

Reading this may save your life

Rip currents are the leading sea hazard for all beachgoers. They are particularly dangerous for weak or non-swimmers and are the major cause of drowning in Nature's Valley.

Nature's Valley beaches are characterized by particularly strong and deep rip currents. These are interspersed by safe sandbanks. It is therefore essential to know where to swim. In particular, the beach between the river (mouth, open or closed) and the rocky cliffs on the far Eastern side are considered unsafe for swimming. Most drownings have occurred there.

When life guards are on duty at or near Beach 4, be sure to swim in their designated swimming area (between the red and yellow flags on the beach) and listen to their advice and instructions implicitly. They check for unsafe conditions constantly and manage swimmer's safety accordingly.

How to Identify Rip Currents (look for any of these clues)

Refer to the photo below, taken at low tide. The rip current runs through a channel of deeper water. Typically this is darker blue in colour, the water may appear to be choppy and churning, and you may see a line of foam or other debris moving steadily seaward. Typically rip currents occur as a break in the incoming wave pattern – waves break over the sandbank (safe place), but do not break much over the deep channel.



Photo taken at Nature's Valley Beach 4, 2012

How to avoid rip currents

1. Do not enter the sea if you can not swim! Do not swim if you have consumed alcohol, are ill (e.g. have headache), are taking drugs (leading to drowsiness, weakness or impairment)
2. Do not let children swim unsupervised, not for the shortest time. Many children have drowned whilst guardian's attention was diverted, by as little as a few seconds (a chat with a friend, a cell phone call etc.).
3. If you feel a current (sideways, seawards), leave the sea immediately. Be extra vigilant during an outgoing tide (from high to low tide, when water naturally moves seawards, accelerating rip currents)
4. Note a fixed object on the beach (house, sign, tree etc.) and keep your position in the surf with respect to the object. If you keep moving sideways (out of line with the object), there is a current pulling you.

Please teach our children these simple guidelines

How to survive rip currents

1. If caught in a rip current, **remain calm** to conserve energy and think clearly, and most importantly to keep your head out of the water. This is hard to do, but it is the single most important step in saving your life!
2. Alert someone by calling out **'HELP'** and waving a hand from side to side
3. Don't fight the current, let it take you until it weakens. The current always stops eventually.
4. If you are unable to swim out of the rip current, then float or calmly tread water until help arrives.
5. Swim out of the current in a direction following the shoreline (parallel). When out of the current swim towards shore (typically through breaking surf over a large sandbank).

How to help someone in trouble

If you see someone in trouble, throw anything, which floats (boogie board, lilo etc), towards the casualty. **Do not swim** after the casualty yourself.

Call the Sea Rescue (Plettenberg Bay): **082 990 5975. Put it in your cell now!**