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Life by the Shore

Sun Salt Skin Guide

Skincare for Coastal Living

10 DIY Recipes	AM & PM Routines	Seasonal Adjustments
Sun Protection	Ocean Recovery	Travel Guide

Coastal Skincare Fundamentals

Coastal living presents unique skincare challenges and opportunities. Salt air, increased sun exposure, wind, and humidity create specific conditions that require thoughtful care. The goal isn't flawless skin but resilient, nourished skin that handles coastal elements with grace. This guide focuses on practical skincare adapted to coastal life. Rather than complex routines with many products, the approach emphasizes quality ingredients, consistency, and adjusting to what the coastal environment requires.

Coastal Skin Challenges

- Increased UV exposure from sun reflecting off water and sand
- Salt air that can dehydrate skin and disrupt moisture barrier
- Wind that increases evaporation and irritation
- Humidity that can worsen breakouts for some skin types
- Chlorine from pools combining with sun exposure
- Temperature fluctuations between sun and cool ocean water
- Sand and salt particles that can irritate or abrade skin

Understanding Skin Type

Skin type is determined primarily by genetics and sebum production. Understanding it helps select appropriate products and routines. Coastal living can temporarily shift skin type (dry skin becomes drier, oily becomes more oily) but the underlying type remains.

Oily

Characteristics: Produces excess sebum. Often shiny, prone to breakouts. Feels greasy within hours of washing.

Coastal needs: Focus on gentle cleansing without over-drying. Salt air can worsen oiliness. Use lightweight, oil-free moisturizers. Clay and mineral masks help balance.

Key ingredients: Niacinamide, salicylic acid, charcoal, zinc, green tea

Dry

Characteristics: Produces insufficient sebum. Feels tight, may flake. Often uncomfortable after sun exposure.

Coastal needs: Heavier focus on hydration and barrier repair. Salt air severely dehydrates. Use rich creams and oils. Avoid over-cleansing.

Key ingredients: Hyaluronic acid, ceramides, glycerin, oils (argan, jojoba), vitamin E

Combination

Characteristics: Oily in T-zone (forehead, nose, chin), normal or dry elsewhere. Most common type.

Coastal needs: Use hydrating cleanser, lightweight moisturizer on dry areas, oil-control for T-zone. Layer products based on need.

Key ingredients: Balanced approach using ingredients from both oily and dry recommendations

Sensitive

Characteristics: Reactive to products, weather, and stress. May show redness, irritation, or eczema-like symptoms.

Coastal needs: Minimal product list essential. Coastal sun and salt can trigger reactions. Focus on calming, protective products.

Key ingredients: Aloe vera, chamomile, calendula, allantoin, centella asiatica

Normal

Characteristics: Balanced sebum production. Rarely problems. Comfortable most of the time.

Coastal needs: Maintain with consistent basic routine. Coastal elements can still dehydrate—don't skip moisturizer.

Key ingredients: Adaptogenic ingredients that work with most skin types

Complete Skincare Routines

A basic routine has three steps: cleanse, treat/hydrate, protect. The following routines work for most skin types living a coastal lifestyle. Adjust based on individual skin response.

Morning Routine

Cleanse (1 min)

Gentle face wash with warm water. For oily skin, use water-soluble cleanser. For dry skin, use creamy cleanser or micellar water. Pat dry gently.

Treat (2-3 min)

Optional: vitamin C serum for brightness and sun protection. Apply to damp skin.

Hydrate (1-2 min)

Lightweight moisturizer appropriate for skin type. Use less if oily, more if dry.

Protect (1 min)

Broad-spectrum SPF 30+ mineral sunscreen. This is non-negotiable for coastal living. Apply generous amount and reapply every 2 hours in sun.

Evening Routine

Remove sunscreen & debris (1 min)

Gentle makeup remover or cleansing oil if wearing sun protection. Rinse with water.

Cleanse (1-2 min)

Second cleanse with gentle cleanser. This removes salt, sand, and remaining residue from coastal environment.

Treat (2-3 min)

Targeted treatment based on concerns: retinol for anti-aging, niacinamide for pores, hyaluronic acid for hydration. Apply to damp skin.

Hydrate (1-2 min)

Richer moisturizer than morning version. This is repair time. Use serums and heavier creams.

Optional: Night treatment (5 min)

Face mask, sleep mask, or intensive treatment 2-3 times weekly.

Sun Protection for Coastal Living

Coastal areas receive significantly more direct sun exposure. Water and sand reflect UV rays, intensifying exposure. Consistent sun protection is the most important part of coastal skincare.

Understanding SPF

SPF (Sun Protection Factor) measures protection against UVB rays. SPF 30 filters 97% of UVB rays. SPF 50 filters 98%. The difference is minimal above SPF 30, but broad-spectrum protection against both UVA and UVB is important.

Mineral vs Chemical Sunscreen

Mineral (Physical)

How it works: Sits on skin surface, deflects and scatters UV rays

Best for: Sensitive skin, all skin types in coastal environment

Pros: Broad-spectrum protection, generally well-tolerated, lasts longer in water

Cons: May leave white cast, can be thicker texture

Chemical (Organic)

How it works: Absorbs UV rays and converts them to heat

Best for: Those who dislike white cast, lighter texture preference

Pros: Lighter texture, can feel more cosmetically elegant

Cons: Requires 15 min to absorb, less stable in water, can irritate sensitive skin

Proper Application

- Apply sunscreen to all sun-exposed areas: face, ears, neck, chest, tops of hands and feet
- Use approximately 1/4 teaspoon for face
- Apply to damp skin before makeup
- Reapply every 2 hours, especially after swimming or sweating
- Don't skip sunscreen on cloudy days—UV rays penetrate clouds
- Consider physical barriers: hats, UV-blocking clothing, seeking shade during peak hours (10am-3pm)
- Even water-resistant sunscreen washes off—reapply after swimming
- Lips also need protection: use SPF 30+ lip balm

Salt Water & Skin Recovery

Ocean water has both positive and challenging effects on skin. Salt can help with certain conditions but also dehydrates and irritates. Strategic ocean exposure with proper recovery yields benefits.

Before Swimming

Prepare skin for ocean exposure by hydrating it well. Apply a protective barrier—sunscreen at minimum, or a facial oil underneath sunscreen for extra protection. Consider applying lip balm and protecting ears (often forgotten but very exposed).

After Swimming

Rinse immediately

Rinse with fresh water as soon as possible after leaving water. This removes salt and chlorine (if applicable).

Don't delay

Waiting allows salt to dry on skin and draw moisture deeper. Immediate rinsing is most effective.

Pat, don't rub

Gently pat skin dry rather than rubbing, which can irritate salt-exposed areas.

Apply lightweight serum

While skin is still damp, apply a hydrating serum with hyaluronic acid or glycerin to seal in moisture.

Moisturize generously

Apply richer moisturizer than usual to counteract salt dehydration.

Avoid heat temporarily

Skip sauna or very hot shower immediately after—skin is already stressed.

Hydrate internally

Drink extra water after ocean swimming to compensate for salt exposure and dehydration.

10 DIY Natural Skincare Recipes

Hydrating Honey Face Mask

Type: Mask

Ingredients: 2 tbsp raw honey, 1 tbsp rosewater, ½ tsp vegetable glycerin

Instructions: Mix all ingredients until smooth. Apply to clean face, avoid eyes. Leave on 15 minutes. Rinse with warm water. Pat dry gently.

Benefit: Deeply moisturizing, soothing, appropriate for all skin types

Gentle Exfoliating Scrub

Type: Scrub

Ingredients: 2 tbsp ground oatmeal (or blend rolled oats), 1 tbsp raw honey, 1 tbsp jojoba oil, 2-3 drops lavender essential oil

Instructions: Mix oatmeal, honey, and oil until paste forms. Add essential oil. Massage gently onto damp face using circular motions (30 seconds). Rinse thoroughly.

Benefit: Gently removes dead skin, won't over-irritate coastal skin

Brightening Vitamin C Serum

Type: Serum

Ingredients: ¼ cup rose hip seed oil, 1 tbsp vitamin C powder (or crushed tablet), 2-3 drops frankincense essential oil

Instructions: Mix oil and vitamin C powder thoroughly until powder dissolves. Add essential oil. Store in dark glass bottle. Apply 2-3 drops to damp face.

Benefit: Brightens, protects from environmental damage, antioxidant

Cooling Aloe & Cucumber Gel

Type: Gel

Ingredients: ¼ cup fresh aloe vera gel (or pure bottled), 2 tbsp cucumber juice (blend and strain), 1 tbsp vegetable glycerin, 2 drops chamomile essential oil

Instructions: Blend all ingredients. Store in refrigerator. Apply to clean skin as hydrating layer. Keep in fridge for cooling effect on irritated skin.

Benefit: Anti-inflammatory, cooling, especially helpful after sun exposure

Rich Night Cream

Type: Cream

Ingredients: 2 tbsp coconut oil, 1 tbsp cocoa butter, 1 tbsp vitamin E oil, 2 drops rose or neroli essential oil

Instructions: Gently melt coconut oil and cocoa butter together over very low heat or in double boiler. Remove from heat, add vitamin E oil and essential oil. Pour into jar. Let solidify.

Benefit: Intensely nourishing, barrier repair, antioxidants

Detoxifying Clay Mask

Type: Mask

Ingredients: 1 tbsp bentonite or kaolin clay, 1 tbsp rosewater, ½ tsp apple cider vinegar, 1 drop tea tree oil

Instructions: Mix clay with rosewater to form paste. Add vinegar and oil. Apply to clean face, avoiding sensitive areas. Leave 10 minutes. Rinse with warm water.

Benefit: Draws out impurities, balances oil, suitable for oily skin

Sensitive Skin Soothing Balm

Type: Balm

Ingredients: 2 tbsp shea butter, 1 tbsp calendula-infused oil, ½ tbsp beeswax (grated), 2 drops chamomile essential oil

Instructions: Melt shea butter and beeswax together over low heat. Add calendula oil and essential oil. Pour into small container. Let solidify.

Benefit: Calming, barrier-repair, protective, ideal for reactive skin

Brightening Coffee Scrub

Type: Scrub

Ingredients: 2 tbsp finely ground coffee, 1 tbsp coconut oil, ½ tbsp raw honey, 1 drop vanilla extract

Instructions: Mix all ingredients. Massage onto damp face using gentle circular motions. Rinse thoroughly. Limit to once weekly to avoid over-exfoliation.

Benefit: Increases circulation, gently exfoliates, energizing scent

Hydrating Rose Water Toner

Type: Toner

Ingredients: ½ cup rose water, 1 tbsp vegetable glycerin, 1 tbsp witch hazel, 2-3 drops geranium essential oil

Instructions: Mix all ingredients in dark glass bottle. Shake before each use. Apply with cotton pad after cleansing and before moisturizer.

Benefit: Hydrating, toning, balancing, works for most skin types

Nourishing Argan Oil Face Serum

Type: Serum

Ingredients: ¼ cup argan oil, ¼ cup jojoba oil, 3 drops frankincense essential oil, 2 drops carrot seed essential oil

Instructions: Mix oils together in dark glass bottle. Apply 3-5 drops to damp skin, press in gently. Use morning or night depending on skin type.

Benefit: Lightweight nourishment, antioxidants, appropriate for most skin types

Seasonal Skincare Adjustments

Spring

Focus: Shedding and renewal

Skin often sheds accumulated dead cells. Gentle exfoliation 2x weekly helps. Increase hydration as temperature rises. Switch to lighter moisturizers if winter was heavy. Start consistently using sunscreen as UV exposure increases.

Summer

Focus: Maximum protection and hydration

SPF becomes most critical—reapply every 2 hours. Lightweight serums and gels replace rich creams. Salt water swimming more frequent—prioritize post-swim recovery. Antioxidant serums help protect from increased UV exposure. Keep routine minimal to avoid irritation.

Fall

Focus: Repair and replenishment

Skin often shows summer sun damage. Introduce targeted treatments: retinol or vitamin C for repair. Increase moisturizer richness slightly as heating season begins. Exfoliate gently to shed summer-damaged layer. Continue sunscreen daily.

Winter

Focus: Barrier repair and protection

Cold air and heating systems severely dehydrate. Use heavier oils and creams. Increase frequency of face masks. Consider humidifier to add moisture to air. Continue sunscreen even in dim light. Avoid overly hot water when cleansing.

Travel Skincare Packing Guide

Traveling disrupts skin routines through climate changes, different water, and schedule shifts. Packing strategically ensures skin stays as healthy while traveling as it does at home.

Essential Travel Items

- Gentle cleanser (travel size or bar form)
- Broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen (the most important item)
- Moisturizer appropriate for skin type
- Hydrating serum with hyaluronic acid
- Lip balm with SPF
- Portable face wash or micellar water for makeup removal
- Eye cream if sensitive area
- Hat or visor for extra sun protection
- Travel-size face mist for hydration refresh
- Enzyme or gentle exfoliating product once weekly

Packing Tips

- Pack doubles of essentials if likely to lose items in transit
- Use travel-size containers or solid skincare products to save space
- Keep sunscreen in carry-on if flying—TSA rules apply
- Consider solid cleansing bars instead of liquids to save space
- Pack in sealed bags to prevent leakage in luggage
- Layer thin, lightweight items rather than one heavy cream
- Remember sunscreen weighs more than other items—budget accordingly

Ingredient Glossary

Hyaluronic Acid

Humectant that attracts water to skin. Holds up to 1000x its weight in water. Key for hydration, especially after salt water exposure.

Glycerin

Natural humectant derived from plants. Draws moisture from environment into skin. Lightweight, suitable for all skin types.

Vitamin C

Antioxidant that brightens, protects from environmental damage, supports collagen production. Unstable—often combined with stabilizers.

Retinol

Vitamin A derivative that supports cell turnover, reduces fine lines, improves texture. Use cautiously—can irritate sensitive skin.

Ceramides

Lipids that repair and strengthen skin barrier. Especially important for coastal skin that's been compromised by salt.

Niacinamide

B-vitamin that regulates sebum, reduces pore appearance, strengthens barrier. Well-tolerated by most skin types.

Jojoba Oil

Plant oil similar to skin's natural sebum. Lightweight, absorbs well, appropriate for most skin types including oily.

Argan Oil

Antioxidant-rich oil from argan tree. Nourishing without feeling heavy. Good for dry skin and after sun exposure.

Aloe Vera

Cooling, soothing plant extract. Anti-inflammatory, hydrating, gentle. Essential for post-sun skin recovery.

Tea Tree Oil

Essential oil with antimicrobial properties. Helpful for breakouts but use diluted—can irritate if undiluted.

Calendula

Flower extract known for calming and supporting skin repair. Gentle, anti-inflammatory, suitable for sensitive skin.

Centella Asiatica

Plant extract that calms and supports barrier function. Known as cica, often used in Asian skincare products.

Bentonite Clay

Mineral clay that absorbs excess oil. Useful in masks for oily or congested skin. Can be drying—balance with hydration.

Rose Hip Seed Oil

Oil rich in vitamins A and C. Supportive for damaged skin, brightening, antioxidant-rich. Can absorb well despite richness.

Frankincense

Essential oil with grounding scent. Anti-inflammatory, supports cell turnover, calming properties.

SPF (Sun Protection Factor)

Measure of protection against UVB rays. SPF 30 blocks 97% of UVB. Broad-spectrum also protects against UVA.