NEWS LESSON

Could a Day at the Beach Become a Luxury?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What should a day at the beach cost?
2. Would you pay for a cleaner beach with better facilities?
3. Can a small fee still stop people doing something?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**assumption**	☐	A	small and not important
2	**concessions**	☐	B	rules that limit what people can do
3	**conservation**	☐	C	protecting nature and wild places
4	**proposal**	☐	D	rights to run a business in a public place, such as a beach cafe
5	**restrictions**	☐	E	a plan that someone suggests
6	**affordable**	☐	F	easily harmed or damaged
7	**sensitive**	☐	G	cheap enough for ordinary people to pay
8	**trivial**	☐	H	something you believe is true without checking

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Protests in Portugal's Arrábida region in 2026 opposed development plans affecting several beaches. They were about who decides how a shared landscape is run.

1 For most people, the right to visit the seaside feels obvious. Beaches may require maintenance, cleaning and transport links, but the sea itself seems like a shared resource rather than a product. In Portugal, protests around the Arrábida coast during the summer of 2026 revealed how complicated that assumption becomes once private development and mass tourism enter the picture.

2 Campaigners opposed plans affecting access to several beaches in the protected coastal area south of Lisbon. Residents feared that greater commercial control could make it harder for ordinary families to visit places they had enjoyed for generations. The protest was as much about local identity as it was about holidaymakers and parking spaces, and that is why it struck such a nerve so quickly.

3 Developers and businesses can make a reasonable case for investment. Coastal destinations need roads, facilities, cleaning and sometimes measures to protect sensitive habitats from heavy visitor numbers. Well-managed tourism can provide employment and income for nearby communities throughout the year. However, improvements can also bring in charges or restrictions that quietly change who is able to enjoy an area.

4 The argument requires careful wording. Opposition to a proposal is not the same as proof that an entire coastline has already been privatised. Public access, commercial concessions and outright private ownership raise quite different legal questions. What protesters feared was a future in which decisions about an important natural space increasingly reflected commercial priorities rather than local ones.

5 Protected status complicates things further. Rules that limit building or cut the number of cars allowed near the sea can be genuinely necessary for conservation, yet the same rules may be felt as a way of keeping ordinary visitors away. Who a restriction protects, and who it inconveniences, depends a great deal on who draws it up. Conservation rules, development plans and charges are different decisions, and each should be judged on its own.

6 A related concern is that tourism can price out the people who live closest to a destination. Visitors may be happy to pay for a premium experience during a fortnight's holiday, while residents need ordinary, affordable access all year round. A charge that looks trivial once can look very different fifty times a summer, and it is the local family, not the holidaymaker, who pays it most often. Seasonal work adds another layer, since many of the jobs tourism creates last only a few months.

7 The Arrábida dispute is therefore not simply a choice between protecting beaches and welcoming business. It raises a more practical question: who gets to decide how a shared landscape is managed, and how can the benefits of tourism be spread around without shutting out the communities that live there? Neither question is settled by pointing at the revenue figures.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer accepts that restrictions in a protected area can be necessary. T F NG
2. A local family who visits often is affected by a small charge more than a one-off holidaymaker. T F NG
3. Most residents of the Arrábida area work in tourism. T F NG
4. The protesters believed the whole coastline had already been privatised. T F NG
5. Conservation rules, development plans and charges should all be judged together as one decision. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

congestion **employment** **habitats** **legislation** **maintenance** **premium** **privatised** **revenue**

1. The council spends a large part of its budget on the _____ of paths and toilets at popular beaches.
2. Many young people left the town to look for _____ elsewhere.
3. Fences keep walkers away from the _____ of rare birds.
4. Some visitors are happy to pay a _____ for a quiet, clean beach with a lifeguard.
5. The beach cafe's _____ from ice cream doubled in July.
6. Critics warned that the whole shoreline could be _____ within ten years.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the protest began, most residents _____ about the plans. (HEAR)
2. Beach cleaning _____ by a private company last summer. (DO)
3. If the fee rises again, local families _____ visiting. (STOP)
4. Many residents wish the council _____ them earlier. (CONSULT)
5. While the protesters _____ along the road, a cafe owner was handing out water. (MARCH)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Adjectives, verbs and nouns often take a fixed preposition. After the preposition, use a noun or an -ing form.

at	for	from	in	on	to	with

1. Whether the scheme works depends _____ how the money is spent.
2. Campaigners were not opposed _____ tourism itself.
3. Barriers protect the dunes _____ damage by large crowds.
4. Residents are interested _____ keeping the beach affordable.
5. The council was criticised _____ failing to consult residents.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should everyone be able to enjoy at a beach without paying?
2. Would a local discount solve the problem of repeated entry fees?
3. Who should help pay to look after a popular stretch of coast?

9 Role-play: a fee for the beach car park

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the council officer

Your council wants to charge a fee at the beach car park. The money will pay for cleaning and safety. Explain why, listen to the resident, and decide if you can offer anything.

Student B · the local resident

You take your family to the beach about fifty times every summer. You think a fee is unfair for local people. Say why, and suggest a better idea.

Useful phrases

I understand your point, but we've got to pay for the cleaning.

That's a lot of money for a family like ours.

What if local people got a discount?

I'm afraid we can't make an exception for everyone.

Who'd decide how the money's spent?

Let's try to find something that's fair for everybody.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a fee, and who was happiest with the result?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 D · 3 C · 4 E · 5 B · 6 G · 7 F · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 maintenance · 2 employment · 3 habitats · 4 premium · 5 revenue · 6 privatised

6 Verb forms

1 had heard · 2 was done · 3 will stop or would stop or may stop or might stop or could stop · 4 had consulted · 5 were marching

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 to · 3 from · 4 in · 5 for

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**