

Culatra to Chipiona

About 76 nautical miles straight across the Gulf of Cádiz, past the mouth of the Guadiana and into Spain, to Chipiona at the mouth of the Guadalquivir. Cádiz itself, 10 nm further, would mean arriving after sunset.

DATE	Thursday 29 April 2027
DISTANCE	76.3 nm, 6 legs
TIME	13 h 04 min
DEPART	06:15 WEST from Culatra. At first light, 25 minutes before sunrise (06:40 WEST), out through the bar on the flood.
ARRIVE	About 20:19 CEST at Chipiona. With only about 55 minutes of daylight in hand (sunset 21:12 CEST).
TIDES	9 days after the full moon: neaps, range about 1.5 m
WIND	North-west to west most likely; a Levanter (east) is possible this close to the Strait
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. A long open crossing: the weather day before it is held at Culatra



Track and waypoints 1 to 5, with ports of refuge as squares.

Go or no-go

Decide the evening before and confirm at 05:30 WEST. Go only if all of these hold:

- ☐ Wind force 5 or less, and no Levanter (east) above force 5 forecast for the Spanish end: it would be on the nose for 70 nm.

- ☐ Swell under 2 m.
- ☐ Faro-Olhão bar open.
- ☐ Visibility 3 nm or more.
- ☐ No navigation warning for firing areas off Rota and Cádiz.

If the forecast fails, use the weather day held at Culatra. If a second day is needed, it costs the rest day at Chipiona.

Route and waypoints

Waypoints are planning positions in open water, checked against a 1:10m coastline to be at least 3 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	Culatra anchorage	36°59.6'N	007°50.6'W				06:15 WEST	Depart at first light. L
1	Faro-Olhão bar approach	36°57.3'N	007°52.3'W	211°T	2.7	2.7	06:51 WEST	Out between the mo flood.
2	Gulf of Cádiz, south of the Guadiana	36°52.0'N	007°25.0'W	104°T	22.5	25.2	10:35 WEST	Open water, 15 nm of
3	Gulf of Cádiz, off Huelva	36°44.0'N	006°50.0'W	106°T	29.2	54.3	16:27 CEST	Spain. Clocks forward nm off the Huelva coa
4	South-west of Chipiona	36°40.0'N	006°32.0'W	105°T	15.0	69.3	18:57 CEST	5 nm south of the Sal north-east. CHECK
5	Chipiona approach	36°43.5'N	006°26.8'W	050°T	5.4	74.7	19:56 CEST	South-west of the ha Salmedina shoal. Pilo CHECK THE PILO
6	Chipiona marina	36°44.8'N	006°25.8'W	032°T	1.5	76.3	20:19 CEST	Position approximate CHECK ON THE

Tides and time

CULATRA · THU 29 APR · WEST (UTC+1)

LW	03:30	1.4 m
HW	09:48	2.3 m
LW	15:42	1.6 m
HW	22:06	2.5 m

From the Lagos Algarve station.

CHIPIONA · THU 29 APR · CEST (UTC+2)

LW	04:27	1.4 m
HW	10:51	2.3 m
LW	16:42	1.6 m
HW	23:07	2.5 m

From the Cadiz station.

Thursday 29 April 2027, 1 day after the last quarter: neaps, range about 1.5 m.

Leaving on the young flood. Low water at the Faro-Olhão bar is at about 03:30 WEST. Leaving at 06:15, the young flood runs in against you through the bar. That costs a little speed, but the bar is quiet: the rough sea there comes with the ebb against a southerly.

Arriving at Chipiona. Low water is at about 16:42 CEST and high water at about 23:07 CEST, so you arrive on the flood. Chipiona has no station in the TICON-4 set: times are from Cádiz, 12 nm south. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)

Time. Portugal keeps WEST (UTC+1) and Spain keeps CEST (UTC+2). Change the ship's clock at the border, about waypoint 3, and keep the log in UTC.

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 Culatra 06:40 WEST. Sunset at Chipiona 21:12 CEST.

Weather

- **The Gulf of Cádiz.** Open water with no shelter on the direct line. Winds from north-west to west are the most common in late spring, often with a sea breeze near the coast in the afternoon.
- **The Levanter.** An east wind funnelled through the Strait of Gibraltar. It can reach the Cádiz end of this crossing and blow for days. It is the reason the weather day is held at Culatra.

FORECASTS TO CHECK

- IPMA (Portugal) high-seas area 19 Cádiz.

- AEMET (Spain) coastal bulletin “Costa de Andalucía Occidental y Ceuta”: zones Aguas costeras de Huelva and Aguas costeras de Cádiz (sub-area Del Guadalquivir al Cabo Roche).
- NAVTEX for southern Spain and the Strait. Check the station and times on the receiver.
[CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)
- Bar status at Faro-Olhão: marinha.pt, Estado das Barras.

Hazards

- **Leaving the Ria Formosa.** Strong streams at the bar. No anchoring in the approach channel.
- **Fishing.** Many fishing boats and some gear across the Gulf of Cádiz, especially off the Huelva coast and the Guadalquivir.
- **The Salmedina shoal.** Rocks and shoals off Chipiona and the Guadalquivir mouth, marked by the Bajo Salmedina light (Fl(9) 15s). Approach Chipiona from the south-west, inside the shoal, by chart. Ships use the Guadalquivir channel to Seville.
- **Rota naval base and firing areas.** A naval base at Rota and possible exercise areas off Rota and Cádiz. Check the Spanish notices to mariners (Avisos a los Navegantes) before leaving.
- **Tuna nets (almadrabas).** Large fixed nets are set off this coast in spring, mainly south of Cádiz (Conil, Barbate, Zahara, Tarifa). They matter for the next 2 legs; check their positions now.
[CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)
- **Chipiona approach.** The harbour is small and the approach is shoal: use the chart and do not cut the corner round the Salmedina. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)

Ports of refuge

PORT	FROM THE ROUTE	USE IT WHEN	NOTES
Culatra	Start	Within the first hour	Back through the bar on the flood.
Mazagón (Huelva)	16 nm from waypoint 3	Weather turns in the middle of the crossing	Marina, maximum draught 4.5 m, +34 959 070 071.
Chipiona	Destination	First choice	Marina, 453 berths, up to 25 m, +34 856 109 711.
Rota	8 nm beyond Chipiona	Chipiona full	Marina, 509 berths, +34 856 104 011.
Puerto Sherry	11 nm beyond Chipiona	Bigger marina wanted	VHF 9, 3.5 m guaranteed depth, waiting quay, staff 24 h, +34 956 870 103.

Pilotage

LEAVING CULATRA

1. Anchor up at first light and follow the channel back to the bar.
2. Out between the moles, watching for fishing boats, and head south-east to waypoint 2.
3. Make sail and set the course for the open crossing.

ENTERING CHIPIONA

1. From waypoint 4, close the coast south of Chipiona and approach the harbour from the south-west, inside the Salmedina shoal, by chart. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)
2. Listen on VHF 16 for traffic in the Guadalquivir channel.
3. Call the marina for a berth (+34 856 109 711). VHF channel: [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)
4. Spain and Portugal are both in Schengen and the EU: no passport control. Check in at the marina office with the boat's papers.

LIGHTS ON THE WAY

Cabo de Santa Maria	Fl(4) 17s, 50 m
Vila Real de Santo António	White, flash every 6.5 s, 52 m
El Rompido	Fl(2) 10s, 43 m
Picacho	Fl(2+4) 30s, 52 m
Chipiona	Fl 10s, 69 m
Bajo Salmedina	Fl(9) 15s
Rota naval base range	Oc 3s, rear light

Communications

Faro port	VHF 14 and 16 on the bar
Capitania de Olhão	+351 289 079 025
Chipiona marina	+34 856 109 711 or +34 600 143 522 · VHF: CHECK THE PILOT BOOK
Rota marina	+34 856 104 011
Puerto Sherry	VHF 9 · +34 956 870 103
Emergency	VHF 16, DSC 70 · 112
Salvamento Marítimo (Spain)	Numbers for the Huelva and Cádiz rescue centres: CHECK THE PILOT BOOK
MRCC Lisboa (Portuguese side)	+351 214 401 919

Contingencies

- **Levanter arrives early.** Turn north for Mazagón or Chipiona rather than beating 30 nm into it.
- **Behind time.** If waypoint 3 is passed after 17:00 CEST, Chipiona will be close to sunset. Divert to Mazagón, or stand off in open water south of the Salmedina until morning rather than enter a shoal harbour in the dark.
- **Fog.** Fog routine. Ships cross this gulf for Huelva, Cádiz and the Strait: radar and AIS watch throughout.
- **Engine failure.** Sail on and call the marina for a tow in from the approach.
- **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
 - ☐ Spanish notices to mariners checked for Rota and Cádiz
 - ☐ Courtesy flag of Spain ready
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- ☐ Fuel for 15 hours under engine, plus a reserve
 - ☐ Water, food and hot drinks for 15 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

- Faro-Olhão bar: Capitania do Porto de Faro, Edital 522/2017 and Plano de Salvamento Marítimo (amn.pt).

- AEMET coastal bulletin and zones: aemet.es, predicción marítima, Andalucía occidental.
- Spanish marinas: puertosdeandalucia.es (Chipiona, Rota, Mazagón); puertosherry.com.
- Lights in Spain: The Lighthouse Directory, Spain Atlantic coast (ibiblio.org/lighthouse/esanw.htm).
- Tides: TICON-4 station Cádiz (IEO), used for Chipiona.
- 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.