

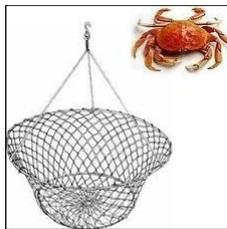


Isle of Cumbrae Crabbing Guide

Taking the kids crabbing when visiting Millport on The Isle of Great Cumbrae is really good fun. Seaside activity will keep the children interested and occupied and is quite addictive for adults too. This guide will help you get started, will give you a good idea how and where to catch the crabs, what bait to use, what you should and shouldn't do and the types of crabs you might catch. So get kitted out, get some bait and get 'doon the watter' and give it a try.

GETTING STARTED—WHAT YOU NEED

1. Take a bucket to put your crabs in. Fill half full with sea-water, a few rocks and a piece of seaweed.
2. You will need either a line with a small weight or a crab net (hoop net)
3. Bait, bacon rind is very good or any type of discarded meat. The best bait is usually frozen mackerel, a tin of sardines or a fish head.



WHERE TO CATCH YOUR CRABS IN MILLPORT

Crabs hide in crevasses and rocks all around the Isle of Cumbrae, however the best places are the piers in Millport. These piers are:

1. Leck Pier (near Crocodile Rock).and The Dancing Midge Cafe.
2. Strathwherry Pier (near The Garrison Building).
3. The Stone Pier (the big pier near the Royal George Hotel)



HOW TO CATCH YOUR CRABS AND LOOK AFTER THEM

Find a suitable place and make yourself comfortable. No need for a hook just tie on the bait (bacon rind etc) onto your line or crab net.

Drop your line or crab net into the water and wait. We said wait..... All crabs need a little coaxing. About 5 minutes should do it.

Raise your line or net, it should feel a little heavier. Clustered to your bait, there should be a few happy crabs munching away. Bring up the line and net very slowly.

Place your crabs in a bucket to look at, make sure you only put a few in at a time. They don't like crowds and can become quite tetchy.

Make sure you place your bucket in the shade, crabs are not accustomed to bright sunlight.



CRABBING DO's AND DONT'S

DO: Be very careful when crabbing, don't lean over too far and make sure children are always accompanied by an adult at all times.

DO: Add rocks and seaweed to your bucket to make the crabs feel at home. Change the water every 15 minutes and keep the bucket out of sunlight.

DON'T: Keep the crabs all day, let them go after a reasonable time. Separate any crabs that are fighting (but be very careful).

DON'T: Use a line with a hook.

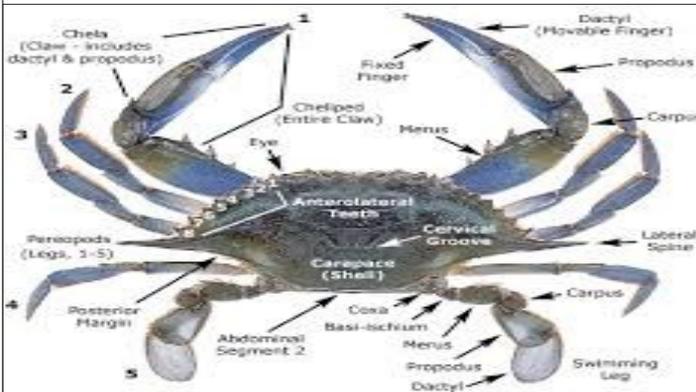
DO: Hold your crab correctly. Either hold either side of the shell or place one finger on top of the shell and one finger underneath (but be very careful or you will be bitten)

DO: Take all your equipment and rubbish home with you.



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DESCRIPTION OF A CRAB



TYPES OF CRAB YOU MAY CATCH

EDIBLE CRAB These crabs are an orange / brown colour and look like a pasty with their crimped edge. They are difficult to spot as they often wedge themselves into a crevice. They grow quite quickly and can reach 30cm across! They have very large pinners which they use to crush and eat mussels and marine snails. To catch this type of crab is quite rare when you are crabbing, but you may catch a small one.



FACTS ABOUT CRABS

- A crabs teeth are in its stomach
- An average crab lives no longer than 3 years
- Crabs are also called decapods (10 legs)
- If a crab loses its claw it grows back
- Crabs generally live in all the waters of the world and on land. There is a considerable size variation from few millimeters to 4 meters (13 feet). We don't think you will catch a 13 foot long crab in Millport.
- Male crabs usually have larger claws than females.
- Crabs are omnivorous species and they usually feed on algae. Crabs also eat other crabs, bacteria, shellfish, worms, and any dead creatures.
- A crabs blood is blue, due to the copper it contains.
- A group of crabs is called a cast.
- Male and female crabs can be identified by looking at their abdomens. The male crabs have narrow abdomens and the female has a broader abdomen.

VELVET SWIMMING CRAB

Also known as the devil's crab, look out for their bright red eyes. They are very aggressive so be careful if you try to pick up this crab. If you are able to find an empty 'moulted' shell, you will feel that their carapace has a soft velvety feel which gives the crab its name.



SHORE CRAB

These are very common and are usually green but can be brown or orange. They can be recognised by the jagged edge to the front of their shell. They grow to about 10cm across the carapace (shell). Like most crustaceans they have to moult their shell every so often as they grow bigger. This usually happens about 4 times in the first year alone.



PISA or SPIDER CRAB

This crab is normally found in the Mediterranean sea but I have caught one in Millport. If you catch one, take a picture and send to www.glaucus.org.uk.



This Crabbing Guide has been created by John Taberner (a resident of Millport) for The Isle of Cumbrae Tourist Association (IOCTA). For more information about Millport and The Isle of Cumbrae and to download your free Crabbing Guide please visit the website:

WWW.MILLPORT.ORG