

Rules and regulations in the dunes

In the sand dunes of this national park, the statutory rules of the National Park of Lower Saxony (NWattNPG) apply. Their significance for coastal protection is additionally safeguarded by special dune protection regulations. These permit you to walk on the designated, clearly marked paths through the dunes. Please keep to the path over the dunes on your way to and from the beach. Use walkways if available.

If you choose to sunbathe or swim, please use the beaches in the designated recreation zone (ger. „Erholungszone“) of the national park, or outside the park’s boundaries. Here you are free to build sandcastles or play ball games, as long as your neighbours approve!

Please do not lie, camp or set up tents in the dunes to protect yourself from the sand and wind. A windbreaker or wicker beach chair (ger. „Strandkorb“) is a more comfortable option and does not cause damage to the dunes. This applies to the foredunes and the outer edges of the dunes as well. Please avoid areas of the beach where plants are growing.

You are welcome to enjoy the dune grasses and sea holly. Looking at them closely and smelling them is always allowed - but picking them is not!

Sea holly



Experience the dunes!

You can find out about guided expeditions through the sand dunes at the local National Park visitor centre or at the ranger station. A tour is the best way to learn exciting new things about this habitat, its wild plants and animals.
www.nationalparkhaus-wattenmeer.de



Curlew

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Life on the sand dunes

Artworks made of sand

What would islands or coasts be without sand dunes? They are just as much a part of a summer holiday as wind, sea and sand are. Below, you can discover what it is that makes sand dunes so special, and find out how important protecting them properly is for the wider protection of coasts, islands, nature and people.

Dunes – a special habitat

In a matter of hours, the wind can blow sand into a small heap; over the course of time, this can build up into a dune several metres in height. In just a few years, entire dune landscapes can change considerably. They grow many metres high, and are then swept away again by the sea and winter storms. Just as the tidal flats and salt marshes do, this habitat in the Wadden Sea provides the basis for a particular set of ecological dynamics. There are certain animals and plants that depend on these constant changes in the environment. Beachgrass, sea lyme grass and sea holly grow here, for instance – and here alone. Shelducks and curlews choose dunes as their breeding sites



Dune formation

Dune grasses – special types of grass

Have you ever walked across the beach on a hot and windy summer's day? The sand is almost too hot to walk on, the small sand grains stinging the back of your legs, and you have to hurry to reach the cool of the water. Plants on the sand dunes very frequently have to cope with these temperatures and the sand in the wind. Of course, they do not have the



Foredunes

option of running away, and must protect themselves in other ways. Their solid, sturdy stalks and tough leaves can withstand the gusts of hot sand, and they resist the strong wind by growing roots that extend several metres deep into the ground, thus also holding the sand there in place. When the wind covers the grass with sand, it grows back through it again. It is only thanks to the long roots and shoots of the dune grasses that loose sand can form into a genuine dune. When humus soil develops from dead grass vegetation, other plants can begin to grow there, too. The older the dune, the more the plant life covering it and the range of colours on it change. Try standing at the lookout point on a dune yourself and looking back from the beach to the inner part of the island! As you look from the north towards the inland, you will be able to perceive the transformation of the dunes from foredunes into yellow dunes and then grey and brown dunes.

Dunes – a natural form of coastal protection

Sand dunes provide living space and protection to rare and endangered animals and plants. And they protect people, too! On islands and coastlines where there is a chain of protective dunes, it is not necessary to build dikes. However, this natural form of coastal protection is a more vulnerable one: the layer of clay inside a dike withstands storm floods and winter storms better than the loose sand of the dunes does. In the North Sea, wind and waves from the west drive thousands of tons of sand towards the east every year. Thus,

dunes and entire islands shift eastwards.

The process of “coming and going” is part of the Wadden Sea habitat. As beneficial as this dynamic environment may be for animals and plants, it can cause major disadvantages for the people that live here. They are dependent on stable coastal protection. However, coastal protection and nature conservation do not need to compete on opposing sides. In sand dune areas, protection of the coast is a matter of survival. The “coming” part of the process is actively encouraged, while the “going” part is slowed down, by planting grass and taking other measures to prevent erosion. Away from the protective dunes, mostly on the east of the island, the natural dynamics are left to develop naturally.



Erosion edge

Here, the dunes are allowed to build up freely – beachgrass, sea lyme grass and sand couch-grass hold them together with their extensive networks of roots, and when the force of the wind and water is strong enough, the sand is blown away again.

In order to protect both people and nature, please always keep to the paths on and in the dunes.

Brown dune

