

# WATER SAFETY TIPS

Australia's national identity is closely linked to our beaches and coastline and visitors often can't wait to join the fun. Here's what you need to know before you dive in.

With over 10,000 beaches, Australia is an aquatic playground. Whether you are coming for a swim, snorkel or a surf, you can experience incredible spots in every corner of the country.

As with any physical activity, before you jump straight in, it's important to exercise caution. Here are a few tips to keep in mind so you can stay safe and enjoy our beautiful beaches.

**AUSTRALIA HAS SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST INCREDIBLE SWIMMING AND SURFING SPOTS. BY BEING SMART AND SAFE, EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE BEAUTIFUL BEACHES AND WATERHOLES THAT ARE SO UNIQUE TO OUR COUNTRY.**

**IS IT SAFE TO SWIM AT AUSTRALIAN BEACHES?**



The safest Australian [beaches](#) for swimming are the beaches patrolled by Lifeguards and Surf Lifesavers so always research the local patrolled beach closest to where you are staying.

Follow these guidelines and you will have lots of fun at our beaches and safely return home.

- Always swim between the red and yellow flags on beaches with lifeguards and surf lifesavers.
- Look for the beach signs at the entrance to the beach, they have lots of local information and will explain to you the meaning of the signs placed on the beach.
- Never swim alone, always with a friend.
- Never swim under the influence of alcohol or after a big meal.



## WATCH FIRST... THEN SWIM

When you get to the beach stand and watch the water for at least five minutes, watch the surf and a few sets of waves roll in, and avoid where the waves are not breaking as it could be a dangerous rip current.

Always check the depth of water before diving in, diving in to shallow water can cause a spinal injury.

## WHAT IS A RIP CURRENT AND HOW DO I SPOT ONE?

Rip currents or 'rips' are formed when the water that has come into the beach needs to escape and go back out to the ocean. As that water heads back out, it forms a channel that takes it out to sea at speed, even the strongest swimmers can struggle, and that is a rip. The water in a rip often looks darker in colour because it is deeper and calmer as there are no waves breaking. The rip will usually slow down and stop out the back of where all the waves are breaking. Rips are marked on the beaches with large 'Dangerous Current' signs.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET CAUGHT IN A RIP?

If you're caught in a rip you need to;

- Stay calm, don't panic and just float to save energy.
- Raise one hand to let everyone know you're in trouble, preferably your weaker one, so you can use the stronger arm as a paddle along with your legs to help you keep afloat until help arrives.
- Never try to swim against the rip, they move in all different directions so first work out which way the water current (rip) is taking you. Only then, if you are able, swim left or right (perpendicular) to the rip.
- If you are not being rescued a rip will often take you out to the back of the break. Aim to move towards whitewash in the waves as this may be a sandbank, the waves will also help push you back into the beach.

## WRITE DOWN THE LIFEGUARDS' PHONE NUMBER

Pick a beach that is patrolled and make sure you or someone that you are with has the telephone number of the lifeguards written down or in their phone.

## WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES TELEPHONE NUMBER IN AUSTRALIA?

Dialling 000 will contact you to Police, Ambulance and the Fire and Rescue Service, only call 000 in an emergency.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I SPOT SOMEONE IN TROUBLE?

1. If you see someone with one arm raised, alert the lifeguard or surf lifesavers immediately.



2. Call 000 and alert the Emergency Services.
3. Alert the people around you so they can get more help and keep an eye on the location of the struggling swimmer.
4. Never try to rescue anyone yourself, as you might end up needing rescuing yourself.

### WHAT IF I AM SWIMMING AND I GET A CRAMP?

If you are swimming and get a cramp remain calm, keep moving your other limbs to stay afloat. If you are near shallow water try to stand up and stretch, if not raise one arm to seek help.

When you're back safely onshore make sure you drink lots of water.

### WHAT DO I DO IF I GET STUNG BY A JELLYFISH?

If you are stung by a jellyfish, stay calm. Immediately you will feel the sting. Depending on your pain threshold the sting can last up to 30 minutes and it's common for the pain to travel to your lymph nodes. To remove the stingers (or tentacles of the jellyfish) use the very tips of your fingers, where the skin is tough, to scrape them off your skin.

Take care to not touch your face or skin as the stinger could stay stuck on your finger.

Get to the nearest shower and pour warm water over the stings.

Alert the lifeguards so they can let other swimmers know.

### ARE SHARKS A REAL DANGER? AND HOW DO I AVOID THEM?

Shark attacks are very rare, and many beaches have shark nets to deter sharks. However, it's always smart to avoid swimming at dusk, in river mouths and a long way offshore. This will help to further reduce risk. The safest place is always between the red and yellow flags.

### WHAT ABOUT CROCODILES?

In the north of Australia crocodiles are found in rivers and coastal estuaries and move around via the sea.

Look for safety signs and do not swim in rivers, estuaries, mangrove shores or deep pools.

Always seek local advice in your area about crocodiles before boating, fishing and camping.

### BE SUN-SMART

Australia's sun is powerful, so always wear SPF 50 sunscreen, cover-up with a rash guard and make sure you have a hat (even on overcast days).



MARK THESE SENTENCES AS "T" (TRUE) OR "F" (FALSE)

1. Australian beaches are ideal for swimming, snorkelling, surfing and windsurfing. ☐
2. There are Lifeguards and Surf Lifesavers in all the beaches. ☐
3. The red and yellow flags mark the safe spots in the sea. ☐
4. There are information signs placed on the beach. ☐
5. You'd better not swim alone or after you've eaten or drunk alcohol. ☐
6. Make sure the water is deep enough before you dive in. ☐
7. If you're caught in a rip, float and raise an arm to let others know you need help. ☐
8. If help doesn't arrive, swim forwards or backwards from the rip. ☐
9. It's important to make a note of the lifeguards' telephone number. ☐
10. If you see someone in trouble, look for help. ☐
11. If you get a cramp, try moving the limb to ease the pain. ☐
12. If you get stung by a shellyfish, rub sand on the sting to remove the stingers. ☐
13. Many beaches have shark fences to keep sharks away. ☐
14. Never swim at dusk, in river mouths and a long way offshore. ☐
15. Crocodiles don't pose a threat to boaters, fishers or campers. ☐
16. Follow sun safety rules even if it is cloudy. ☐

