



RCC PILOTAGE FOUNDATION

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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.

This Route was updated by John Marchment in 2008

Route 10 English Channel to Atlantic Islands Direct and via N.W. Spain

For text version, see below

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General

It is some 1200 miles from the W end of the English Channel to the Azores and around 1300 to Madeira; though the latter lies 500 miles SE of the former, most of the additional mileage is due to the Azores' position well off the direct track to Madeira. From Madeira to the Canaries is 240 miles, with a further 850 to the Cape Verdes. Diversion to NW Spain adds little to the total distance to Madeira but some 200 miles if going to the Azores.

Full details of these passages may be found in the RCC Pilotage Foundation's *The Atlantic Crossing Guide*. This chapter contains only the brief details needed to check feasibility and for planning.

Weather and sea states

The Azores High tends to move N in the summer months forcing the passage of the Atlantic lows and associated bad weather N over the British Isles. Once clear of soundings in the SW approaches to the Channel, winds from SW to NW can be expected becoming increasingly light the further S or SW. Off the W Iberian coast low pressure over mainland Spain leads to the northerly Portuguese Trades blowing from June to September down the coast and up to about 100M off it. This general northerly wind direction persists S to the Canaries before turning to the NE as the Trades from the region of the Cape Verdes, although the northern boundary of the Trades may move N in some years.

Swell is nearly always present in the Atlantic and is mainly generated by disturbances to the N resulting in a NW direction, becoming N the further S. It is very much a feature in most of the harbours of the Atlantic Islands and along the NW African coast.

Sea temperature increases from about 18°C in the Bay of Biscay to 26°C in the Cape Verdes.

Fog is only prevalent on the W coast of the Iberian peninsular as far S as Lisbon in the summer months.

The dust-laden *harmattan* off the NW African shore can reduce visibility appreciably and may extend far enough offshore to affect the Cape Verdes.

Currents

The N Atlantic E-going current divides at the British Isles, turning S to run down the W Iberian coast and continuing to the Canaries before turning SW and later W in the Trade Wind zone. It seldom exceeds ½ knot.

Tides and tidal streams

Tidal streams can be discounted once clear of soundings off the English Channel except when entering harbours on the Spanish and Portuguese coasts, but must be reckoned with in the Straits of Gibraltar.

Tidal streams can run strongly (and create steep seas) between individual islands in all the Atlantic Island groups.

Tidal ranges vary from 5.9m at Ouessant, to 3.3m in NW Spain to 0.9m at Gibraltar; in Madeira it is 2.2m reducing to 0.8m in the Cape Verdes.

Formalities

The following documents should be on board and produced on demand:-

- (a) Certificate of Registry or Small Ships Registry document.
- (b) International or RYA Certificate of Competence at least for the Skipper.
- (c) Evidence of insurance of the vessel.
- (d) Passports for all on board.
- (e) Radio licence.

Recent legislation in the Cape Verdes restricts the number of ports through which the islands may be entered and the situation should be checked before departure.

Search and rescue

The various routes to and from the islands pass through the UK, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Moroccan and Senegal Search and Rescue Regions. All of the routes are covered by HF DSC, some by MF DSC and little by VHF DSC. There are several MRCCs on the route including in the Azores, Madeira, Canaries and Dakar. Spain, Portugal, the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries still maintain coastal radio stations. There are busy commercial shipping routes in to the English Channel, along the W. Iberian coast and through the Straits of Gibraltar but less along the W African coast and to and from the islands.

Navtex and weather forecasts

The routes are covered by Navtex stations at Corsen(A), Coruña(D), Monsanto(R), Horta(F), Madeira(P), Casablanca(M), and Las Palmas(I).

Details of further weather forecasts may be found in Admiralty Maritime Communications(UK and Caribbean) NP 290 and RYA Weather Forecasts G5/04

Fuel and domestic gas

The availability of diesel fuel is noted in the Ports section. Generally, duty-paid fuel is readily available in any quantities in ports with yacht facilities in Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Azores, Canaries and Cape Verdes. Outside marinas in Spain and Portugal it may have to be brought by road tanker and even in drums or cans elsewhere. Duty-free diesel is available in Gibraltar and powered vessels with large tanks and low consumption may find it worthwhile to divert here to fill up.

While it is still just possible in some ports in Spain, Portugal and Morocco to have Calor (Butane) cylinders refilled, the only domestic butane readily available everywhere is Camping Gas. It may worthwhile converting to these bottles, or to propane which is generally used in yachts in the USA.

Timing of passage

The summer season of May to September offers the best chance of benign weather and favourable winds if going to or from the Azores and Madeira. It is worthwhile reaching the NW corner of Spain before late September if continuing further S. The optimum time to start westwards on the Trade Wind route in the region of the Cape Verdes is late-November which leaves time to enjoy Madeira, the Canaries or Morocco when coming from northern Europe in the late summer.

Routeing recommendations

Only unusual weather or fuel considerations would give reasons to deviate from the direct 1200M route to the Azores. Powered vessels need a range of at least 750M to reach the Azores from the nearest mainland (Lisbon).

Going S to Madeira, Canaries or Cape Verdes will benefit from the northerlies off the W Iberian coast, subsequent north easterlies along the NW African coast, and generally favourable current. For powered craft the longest leg will be 400M from the coast out to Madeira.

Going N from Madeira and the Canaries to the English Channel will favour a long leg out to the NW to pick up the prevailing westerlies in the N. Atlantic. See Route 7, second page for tactics if the need to go N up the west Iberian coast arises.

Distance Table

	DOVER	SOLENT(Cowes)	PLYMOUTH	LA CORUÑA	CASCAIS	GIBRALTAR	Casablanca	Essaouira	Azores(S.Miguel)	Madeira(Funchal)	Canaries(S.Cruz)	Cape Verdes
DOVER	***	110	230	695	1048	1371	1330	1670	1380	1420	1670	2520
SOLENT(Cowes)	110	***	120	585	938	1261	1220	1560	1270	1310	1560	2410
PLYMOUTH	230	120	***	465	818	1061	1100	1440	1150	1190	1440	2290
LA CORUÑA	695	585	465	***	353	676	620	950	860	900	1100	1950
CASCAIS	1048	938	818	353	***	323	310	640	750	600	800	1650
GIBRALTAR	1371	1261	1061	676	323	***	190	365	940	720	755	1605
Casablanca	1330	1220	1100	620	310	190	***	175	820	600	570	1420
Essaouira	1670	1560	1440	950	640	365	175	***	770	550	390	1340
Azores(S.Miguel)	1380	1270	1150	860	750	940	820	770	***	500	700	1400
Madeira(Funchal)	1420	1310	1190	900	600	720	600	550	500	***	240	1060
Canaries(S.Cruz)	1670	1560	1440	1100	800	755	570	390	700	240	***	850
C.Verdes(P.Gr' de)	2520	2410	2290	1950	1650	1605	1420	1340	1400	1060	850	***

The distances are direct between any two points in different columns. Interpolation between distances 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 some of these facilities with any omissions noted.

Ports in the UK are not included.

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.

LA CORUÑA A*

Only qualified as the outer banks break in storm conditions and must be avoided on approach.

A large commercial and fishing port with first class facilities for yachts in a new marina near the city centre; a port of entry, the formalities being handled by the Club Nautico; a well protected marina with 350 berths in 5m for yachts up to 15m, room for larger in the commercial basins in the city; another marina at Fontan/Sada 6M to the E; 32 ton travel lift; duty paid fuel in reasonable quantities at the moment only from the site of the old marina where there is only tidal access to the fuel point for yachts drawing more than 2m.

City airport has some UK flights in the season, otherwise via Madrid. Santiago de Compostella international airport 60km.

National holidays on 1 May, 17 and 29 June, 18 and 25 July, 15 Aug for several days may restrict facilities but not berthing.

Yachts can be safely left unattended here or at Fontan/Sada.

CASCAIS A

A large and modern (1999) marina with complete shelter and safe approach in all conditions; several other marinas up the estuary to Lisbon if further diversion is desired; accommodation for up to about 20m and 6m draft, over 40m and up to 7m draft at special pontoon; 70 ton travel lift; fuel in any quantity; first class rail service to Lisbon (30 minutes); 1 hour to Lisbon international airport.

A safe place to leave a yacht but very expensive.

GIBRALTAR A

A large commercial ex-Naval harbour on the W side of the Rock. It has three marinas and is increasingly widening its facilities for yachts at this focal point at the entrance to the Mediterranean. Accessible in all weathers but the three marinas are subject to a greater or lesser extent from swell in strong westerlies, and all are buffeted by gusts and down-drafts in strong *levanters*. A duty free port with excellent facilities for yachtsmen.

Vessels of any size and draft can be accepted up to 90m in the marinas and more in the commercial part of the harbour; the depth in the marinas is at least 3.5m; 40 ton travel lift and the largest yacht can be catered for by Cammell Lairds in the old Dockyard.

Good medical facilities on the NHS for UK residents.

Several flights a day to UK but not to Spain.

A safe a secure place to leave a yacht but a minder of warps and fenders needed.

Casablanca A *Temporarily closed to yachts during building of a new marina(2005)*

Safe entry and shelter in all weather and good facilities for yachts in a busy commercial port; 2.5m to 1.8m in the marina; a port of entry; good repair facilities but no lift-out although a 2.9m tidal range allows much to be done alongside; unlimited fuel by request; international airport nearby.

A safe all-weather alternative while Casablanca is not available is the large commercial port of Jos Lafar further down the coast

Essaouira B*

An entrance needing precise navigation and a strong nerve in a swell; uncomfortable inside in strong southerlies; adequate facilities for yachts and a port of entry; water on the quay and fuel alongside by arrangement; good for provisions; bus and rail connections to Marrakesh and Casablanca.

PONTA DELGADA(Azores) A

A large commercial and naval port with excellent shelter and nearly all facilities in a good marina berthing up to 40m in length; 22 ton travel lift and all engineering and electronic skills plus sailmaker and chandlery; fuel in the marina; hospitals; easy provisioning within walking distance; Calor cylinders can be charged; international airport with flights to the UK via Lisbon.

The best place to stop over in the Azores especially for provisioning, with **Horta** in Faial as a good alternative.

Funchal (Madeira) A*

Open to the E although the marina is partially protected from sea and swell; a very crowded marina with most facilities; 25 ton travel lift; fuel in the marina; good provisioning but taxi needed for a major stock-up; hospitals; Calor cylinders can be filled; there is another marina now with most facilities at **Quinta do Lorde** at the E end of the island; international airport with frequent flights.

Santa Cruz de Tenerife(Canaries) A*

E winds send in some swell to all three harbours; there are two marinas some 3M apart with the newest and largest to the S; most facilities, fuel and good provisioning; hospitals; Calor cylinders can be filled; one international airport with frequent scheduled and charter flights.

Porto Grande (Mindelo)(Cape Verde Islands) B

A sheltered anchorage in a large bay with good holding and some alongside facilities; most engineering and electrical repairs can be undertaken and there is a large boat/shipyard; fuel alongside by arrangement in any quantities; good provisioning; hospitals; airport with international connections.

Route 10

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 off ports or headlands.

Turning points are also noted in the table to avoid land or navigational hazards.

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

Port or point	Lat	Long
LA CORUNA	43 22 N	08 22 W
*		*
Tp Cabo Villano	43 10	09 15
*		*
CASCAIS	38 41	09 25
*		*
GIBRALTAR	36 09	05 22
*		*
Casablanca	33 09	07 35
*		*
Essaouira	31 30	09 48
*		*
PONTA DELGADA(Azores)	37 40	25 35
*		*
Funchal (Madeira)	32 38	16 54
*		*
Santa Cruz (Canaries)	28 27	16 14
*		*
Porto Grande (Cape Verdes)	16 53 N	25 01W

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