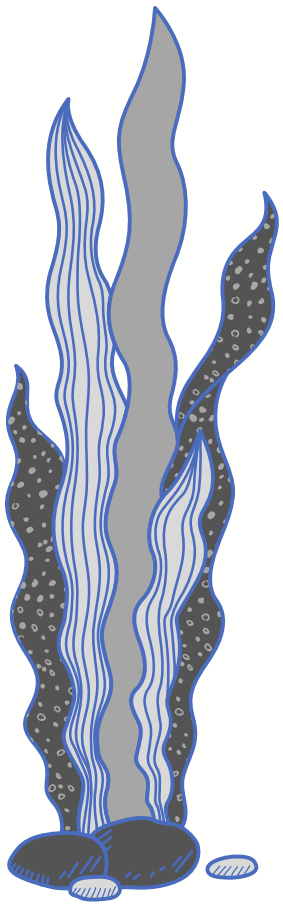
East Neuk Seaweed

A.L.L.W.E.T
to stay dry and safe

Our ultimate guide to staying safe when foraging in the intertidal zone

A - Ally Page 2
L - Location Pages 3-4
L - Lunch Page 5
W - Weather Page 6
E - Equipment Pages 7-8
T - Tides Page 9

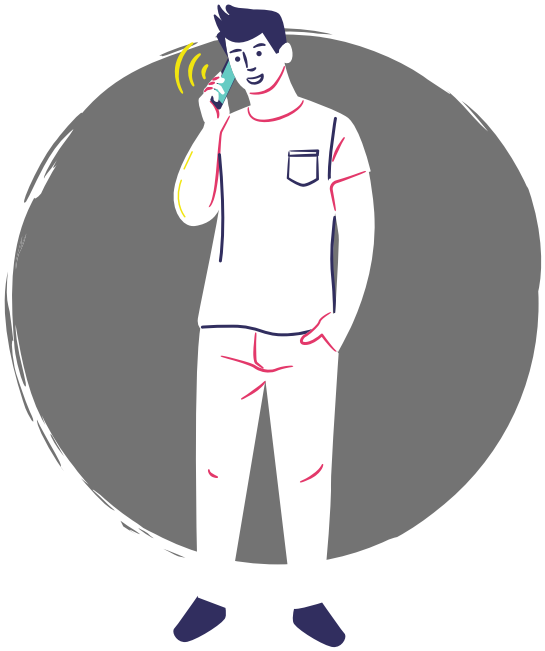


A is for ALLY

It is essential to have a contact on dry land that knows:

- Your exact location and nearest vehicle access.
- The time you expect to come off the beach.
- To expect a call or message when you are safely off the rocks.
- All emergency numbers in case of anything unexpected (find links in resources)

If possible, take a friend with you, sharing your experience is fun and will help to keep you safe. You will still want an ally on dry land.



L is for LOCATION

Location and the place you choose should:

- Be a rocky shore, in general, the more diverse the coast, the broader variety of seaweeds you will find. As you will learn later, certain seaweeds prefer specific conditions.

- Have good access. As tempting as it may be to find a remote location think about how you would get help in a worst-case scenario.

- Boast a broad tidal range, this is preferable as it allows good access to a more expansive intertidal zone.

- Be pollution-free. It's best to avoid harvesting near built-up areas, busy harbours, sewage outfalls, storm drains or other potential pollution sources.

LOCATION continued

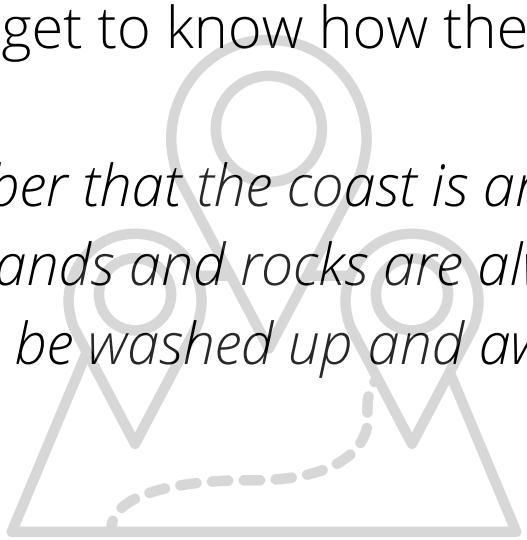
Location and the place you choose should:

- Be local/accessible. The ability to walk, ride or take public transport is best for the environment. It will also allow you to visit regularly to observe seasonal changes and become deeply acquainted with your favourite areas.

- Be familiar. Get to know your location or locations, visiting at different times of the day and levels of the tide is a great way to acquaint yourself with any potential hazards.

- Be explored at the right time. Take the time to observe an incoming tide, watch the areas that fill in first and get to know how the currents work.

Always remember that the coast is an ever-changing environment, sands and rocks are always on the move, and things can be washed up and away daily.



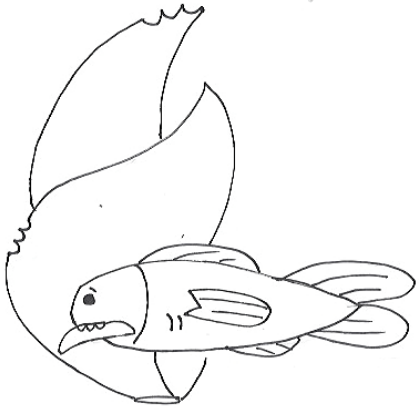
L is for LUNCH

Lunch is a good analogy, and how I mean it is both:

- Practical - take snacks, many a time has a quick visit to my favourite spot turned into several hours! Being out on the rocks is such an immersive experience requiring a lot of concentration and can be tiring. Weakness through hunger or exhaustion can sneak up on you. Avoid that by being prepared. Hot drinks work well too - bring a flask and plenty water.

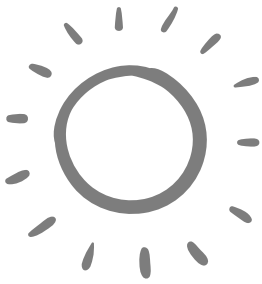
- Leaning towards moderation; foraging doesn't mean gathering everything you can see. The ecosystem will benefit from your restraint, think about picking enough for a decent lunch (perhaps with a friend or two) and leaving plenty intact to regenerate for another day.

Remember we share this space with many creatures, a lot of which rely on seaweed for their lunch either directly or indirectly.



W is for WEATHER

Weather is of prime concern when you are going out on the rocks.



- Pay attention to the forecast; remember that weather conditions can affect the tides and that weather can feel more intense on the coast.

- Heavy rains, high winds, poor visibility and very cold or slippery conditions mean a no-no for going out.

- Don't go out for at least 24hrs after very heavy rains. Even if the rain has stopped a lot of pollution can be brought to the coastline by runoff.

- Dress for the weather conditions, remembering that in Scotland it is very changeable, bring spare, dry clothes just in case.

E is for Equipment

Always check you have the right equipment and that it is in clean and good working condition:

- A helmet is a great idea when venturing onto slippery rocks, a bike or watersports helmet is cheap to buy and could save your life.

- Sturdy footwear with good grip, preferably waterproof. Surf boots will keep your feet warm but generally have very little grip.

- A good option when going deep into the intertidal is slip on crampons as used for ice climbing.

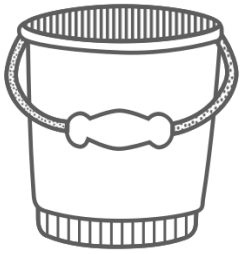
- A back pack is a good idea so you can traverse 'hands free' on the rocks(dont overload yourself).

- Mobile phone in a ‘dry bag’ or sealable plastic bag

EQUIPMENT continued

As always clean and in good condition:

- Reusable cloth bags, bucket or tubs for seaweed. Plastic bags become slippery when wet and seaweed can sweat in them. I like cloth bags as they will drain excess water but still retain some moisture to keep your catch fresh.



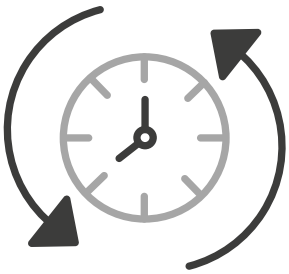
- Hi-visibility or bright clothes to be seen on the rocks.

- Sharp scissors in a bag or holster for safe transportation across the rocks.

- Snacks, a hot drink and plenty of drinking water.
- Sunscreen and a sun hat, even on a grey day.
- Layers of weather appropriate clothing - waders can be useful but are dangerous if you go in too deep or an unexpected wave swamps you.

T is for TIDES

Last but not least tides are very important without a low tide you have no inter-tidal zone, so:



- Check your tide times.
- Avoid being too close to the water line especially breaking waves
- Only go out on tides that sit firmly in daylight hours. Scrambling on the rocks in low visibility is a no-no.
- Remember not all low tides will get you into the 'zone' you want.
- Remember that tide heights are an estimation and will be affected by current weather conditions.
- Best practise is to arrive at least an hour before the low tide time and follow the tide out, once the tide turns be ready to leave at short notice.