

Summer Beach Fun

Think about your favorite summertime activities. Hanging out at the park with friends? Camping? Visiting an amusement

park? Fishing? All of these activities are fun. But for lots of kids, going to the beach is right up there on top of the list.

What Is a Beach?

A beach is a stretch of land along the edge of bodies of water such as oceans or lakes. Usually the land is made up of sand, rocks, pebbles, and shells. There are also many different kinds of beaches. Some beaches in North America are connected to the wide open waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, while other beaches contain fresh water from the Great Lakes. Some beaches on the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron have huge mounds of sand called sand dunes. They may be a challenge to climb, but are lots of fun to slide down! What kind of beach is near you? If you don't live close to the beach, read on to enjoy a journey to the beach from your own living room!

The beach is full of amazing animals that live on the shore and beneath the water's surface. Check out these interesting ocean and freshwater creatures!

Blue Crabs

These cool ocean critters have a hard outside shell called an *exoskeleton*. Even though they are mostly brown and gray, blue crabs have blue tints on their claws. The tips of female blue crabs are also a bright reddish-orange color. Blue crabs eat plants and small animals like mussels, snails, fish, and smaller crabs.

Did you know?

Some blue crabs lay around two million eggs in two weeks!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Beach in a Bottle

If you live too far away to visit a beach, bring the beach to you! Try making this cool beach in a bottle.

Here's what you'll need:

- Clean plastic bottle or glass jar with lid
- Sand (use gravel if you don't have sand)
- Sea shells or pebbles
- Veggie oil or baby oil
- Water
- Blue food coloring
- Funnel



Here's what to do:

Use the funnel to pour sand into the bottle or jar. Add pebbles, shells, beads, or any other cool beach treasures you have. In a separate container mix the water, baby oil, and food coloring. Then use the funnel to carefully pour the solution into your bottle. Make sure your bottle top or jar lid is sealed tightly. You can also ask an adult to help you secure the lid by sealing it with plumber's tape or hot glue from a hot glue gun.



Seagulls

If you've been to the beach, you've seen seagulls. They live near ocean and freshwater lake shores. These sassy sea birds are not afraid of people. If you're having a picnic on the beach, they might swoop down to try to steal your food! Seagulls have been called "garbage birds" because they eat just about anything. Besides sandwich scraps from your picnic, seagulls eat fish, squid, mussels, shellfish, bugs, and earthworms. That is some diet!

Did you know?

Seagulls can drink salt water from the ocean. They have glands near their eyes that remove the extra salt so that they can safely drink the water.

Walleye

The walleye is a freshwater fish that makes its home in deep rivers and lakes across North America. Walleye are shimmery gold and olive color with a white belly. These freshwater fish can grow to be 30 to 35 inches long (1 m) and weigh around 10 to 20 pounds (4-9 kg). Walleye usually eat small fish and bugs and search for their food at night. For people who enjoy fishing, walleye are fun to catch—and good to eat.

Did you know?

A female walleye can lay more than 100,000 eggs!



Fun Fishy Beach Snack

Make your own edible beach!

Here's what you'll need:

- Whole graham crackers
- ¼ cup finely crushed graham crackers (or vanilla wafers)
- White frosting
- Blue food coloring
- Goldfish crackers or gummy fish

Here's what to do:

Stir the blue food coloring into the white frosting. Use a plastic knife to spread the blue frosting on a graham cracker (this will be your "water"). Sprinkle crushed graham crackers onto a portion of the graham cracker to create "sand." Add goldfish to the "water." Then enjoy your beach snack!

Jellyfish

Jellyfish are very interesting creatures that live in the ocean. They have mushroom-like bodies with long wiggly arms called *tentacles*. They squirt water from their bodies to push themselves forward. Their tentacles are used to sting their food. Watch out: sometimes jellyfish sting people too! Jellyfish eat fish, shrimp, crabs, and tiny plants. Jellyfish come in a range of different colors: pink, yellow, blue, and even purple.

Did you know?

Many jellyfish have *bioluminescent organs*, which mean some parts of their bodies glow in the dark!

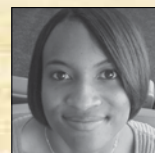


Green Sea Turtles

Green sea turtles are ocean creatures. They are the largest hard-shell turtles in the world and can weigh over 700 pounds (317 kg). Known for the greenish color of their skin, these turtles live in warm, tropical oceans and can swim around 35 miles per hour (56 kph)—that's as fast as a moving car! Though these creatures move quickly in the water, they move much more slowly on land. Green sea turtles lay 100-200 eggs on warm sandy beaches. The tiny baby sea turtles eat small sea animals like crabs and jellyfish.

Did you know?

Green sea turtles can hold their breath for hours under water. Since they are cold-blooded animals, they can hold their breath longer in cold water.



Christin Baker is a full-time stay-at-home mom. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.