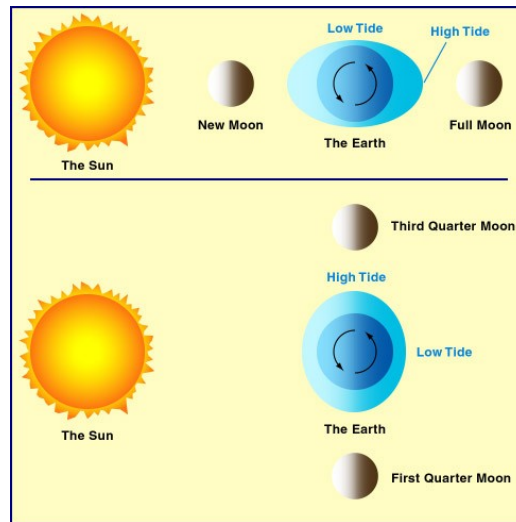


Tides and the effects on Kitesurfers

What is a tide and what causes the tides

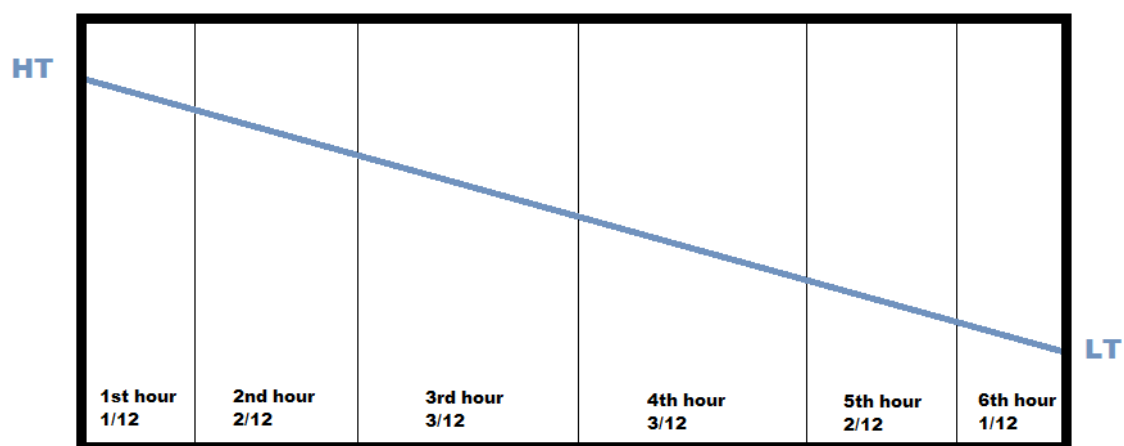
Tides are the rise and fall of the sea levels due to the gravitational pull of the sun and moon.

So what does this mean? It simply means that depending on the position of the sun and moon around the earth the sea will be at different levels as they pull the water towards them. The moon has a greater pull than the sun but working together they can cause different types of tides from spring tides to neap tides.



How do tides work?

The best twat to describe how tides work is by using a diagram and the rule of twelfth.



This shows what happens every six hours. This is often shown in many different ways. You may now think what if this is the case do the tide times change as within 24 hours there are 4 x 6 hours, yet

the tide time is forward by about an hour each day. This is due to the fact that it actually takes the moon a little more than 24 hours to orbit the earth, it takes about 24 hours and 50 minutes.

What sources of information are there?

There are so many different sources to obtain tide times, some include internet sites such as BBC tides, others may include iPhone apps but the old school way would be to get a timetable from your local harbour master or local sailing club. Make sure that you get the table that is for your spot, if you can't get that exact spot get one for the closest port as this should be accurate enough.

Effects of tides on the kitesurfer

There are 2 different tides that us as kitesurfers need to take into consideration.

Normal tidal patterns - The normal tidal patterns are important and it is very important to know what tide is best for your kite spot as some beaches are best at low tide and others may be best at high tide. Low tide may reveal obstacles, reefs or beach.

For training purposes it is always best to kitesurf at a spot that favours low tide as you will need to stand while being in the water. While you are a beginner this is also advisable, but make sure that you are at least waist deep and a kite length away from the beach.

Rip tides - a rip tide is a current that follows a channel in the sea bed and acts like a river. This is often caused by harbour entrances, lagoon entrances, estuaries and other areas where the water channels through a small gap to fill a large area. These large areas are often the perfect kite spots and more than often we don't even notice that we are Kitesurfing over a rip tide. If you ever come off your board in the rip tide it is always best to go with the tide and then swim around it as it is never a good idea to swim against one.

We can use these tides to our advantage as we need to understand that the tide will either work with us and increase our forward speed or could work against us and push us further out to sea, an example of this is if we have a weak onshore wind but a strong outgoing tidal flow we can easily sail off shore and struggle to sail downwind back to shore.

Also bear in mind that some beaches that are easy to start from in low tides may have big waves at high tide due to the varying slope of the shore. This may make it difficult to come in after a couple of hours out on the water.

Make sure that you understand what the tidal patterns are at any spot that you are going to kitesurf and have a chat to the locals to find out more about what could be hidden dangers.