



British Coasts

Britain is made up of 6,100 islands of which only 291 are inhabited, combined they have a coastline of 9040 miles (14,549km) of which the National Trust owns 555 miles. There are 45 Heritage coasts, covering 33% of the overall coastline, these areas are conserved and managed to protect their natural beauty, and if necessary improve accessibility for visitors.

The tidal range in the UK varies from 14.5m, during the spring tide in the Bristol Channel to less than 1m during the neap tides in southwest Scotland.

The British coasts are home to 12 species of cold-water coral, which can be split into 7 species of hard coral: the largest of which *Lophelia pertusa* can be found forming reefs up to 13km long, the smallest being *Sphenotrochus* and *Rewianus* with a diameter between 2-6mm, 3 species of soft coral ranging between 4-25cm in height and 2 species of sea fan ranging between 20-40cm.

The southern half of the British coastline is sinking at the rate of 5mm a year, whilst the northern half is rising.

Along the coastline there are 133 castles, most of which are located in the south, 150 lighthouses, the first of which was built by the Romans on the first century and about 250 thousand wrecks of which 1,000 can be found in the fifty mile stretch of water by the Isle of Wight.

In 1900 there were 85 piers in Great Britain half of which now have collapsed, the most recent being the west pier in Brighton. The longest pier is in Southend measuring 182m (600ft).



The shape of the coast is changing constantly due to costal erosion; factors which can cause this are rises in the sea level, the actions of tides, waves and currents and changes in the sediment levels and distribution. Weathering also plays a big part in the erosion of costal cliffs.

Between 1926 and 1996 29 villages along the Yorkshire coast have disappeared into the sea due to costal erosion which is occurring, in some areas, at a rate of 2m/6.6ft per year. Sea defences are expensive to build and current opinion is to allow the land to be surrendered to the sea.

The area between the Hebridean islands of Jura and Scarba is home to a collection of whirlpools which combine to make the world's third largest whirlpool.