



Golden Gate National Recreation Area
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Beach Safety Practices Ensure a Safe Visit to the Coast as Summer Heat Comes to the Bay Area

San Francisco, CA—As summer approaches and temperatures rise, visitors to Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) may look for relief from the heat by swimming in the ocean, where rough surf, rip currents and cold water can make for a dangerous combination.

GGNRA discourages swimming at most of its coastal beaches. The National Park Service (NPS) area of [Stinson Beach](#) is the only park beach with a staffed lifeguard program, from the first week of July until Labor Day for summer 2019. On coastal areas of the San Francisco Bay, water is extremely cold and unpredictable due to tidal action.



Stinson Beach is north of San Francisco in Marin County. Photo by NPS/Kirke Wrench

Before visiting the beach, check the weather and ask a lifeguard about surf conditions. At [Ocean Beach](#), which faces the open ocean, NPS Ocean Rescue team members educate visitors about safety practices and perform water rescues.

Even at Stinson Beach, visitors should follow common beach safety practices and be aware of their surroundings. Non-swimmers should never enter the water past their ankles. Even when standing in water as low as your knees, you can fall into the surf.

Don't turn your back to the ocean while in or around the water. "Sneaker" waves, or unusually large swells, and rip currents can pull a person into deep water in a matter of moments.

Swim only when a lifeguard is on duty and avoid entering the water alone. Children should be kept close to adults at all times and should wear life vests if they are going to be in the water or near the shore.

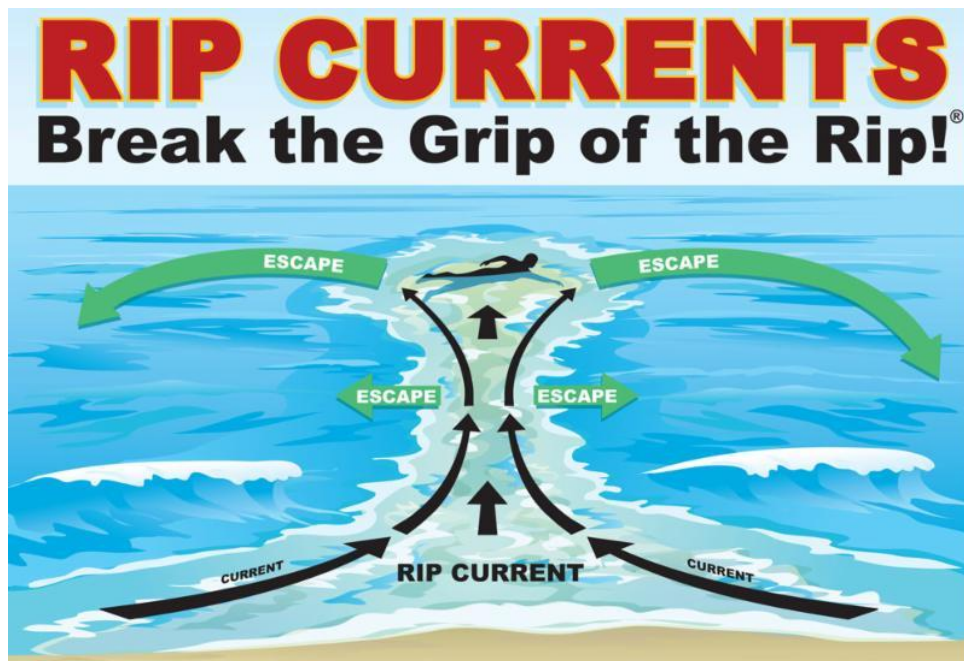
If caught in a rip current, remain calm. Do not fight the current and instead swim parallel to the shore. When you are out of the current, make your way to the shore by following incoming waves.

If you cannot escape the current, float or tread water to conserve energy. Indicate you need help by shouting and waving your hands high in the air.

Swimmers must be especially cautious at beaches in the San Francisco Bay because of cold water and currents moving throughout the bay toward the ocean.



Multi-lingual signage at Ocean Beach warns visitors about swimming. NPS photo



A diagram shows how to escape a rip current. NWS/NOAA illustration

If you witness a swimmer in distress, tell a lifeguard or call 911 if a lifeguard is not on duty. Do not enter the water—don't take the chance of becoming a victim yourself.

Remember, excessive alcohol consumption and swimming don't mix and can increase the risk of drowning.

When in doubt of your swimming abilities or surf conditions, stay on the dry sand areas of the beach. San Francisco has indoor and outdoor swimming pools open to the public—please see the [Aquatics & Pools section](#) of the San Francisco Recreation & Parks website for more information.

Your Bay Area ocean safety providers encourage you to use these precautions to enjoy your visit to bay beaches and coastal areas.