

Which section

- 1 recommends paying the entrance fee?
- 2 states that the beach has featured in advertisements?
- 3 says visitors may be surprised by the water temperature?
- 4 points out that the water is quite shallow?
- 5 suggests visitors should take photos of the beach?
- 6 says visitors can walk on the beach in their bare feet?
- 7 mentions a pleasant smell from the trees?
- 8 advises visitors to get to the beach early in the day?
- 9 states that it is not always possible to visit the beach?
- 10 warns visitors to the beach to protect their skin?

Four of the world's best beaches

Which are the best beaches on Earth? Here are our top four.

A Rodas Beach, the Cies Islands, Spain

Some of Spain's most spectacular beaches lie in Galicia on the Atlantic coast, and perhaps the most stunning of these are on the Cies Islands. These unspoilt and uninhabited islands are a national park, with public access limited to the summer months, and contain the perfectly-shaped Rodas Beach with its pure white sand and clear blue sea. At first sight it almost seems tropical, until dipping your toe in the water encourages you to spend a lazy day on the beach rather than dive in for a swim. There you can enjoy the quiet, the warmth of the sun and the scent of pine from the nearby woods, and later on have an excellent meal in the reasonably-priced fish restaurant close to the beach.

B Whitehaven Beach, Whitsunday Islands, Australia

Australia is famous for wonderful beaches, and Whitehaven must surely be one of its very best. Set against a background of amazingly-green tropical forest, and with views across the clear blue ocean to distant small islands, the sandy white beach is like something from a picture postcard or a TV commercial. As you would expect

in such a sunny climate, the water is pleasantly warm, ideal for swimming on or below the surface. The sand, in contrast, always remains cool as it is of a type that reflects the sunlight, so you won't need sandals. As the island has no permanent inhabitants, and most day trippers leave by boat quite early, in the late afternoon and evening you can have the place almost to yourself.

C Matira Beach, Bora Bora, Tahiti

Matira Beach on the Pacific island of Bora Bora has incredibly white sand, beautiful fish swimming in clear blue-green water, and stunning sunsets. The air temperature hardly varies around the year, and neither does that of the ocean – which is only waist high even hundreds of metres from the shore. And unlike windier beaches nearby, Matira is quite well sheltered. There isn't, however, much shade, so it is advisable to use plenty of sun cream, and the sand can feel uncomfortably hot unless you wear beach shoes or something similar. There is no charge to visit the beach, yet it rarely becomes crowded at any time of day. Everyone should go there at least once in life, and when you do, make sure you have your photo taken as the sun goes down.

D Anse Source d'Argent Beach, Seychelles

This must be one of the most photographed beaches in the world, so don't forget to get some shots of your own, especially of the sea and the sand framed by the background of enormous pink rocks, with tall palm trees right behind them. It's easy to see why commercials have been made there. The patches of brilliantly white sand between those beautiful rocks make it the perfect place to spend a relaxing day, and it is well worth the small amount it costs for access. The best spots – those with both sunshine and shade – quickly get taken, so make sure you arrive well before the sun starts to beat down and the sand heats up.