to disturbance during this time. Please keep to tracks and follow any signs in place.

Legal protection

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to intentionally damage or destroy an active nest of any species of bird. In addition, it is an offence to disturb adults or young of specially protected (Schedule 1) species, for example, little tern, which nest on some Suffolk beaches.

Effects of disturbance

Nests are particularly vulnerable whilst the adults are incubating the eggs. This is because eggs may cool quickly if parent birds are scared away from the nest. Eggs and chicks may also be more vulnerable to predators, who may quickly locate nests due to the alarm calls of parents. Nests in open access areas, such as beaches, may also be prone to trampling.

What you can do

- Many ground-nesting birds will choose locations away from regularly used footpaths and bridleways – please keep to paths/tracks where possible
- Access restrictions may be in place in some areas – please look out for signage and follow any guidelines
- Look out for indications that a nest may be nearby, e.g. birds alarm calling, circling or dive-bombing. Give these areas a wide berth.

Keep dogs on short leads and close to you at all times.

Wales

Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau/Lleyn Peninsula and the Sarnau

Contact Gwynedd Council, 01758 704066, morwrol@gwynedd.gov.uk

Swansea Bay, Swansea

Swansea Bay and Estuaries is a large estuarine site on the south coast of Wales. For information about riding and restrictions on Swansea Bay contact City and County of Swansea, 01792 636000.

Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries

For information about riding and restrictions on Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries, contact Carmarthenshire County Council, 01267 234567, leisure@carmarthenshire.gov.uk.

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