# Be warned beachgoers: collecting shells and pebbles from UK beaches is illegal



With the UK experiencing warmer weather and two upcoming bank holidays in May, many people are likely planning beach visits to enjoy the sunshine. However, beachgoers are being warned against collecting natural souvenirs such as seashells, pebbles, or sand from UK beaches, as this activity is illegal and can lead to substantial fines.

Under the Coast Protection Act 1949, it is prohibited to remove any natural materials from UK beaches, regardless of the quantity. This law applies to seashells, pebbles, sand, and similar materials, aiming to preserve the coastal environment and prevent erosion. Removal of such natural resources can undermine the delicate balance of coastal ecosystems.

Daniel McAfee, Head of Legal Operations at Lawhive, explained the legal position to the Express: “While picking up a seashell might seem like a harmless souvenir, removing natural materials from beaches, including shells, stones, and even driftwood, can, in some cases, be illegal. Under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, it is illegal to remove natural materials like sand and pebbles from public beaches without permission, as this can contribute to coastal erosion and damage delicate ecosystems.”

He added that the legislation mainly targets larger-scale removal, but individuals can also be caught breaking the law, especially in environmentally sensitive areas. “While the Act primarily targets larger-scale removal, individuals can still fall foul of the law, especially in protected areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, national parks, or heritage coastlines,” McAfee said.

Penalties for breaching the Act can be severe, with offenders facing fines of up to £1,000. In some instances, further prosecution under related environmental regulations can impose even higher penalties.

This legislation is enforced by local councils, who monitor and take action against those found removing natural materials to protect the UK's beaches and coastline from damage and erosion.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2024-04-30/up-to-1000-fine-for-taking-pebbles-from-beaches> - This article reports that visitors and residents in Cumbria have been warned they could face fines of up to £1,000 for taking pebbles and shells from beaches, in line with the Coast Protection Act 1949.
* <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tourists-locals-breaking-small-law-uk-could-face-1000-fine-1718316> - This piece highlights that under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, removing sand, pebbles, or stones from public beaches in the UK is illegal, with fines up to £1,000 for offenders.
* <https://www.thenational.scot/news/national/uk-today/23729795.illegal-take-home-pebbles-beach/> - The article explains that under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, removing natural materials like sand and pebbles from public beaches in the UK is illegal, aiming to protect beaches from erosion and encroachment by the sea.
* <https://shepwayvox.org/2024/02/24/harmless-taking-pebbles-other-material-from-the-beach-is-illegal/> - This blog post discusses the illegality of removing pebbles and other materials from UK beaches under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, emphasizing the environmental impact and potential fines up to £1,000.
* <https://www.ncesc.com/geographic-pedia/is-it-illegal-to-take-sand-off-the-beach-uk/> - This article confirms that under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, it is illegal to remove natural materials such as sand and pebbles from public beaches in the UK, with fines up to £1,000 for offenders.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/travel/articles/1619456/Beach-laws-fines-summer-uk-evg> - This article informs that under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, it is illegal to take any natural materials from public beaches in the UK, with fines up to £1,000 for offenders.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2048285/brits-1000-fines-items-beaches> - Please view link - unable to able to access data