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The Pilotage Foundation is grateful to John Lawson who was the author of all our Passage Planning routes flowing out from the South Coast of England to Iceland, The Baltic, the Atlantic Islands and the Mediterranean.

Updated in 2008 by John Marchment

Route 2 English Channel to Faeroe via west coast of Ireland, St.Kilda, Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

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General

It is over 900 miles from the Solent to Torshavn in Faeroe passing to the west of Ireland with little difference in distance in passing the Hebrides to the W or E. This is almost the same as the route up the Irish Sea. The two open sea legs are 155M from Land's End to the Fastnet (but with ports available in Ireland short of the Fastnet if needed), and 520M from Eagle Island off NW Ireland to Torshavn (but with ports available in the Hebrides if needed).

Weather and sea states

The weather along the whole route is dominated by the passage of Atlantic lows giving predominately westerly winds. Sometimes these are held up by high pressure extending N from the Continent which may persist for several days or even weeks with light or easterly winds. Occasionally from July to September, hurricanes from the US coasts will regenerate and sweep across the area as storms but more than two days of gale force winds per month in the summer are not usual. In general rainfall increases with northing.

Swell from the W or SW becomes increasingly present from the SW corner of Ireland northwards.

Sea temperature varies over the summer in the S from 11° - 16°C to 8° - 12°C in Faeroe.

Fog may occur up to two days a month, is not common to the W of Ireland but can occur with little warning up to 6 or 7 days a month in Faeroe.

Currents

The effects of the flow of the remnants of the Gulf Stream are of no significance until N of the Hebrides when up to ½ knot easterly should be allowed for.

Tidal streams and tides

The timing of the tidal streams until clear of Land's End is of importance in low powered craft especially at Springs. See Routeing Recommendations below.

The main flood flows NE into St George's Channel, E along the S coast of Ireland, S round the SW corner and N along the north part of the W coast; there is considerable variation where the streams meet and part on the W coast and no planning provisions can be made for this. The flood sets N on both sides of the Hebrides. The tidal streams are strong round Faeroe and fierce in the fiords.

Tidal ranges vary from 4.1m at Plymouth, 3.6m at the SW corner of Ireland, 4.5m at Galway, 4.1m at Stornoway and less than 1m at Torshavn.

Formalities

There is no need to clear in or out of the Republic of Ireland unless the vessel is non-EU origin or there are non-EU nationals on board. In these cases the Q flag should be flown and the Garda telephoned on first arrival or the Police in Northern Ireland.

The Customs should be contacted on first arrival at Faeroe. A courtesy flag should be flown in the Republic of Ireland and Faeroe (the Faeroese and not the Danish flag).

Import of alcohol to Faeroe is controlled and may not be brought ashore. It is available in Government shops (*rusdrekksolan*) at a price; there are now bars and restaurants where you can get a drink in Torshavn and bigger places.

Search and Rescue

The route lies in the British, Irish and Faeroese Search and Rescue regions (SRRs). It is covered by the VHF DSC network except for a 200M gap between the N end of the North Minch and the southern end of Faeroe which is covered by MF DSC.

Faeroe has 4 coastal radio stations covering VHF and MF bands.

There is helicopter coverage for most of the route.

Navtex and weather forecasts

The route is covered by Navtex stations at Niton (E and K), Valentia(W), Portpatrick(O), Malin Head(Q) and Rogaland (Norway)(L) .

Details of the many other weather forecasts available may be found in Admiralty Maritime Communications (UK and Baltic) NP 291 and RYA Weather Forecasts G5/04

Fuel and domestic gas

Diesel tends to become cheaper the further north although marina outlets remain expensive. In Ireland and Scotland always buy red diesel from fishing boat sources especially if a reasonable amount can be taken. Calor Gas (Butane) is available in Scotland and Northern Ireland and Camping Gas obtainable generally including the Republic of Ireland where Kosangas is the usual product; this requires an adaptor for Calor cylinders; it is worth taking enough Calor Gas to Faeroe to last the trip; Propane cylinders and adaptors are available there if necessary.

Timing of the passage

The summer months are obviously likely to produce more settled and equable weather than the spring or autumn. It is light for 24 hours in Faeroe around midsummer when the sun only just dips below the horizon.

Routeing recommendations

Going west and north.

Tidal gates at Portland and Start Point are of significance but adverse effects can be lessened by creeping inshore or staying well offshore. Arrival off the Lizard however should be planned at HW Dover -0200 when it turns to the W and gives enough fair stream to clear Land's End at 5 knots or more SOA. Streams thereon are of less significance and cannot be taken into account for advanced planning.

The 165M leg NW from Longships to the Fastnet in W winds can be an arduous passage especially as prolonged W winds sets up on E current and accelerates the E-going flood along the S coast; however there are plenty of ports along the W end of the S coast for refuge and if the worst comes to the worst, plans can be changed to pass up the Irish Sea in the lee of Ireland.

The W coast of Ireland is often a lee shore and the onset of bad weather is usually preceded by rain and low visibility. There are however, many sheltered ports and delightful anchorages but all involving greater or less detours; those determined on a fast passage will stay well offshore clear of dangers and the ubiquitous salmon drift nets which can extend for long distances.

The choice of passage to the W or E of the Outer Hebrides is for individual preference as there is little difference in distance. A passage to the W may allow a visit to St Kilda and the Flannan Islands but once the

Sound of Barra is passed there is only the Sound of Harris to pass through if there is need to reach facilities, fuel or stores at Stornoway.

A passage to the E will usually be in the lee of the islands with good ports at Castlebay, Barra in the S and Stornoway in the N.

A visit to Sula Sgeir or Rona to the N of Lewis is equally possible using either route outside the nesting season.

From Stornoway to the southern island of Suderoy is 200M and clear of all land and dangers. Diversions to Orkney will add 100M and Shetland over 200M to the direct route from Stornoway.

Going south and east.

The same considerations apply in reverse except the passage from the Fastnet to Land's End can be regarded with more equanimity. Arrival at Land's End should be planned to carry a fair stream past there and the Lizard.

Distance Table

	SOLENT	PLYMOUTH	KINSALE	Castletown	Dingle	Cashla Bay	Castlebay	St.Kilda	Sound of Harris	Stornoway	Stromness	Lerwick	Tvøroyri	Torshavn
SOLENT	***	125	330	387	425	505	640	658	685	696	807	1009	907	937
PLYMOUTH	125	***	205	262	300	380	515	533	560	571	682	884	782	812
KINSALE	330	205	***	67	114	195	442	472	490	501	611	721	710	740
Castletown	387	262	67	***	48	128	375	405	427	438	548	659	648	678
Dingle	425	300	114	48	***	80	325	357	379	390	500	610	600	630
Cashla Bay	505	380	195	128	80	***	278	310	332	343	453	563	553	583
Castlebay, Barra	640	515	442	375	325	278	***	***	***	85	195	407	295	325
St.Kilda	658	533	472	405	357	310	***	***	***	90	190	288	246	276
Sound of Harris	685	560	490	427	379	332	***	***	***	38	123	258	241	271
Stornoway	696	571	501	438	390	343	85	90	38	***	110	220	210	240
Stromness(Orkney)	807	682	611	548	500	453	195	190	123	110	***	110	190	220
Lerwick(Shetland)	1009	884	721	659	610	563	407	288	258	220	110	***	210	220
Tvøroyri	907	782	710	648	600	553	295	246	241	210	190	210	***	30
Torshavn	937	812	740	678	630	583	325	276	271	240	220	220	30	***

The distances are direct between any two ports in different columns. Interpolation between ports in the same column will not necessarily be correct.

Ports on the route

Port names in capital letters indicate a port with major marina facilities including slipping and all kinds of repair, electricity and water on the pontoons with the resources of a town or city nearby. Other ports will have many of these facilities but with any omissions noted.

Port Categories

Ports are categorised for their accessibility in all weathers and the security of shelter.

- A Port of refuge in storms; complete shelter.
- A* Qualified storm port of refuge and haven.
- B Port accessible in gales with good shelter.
- B* Qualified gale port of refuge and haven.
- C Entry subject to wind, tide and swell conditions with some shelter inside.

PLYMOUTH A

A large naval and commercial complex with three major marinas and every possible facility and service; fuel from three outlets but only during working hours; water on all pontoons; easy provisioning from Sutton Harbour but not the other two marinas; regional hospital; good road and rail connections; airport with internal flights and to Channel Islands and Eire.

Falmouth 35M to the W has similar facilities but both ports are some 15M off the direct track W.

KINSALE B*

The entrance could be dangerous in a S or SE gale especially on the ebb but there is good shelter inside; two small marinas with 3m with the usual facilities, one near the town centre; 40 ton travel lift and usual boatyard services; fuel from various sources up to commercial quantities; good provisioning from Kinsale Yacht Club Marina; bus service to Cork where there is an airport with flights to UK and overseas.

Kinsale is the best bolt hole if forced E by weather, with Crosshaven/Cork 12M still further E. There are several sheltered anchorages further W to the Fastnet with safe access; Baltimore 35M to the W of Kinsale is probably the best with fuel, water, provisions and yacht facilities.

Castletown B

A well-sheltered anchorage with some alongside berths; 3.7m in approaches. 2.4m – 4m in anchorage, similar depths alongside; piped fuel alongside and water; marine lift and boatyard facilities; handy shopping, ice; occasional bus to Bantry.

Dingle A

A well sheltered but shallow harbour with a safe entrance and a marina; entrance channel dredged to 2.6m and marina with similar depth; piped fuel from pier or by cans; boatyard, engineering and electronic repairs; chandlery; good provisioning; Farranfore airport 30M with flights to Dublin.

Cashla Bay B

The easiest harbour on this part of the coast at the NW end of Galway Bay; it has a safe access in all conditions with a snug anchorage in inner harbour in 3m – 7m but is 30M off the direct track; new fishing harbour has 3.7m where fuel is available, also by cans; shops over ½M away but will deliver; garage type repairs only; bus or taxi to Galway.

20M further to the E is **Galway** with many facilities; a locked commercial harbour with 3.4m in approaches, open –0200 to HW with a small marina inside; possibility of larger marina nearby later; airport nearby with flights to Dublin and good road and rail connections.

It is 80M from Cashla Bay to Eagle Island on the NW corner of Ireland along a well-indented coast with many anchorages but few ports with any facilities. From Eagle Island the coast trends increasingly to the E and diversions inshore will become increasingly long so those intent on a smart passage will complete the 278M from Cashla to Castlebay, Barra in one leg.

Castlebay, Barra B

A reasonably sheltered anchorage accessible in all weathers with patchy holding but a number of yacht moorings; fuel and water by cans; more than adequate provisions; some engineering services; ferries to Oban and the north.

St.Kilda can be reached from Castlebay through the Sound of Barra which requires careful pilotage but is deep enough for any yacht.

St.Kilda C

An uneasy anchorage and quite open to the E sector; worth a visit if opportunity offers if nothing else for the bird life and historical interest; ex-Army establishment ashore manned by a few radar operators and NT for Scotland volunteers; water by can; small amounts of diesel might be solicited; minimal provisions; weekly ferry.

Sound of Harris C

The SE/NW access to the Minches and Stornoway from St Kilda; the N channel is deep if rock strewn and accessible in any weather; some sheltered anchorages but no facilities nearer than E.Loch Tarbert and Stornoway.

Stornoway A

A well-sheltered port with access in all conditions; pontoon berths for yachts in complete shelter in depths of 2m close to town; piped fuel at North Beach Quay; water on pontoons; easy provisioning; fishing boat slip and facilities mainly fishing oriented; cranes to 25 tons; ferries to Ullapool and Uig (Skye); airport close by with flights to Glasgow.

40M E of Stornoway on the mainland is **Lochinver** with easy access and good shelter with pontoon berths up to 12m.

Stromness(Orkney) A*

A well-sheltered port on the W side of Orkney with access in the worst conditions but not on the ebb in strong westerlies; at least 4m in the anchorage, there is a sheltered pontoon for up to 15m and more along the quays; fuel and water at quays; easy provisioning close by; airport on island plus ferries both with mainland connections.

Lerwick, Shetland A

A busy fishing and oil rig support port which makes considerable effort to welcome visiting yachts; 6.8m in entrance with 1.5m to 6m alongside pontoon for up to 15m in yacht harbour which is in the centre of the town; yachts of almost any size can be accommodated somewhere; water on the pontoon and fuel by road tanker in any quantities; craneage up to 140 tons; ferry and air connections with the mainland; summer ferries to Norway, Denmark, Faeroe and Iceland.

Scalloway on the W side of the same island is a good alternative and may be preferable if going to or from the W or NW.

Tvøroyri A

A small port with a clear approach in all weathers and reasonable shelter inside on the E side of the most southerly island Suduroy; although not the first port coming from the S it has fuel, water and provisions available, also Customs to clear in.

Torshavn A

A deep-water, well-sheltered harbour on the main island Stremoy and the capital of Faeroe, negligible tidal range, yachts lie alongside the quay close to the Boat Club with depths of 1.5m plus; water, showers and washing machine; fuel and water at the quay; supermarket, hotels and restaurants close by; good repair facilities and heavy craneage; hospital; daily flights to Scandinavia as well as to Iceland, Aberdeen and London. A car ferry plies between Iceland, Faeroe, Norway, Denmark and Shetland, with connections to Orkney and Aberdeen; crew changes here are not difficult. July 29th is St. Olav's day and all shops are shut.

Route 2 Waypoint Table

THESE WAYPOINTS SHOULD BE USED FOR PLANNING ONLY AND NEVER FOR NAVIGATION

Waypoints are given to the nearest minute of latitude and longitude and are positioned in clear water of the ports and headlands.

Turning Points (TP) to avoid land or navigational hazards are also noted in the table.

The symbol * between two points denotes that the direct route between them passes over or close to land or other navigational dangers.

Port or point	Lat	Long
SOLENT(Cowes)	50 46N	01 18W
*		*
PLYMOUTH	50 19	04 10
*		*
TP The Lizard	49 56	05 12
Longships	50 03	05 48
KINSALE	51 40	08 30
TP Cape Clear	51 20	09 32
Mizzen Head	51 22	09 53
Castletown	51 37	09 55
*		*
TP The Bull	51 35	10 19
Bray Head	51 53	10 28
Dingle	52 07	10 13
TP Sleah Head	52 05	10 30
Via Blasket Sound		
*		*
TP Gregory Sound	53 05	09 37
Cashla Bay	53 13	09 34
*		*
TP Skerd Rocks	53 14	10 05
Slyne Head	53 23	10 21
Black Rock	54 04	10 23
*		*
Castlebay, Barra	56 56	07 28
*		*

Port or point	Lat	Long
St. Kilda	57 48	08 34
Sound of Harris(W end)	57 48	07 14
*		*
Sound of Harris(E end)	57 44	06 5
*		*
Stornoway	58 12	06 20
*		*
TP Cape Wrath	58 40	05 06
Stromness	58 56	03 18
*		*
Lerwick	60 08	01 10
*		*
Tvøroyri	61 32	06 44
*		*
Torshavn	62 00	06 44

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