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Route i3

THE RED SEA AND THE SUEZ CANAL ROUTES AND ANCHORAGES

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WEATHER PATTERNS IN THE RED SEA

Winds in the Red Sea tend to blow down it from the NW or up it from the SE. In the southern Red Sea winds blow from the SE from October through to May. These winds are strongest from November to February, particularly through the Straits of Bab el Mandeb where a funnelling effect frequently produces winds of 25 knots up to gale force.

Through the summer months the NW winds fill in down the whole length of the Red Sea and merge into the SW monsoon in the Gulf of Aden. September and May are transitional months with lighter winds. In the northern part of the Red Sea (from around 20°N) winds blow from the NW all year. The Gulf of Suez is influenced by weather systems in the Mediterranean and gale force winds are most frequent in this area between April and October. All this would seem rather off-putting and the Red Sea has a reputation for long hard slogs to windward.

However, Red Sea winds are often light to moderate and complete calms occur, sometimes for several days. Inside the reefs on the Sudanese and Egyptian coasts the winds tend to drop overnight. With enough good light to leave an anchorage it is possible to make good progress until the daytime NW wind becomes too strong, at which point you can find shelter in the next Marsa. By day sailing from marsa to marsa, waiting for calms and motoring up more notorious stretches such as the Gulf of Suez, it is possible to enjoy a cruise up the Red Sea in relative comfort.

ROUTES

Many yachts decide to beat up the middle of the Red Sea, either through lack of time or through fears of problems ashore. However, there are also many yachts, often travelling together in small groups, who have taken their time, been patient with the winds and enjoyed wonderful cruising. The juxtaposition of desert and teeming coral reef can be breathtakingly beautiful. There are long stretches where provisioning is difficult or impossible, but the self-sufficient vessel will be in no hurry to reach civilisation.

PILOT BOOKS

World Cruising Routes, by Jimmy Cornell, published by Adlard Coles Nautical.

Red Sea Pilot, by Stephen Davies and Elaine Morgan, published by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson

PIRATES

Yachts are at risk of attack by pirates around the Horn of Africa (particularly the Somali coast), off the Yemeni coast and all the way up the Red Sea. Yachts have been boarded by armed gangs in fast dinghies, and have been robbed of cash and items such as VHF radios and outboard motors. There have been a number of reported incidents in recent years, including incidences of kidnapping. The risk of violence to yachts should not be underestimated. It would seem prudent for yachts to travel in groups and maintain close contact when cruising these areas. Maintaining a regular VHF contact between yachts also makes the various international Naval Patrol and commercial vessels in the area aware of your presence and movements. They are generally very supportive.

SANDSTORMS Visibility near the desert coasts of the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa is often poor as a result of the dust in the air. Visibility can be reduced even further when the wind freshens.

RED SEA HARBOURS AND ANCHORAGES

YEMEN

Aden This is one of the traditional stop overs for cruising yachts entering or leaving the Red Sea. In recent years there have been various incidents which have meant that yachts from some countries have not been allowed entry or have been discouraged from stopping there. However, the experience of several yachts has been that they are made to feel welcome, if only to the dockside area of the port. In these cases, fuel and water were made available, and provisioning was possible with the help of locals to run errands.

ERITREA

Massawa Despite its turbulent and ravaged history, Massawa is a welcoming place for yachts. An overnight trip up into the hills to the capital, Asmara, is one of the highlights of the Red Sea.

Formalities; Customs and immigration are located in the port area.

If you are to visit Asmara you need to inform immigration.

Mike (07123326) or 552467 is very helpful and will organise a mini bus to Asmara.

EGYPT

If you have not been before, take the opportunity to travel in-land to see the Valley of the Kings, the Nile and the temples at Luxor, as well as Cairo and the Pyramids.

Port Ghalib Port Ghalib was the only harbour in 2005 operating a new system which avoided having to recheck in/out at subsequent ports. The old system was still in operation at Hurgada and was expensive and cumbersome. Port Ghalib is a massive construction site and there will certainly be more facilities as time passes.

Formalities; Entry should be made at Port Ghalib (Fairway buoy 25° 32.001'N 34° 38.707'E). The port can be entered at night but be careful of the reef to port when entering.

It is a good idea to make some copies of the permit to give to other harbourmasters.

The Port Captain at Port Ghalib will probably be very helpful about this.

Facilities; There is fuel and water available alongside. There is a small shop close by with limited provisions.

Suez Canal The system and costings will become apparent on arrival. It is worth spending some time here and visiting Cairo and the Pyramids.

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