

Sagres to Culatra

East along the Algarve past Lagos, Portimão and the sea caves of Benagil, then in through the Barra de Faro-Olhão to anchor in the Ria Formosa lagoon off Culatra, a car-free island village.

DATE	Tuesday 27 April 2027
DISTANCE	55.7 nm, 8 legs
TIME	9 h 36 min
DEPART	07:30 WEST from Sagres. 45 minutes after sunrise (06:47 WEST), timed to reach the bar on the flood.
ARRIVE	About 17:06 WEST at Culatra. On the flood into the Ria Formosa, about 2 hours 30 minutes before high water, with about 3 hours 10 minutes of daylight in hand.
TIDES	7 days after the full moon, toward neaps: range about 1.6 m
WIND	North-west to west, or a south-westerly sea breeze in the afternoon
BOAT	35 to 38 ft sailing yacht, 1.9 m draught, 6 kn under sail, 5.5 kn under engine
CREW	Skipper and 3 crew, 2 watches of 2



Track and waypoints 1 to 7, with ports of refuge as squares.

Go or no-go

Decide at 09:00 WEST. Go only if all of these hold:

- ☐ Wind force 5 or less, and no strong southerly or south-westerly: the Faro-Olhão bar faces south.
- ☐ Swell under 2 m from the south-west.

- ☐ Faro-Olhão bar open (no signal at the moles; status on [marinha.pt](#)).
- ☐ Visibility 2 nm or more.

If the bar is in doubt, plan Vilamoura as the night stop instead (marina, 4 m entrance) and go to Culatra the next day, which is the weather day held there.

Route and waypoints

Waypoints are planning positions in open water, checked against a 1:10m coastline to be at least 1 nm off land except at the harbour ends. Distances and courses are calculated from them. Plot every one on the current chart before use. Courses are true.

#	WAYPOINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	COURSE	LEG NM	TOTAL NM	ETA	NOTES
0	Baleeira, Sagres	37°00.6'N	008°55.5'W				07:30 WEST	Weigh anchor.
1	Baleeira approach	36°59.6'N	008°54.8'W	151°T	1.1	1.1	07:47 WEST	Out of the bay.
2	Off Ponta da Piedade	37°03.6'N	008°40.0'W	071°T	12.5	13.6	09:52 WEST	1.2 nm south of the p
3	Off Portimão	37°04.6'N	008°31.0'W	082°T	7.3	20.9	11:05 WEST	1.7 nm south of Ponta Arade channel.
4	Off Benagil	37°03.8'N	008°25.5'W	100°T	4.5	25.3	11:49 WEST	Outside the cave zone off the cliffs. Look fr
5	Off Albufeira	37°03.0'N	008°15.0'W	095°T	8.4	33.8	13:13 WEST	2 nm off.
6	Off Vilamoura	37°02.5'N	008°07.0'W	094°T	6.4	40.2	14:18 WEST	2 nm off the marina e refuge on this leg.
7	Faro-Olhão bar approach	36°57.3'N	007°52.3'W	114°T	12.8	53.0	16:26 WEST	South of the moles. L Faro on VHF 14. CHECK ON THE
8	Culatra anchorage	36°59.6'N	007°50.6'W	031°T	2.7	55.7	17:06 WEST	Inside the lagoon, we outside the seahorse rules: see Hazards. CHECK ON THE

Tides and time

SAGRES · TUE 27 APR · WEST (UTC+1)

LW	00:55	1.2 m
HW	07:14	2.4 m
LW	12:59	1.4 m
HW	19:31	2.6 m

From the Lagos Algarve station.

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HW	19:31	2.6 m

From the Lagos Algarve station.

Tuesday 27 April 2027, 7 days after the full moon and the day before the last quarter: toward neaps, range about 1.6 m.

Entering on the flood. Low water is at about 12:59 WEST and high water at about 19:31 WEST. Arriving at about 17:05, the flood is running in with you through the bar, and the water is rising. Streams in the Ria Formosa channels are strong at the bars, and strongest at springs; at neaps they are weaker, which is one reason this leg sits here.

Culatra has no station in the TICON-4 set, so its times are from Lagos, 30 nm west. The Huelva station, 50 nm east, gives times within 5 minutes of Lagos, so the tide along this coast is close to simultaneous. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)

Tide times are predictions made for this plan from the TICON-4 harmonic constants (DGFI-TUM) with the Neaps tide predictor, because the official 2027 tables were not yet published when it was written. Tested against the official APDL table for Leixões on 23 July 2026, the predicted times were within 8 minutes and the heights 0.1 to 0.2 m lower. Heights are above lowest astronomical tide. Check every time against the official 2027 table before sailing.

Daylight. Sunrise at Sagres 06:47 WEST. Sunset at Culatra 20:16 WEST.

Weather

- **The Algarve.** Sheltered from the north. Afternoon sea breezes from the south-west build in fine weather.
- **The bar.** A south or south-west wind against the ebb makes the Faro-Olhão bar rough. Entering on the flood avoids that.

FORECASTS TO CHECK

- IPMA (Portugal) maritime bulletins and coastal warnings, ipma.pt, maritime section. The high-seas area for this coast is 17 Porto.

- NAVTEX Portugal (Monsanto): 518 kHz, station R, in English; 490 kHz, station G, in Portuguese. Check the station letters and broadcast times against the Admiralty List of Radio Signals. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)
- Bar status: Autoridade Marítima Nacional, “Estado das barras”, on the amn.pt home page, by zone. The online notice overrides the signals shown at the harbour.
- Navigation warnings: Instituto Hidrográfico local warnings, geoanavnet.hidrografico.pt.
- IPMA high-seas area 18 São Vicente.

Hazards

- **Benagil caves.** A restricted zone from Praia do Vale do Lapa to Praia de Albandeira, within 500 m of the coast and out to the 30 m contour. Inside the main cave (the Algar), motor craft use the west entrance, kayaks and paddleboards the east; at most 5 motor craft at a time, for 2 minutes each, bow out only, never at night or in visibility under 1,000 m, and no landing. Fines reach €44,000. The Benagil mooring buoys are for craft up to 6 m only. A 35 to 38 ft yacht should not go in: look from outside the zone.
- **Portimão.** Ships use the Arade channel. Keep clear of the outer anchorage south of the entrance. Keep a distance of 1.5 times the cliff height from the cliffs.
- **The Faro-Olhão bar.** Strong streams at the bar, strongest at springs. No anchoring in the approach channel. Watch VHF 14 and 16 on entry. Closed: 2 cones point to point by day, or green-red-green lights by night. Conditioned: cones and a ball, or green-red-green-white, and only vessels over 10 m may move.
- **Other bars.** The Armona and Fuseta bars, east of Culatra, have unstable shoals. Keep 1 nm off them.
- **The seahorse refuge.** No navigation in the secondary channel east of Culatra village, between the village and the Lavajo. Points on its edge include 37°00.123'N 007°49.491'W and 36°59.768'N 007°49.353'W.
- **Anchoring at Culatra.** Culatra is in the Olhão harbour authority's area. Its anchoring rules (Edital 1-A/2016) could not be read for this plan. Phone the Capitania de Olhão before arriving to confirm where a yacht may anchor and for how long.

Ports of refuge

PORT	FROM THE ROUTE	USE IT WHEN	NOTES
Baleeira	Start	Within the first hour	Anchorage.

PORT	FROM THE ROUTE	USE IT WHEN	NOTES
Lagos	At waypoint 2	Weather turns early	Marina, +351 282 770 210.
Portimão	At waypoint 3	Wind or sea rising early	Bar status on marinha.pt . Marina inside the entrance: CHECK THE PILOT BOOK
Vilamoura	At waypoint 6	Bar in doubt, or late	Marina, VHF 9 and 16, entrance 4 m, reception +351 289 310 560.
Olhão	3 nm inside the bar	No room or no permission to anchor at Culatra	Marina at the town. CHECK THE PILOT BOOK

Pilotage

LEAVING BALEEIRA

1. Weigh anchor and head south-east out of the bay, then east along the cliffs.
2. Keep 1 nm off Ponta da Piedade's sea stacks, then make sail.

INTO THE RIA FORMOSA

1. At waypoint 7, look at the bar signals and call Faro port on VHF 14 (watch 16).
2. Enter between the moles (east FI G 4s, west FI R 4s) on the flood, on the leading line (front light Oc 4s).
3. Inside, turn east toward Culatra, keeping in the channel. Faro Port Control works VHF 13 and 74.
4. Anchor west of the village, outside the seahorse refuge, where the Capitania confirms. Show an anchor light. [CHECK ON THE CHART](#)

LIGHTS ON THE WAY

Ponta da Piedade	FI 7s, 51 m
Ponta do Altar	White, 2 s on and 3 s off, 32 m
Portimão moles	FI G 5s and FI R 5s
Alfanzina	FI(2) 15s, 56 m
Vilamoura	CHECK ON THE CHART : the marina and the Lighthouse Directory disagree
Cabo de Santa Maria	FI(4) 17s, 50 m
Faro-Olhão bar moles	FI G 4s and FI R 4s
Culatra	Oc G 5s

Communications

Portimão port	VHF 12 port operations, 13 navigation safety · Polícia Marítima +351 916 613 547 (24 h)
Capitania de Portimão	+351 282 073 503
Vilamoura marina	VHF 9 and 16 · +351 289 310 560
Faro port	VHF 14 and 16 on the bar · Faro Port Control VHF 13 and 74
Capitania de Faro	+351 289 072 150 · Polícia Marítima +351 289 072 160 or +351 916 613 531
Capitania de Olhão (Culatra)	+351 289 079 025 · Polícia Marítima +351 916 613 521
AMN working channels	AMN channels on this coast: VHF 16 calling, 11 Capitania and Polícia Marítima working, 67 search and rescue working.
Emergency	VHF 16, DSC 70 · 112
MRCC Lisboa	+351 214 401 919 · mrcc.lisboa@marinha.pt · watches VHF 16 around the clock

Contingencies

- **Faro-Olhão bar closed or rough.** Stop at Vilamoura instead and use tomorrow's weather day to move to Culatra.
- **No permission to anchor at Culatra.** Go on 3 nm to Olhão and berth in the marina; visit Culatra by the island ferry.
- **Running late.** If waypoint 5 is passed after 17:00 WEST, stop at Vilamoura: do not enter an unfamiliar lagoon in failing light.
- **Engine failure.** Do not try the bar under sail. Anchor off in settled weather or sail to Vilamoura and call for a tow in.
- **Person overboard.** Shout, point, throw the danger buoy, press MOB, DSC distress alert, Mayday on 16.

Before leaving

- ☐ Forecasts read and logged before the go or no-go time
- ☐ Bar status checked on amn.pt for departure, destination and refuges
- ☐ Navigation warnings checked
- ☐ Waypoints entered and checked against the chart
- ☐ Ship's log started in UTC
- ☐ Crew briefing: route, watches, safety gear, MOB, fog
- ☐ Capitania de Olhão called about anchoring at Culatra

- ☐ Fuel for 10 hours under engine, plus a reserve
- ☐ Water, food and hot drinks for 10 hours
- ☐ Lifejackets with crotch straps, jackstays rigged, harnesses
- ☐ Liferaft, grab bag, flares in date, handheld VHF
- ☐ Radar, AIS and navigation lights tested
- ☐ Passports and boat papers aboard

Sources

- Benagil caves: Capitania do Porto de Portimão, Edital 019/2024 and Edital 009/2025 (amn.pt).
- Portimão: Capitania do Porto de Portimão, Edital 1733/2023 (amn.pt).
- Faro-Olhão bar and Ria Formosa (Faro area): Capitania do Porto de Faro, Edital 522/2017 and Plano de Salvamento Marítimo (amn.pt).
- Culatra and the seahorse refuge: Capitania do Porto de Olhão, Plano de Salvamento Marítimo 2025 and Edital 03/2024 (amn.pt).
- Vilamoura: marinadevilamoura.com, technical information.
- Bar status: Marinha, Estado das Barras, marinha.pt (all bars on this stretch shown open in October 2026).
- Local warnings: Instituto Hidrográfico, geoanavnet.hidrografico.pt.
- Tides: predictions from TICON-4 harmonic constants (Hart-Davis, Dettmering and Seitz, DGFI-TUM, 2025, doi 10.17882/109129) with Neaps (openwaters.io). Check against the Instituto Hidrográfico 2027 tables.
- Sunrise and sunset: calculated (NOAA method).
- Lights: The Lighthouse Directory (Rowlett), ibiblio.org/lighthouse, Portugal pages revised August 2024. Cross-check with the IH List of Lights, volume I.
- Pilot: RCC Pilotage Foundation, Atlantic Spain and Portugal, 9th edition (2025).

A planning exercise to RYA Yachtmaster standard. Not for navigation: use current official charts, the pilot book and the forecasts on the day.