

Barbate to Gibraltar

Into the Strait of Gibraltar along the Spanish shore, past Zahara and Tarifa, the southernmost point of mainland Europe, timed to ride the east-going stream, and across the bay of Algeciras to Gibraltar.

DATE	Sunday 2 May 2027
DISTANCE	37.8 nm, 8 legs
TIME	6 h 31 min
DEPART	09:45 CEST from Barbate. Timed to reach Tarifa about when the east-going stream begins, at high water Gibraltar (13:24 CEST).
ARRIVE	About 16:16 CEST at Gibraltar. In the late afternoon, with about 4 hours 55 minutes of daylight in hand (sunset 21:09 CEST).
TIDES	4 days after the last quarter: neaps, so the Strait streams are near their weakest
WIND	Levanter (east) or Poniente (west), funnelled through the Strait. A Poniente is fair; a strong Levanter is a no-go
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 08:45 CEST, after the morning forecast and a look at the sea off Barbate. Go only if all of these hold:

- ☐ No Levanter above force 5 forecast for the Strait: in the Strait it is stronger than outside, and against the east-going stream it raises a steep sea.
- ☐ No Poniente above force 6: fair, but the sea builds at Tarifa.
- ☐ Visibility 2 nm or more: this is one of the busiest shipping straits in the world.
- ☐ Tuna net positions for Barbate, Zahara and Tarifa plotted.
- ☐ Gibraltar marina berth confirmed.

If the Levanter is blowing, wait in Barbate: it often lasts several days. The rest day planned at Gibraltar on 3 May is the first to go.

Route and waypoints

Waypoints are planning positions in open water, checked against a 1:10m coastline to be at least 0.8 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	Barbate harbour	36°10.8'N	005°55.5'W				09:45 CEST	Depart.
1	South-west of Barbate	36°09.0'N	005°56.5'W	204°T	1.9	1.9	10:08 CEST	Clear of the tuna nets CHECK ON THE CHART
2	Off Punta Camarinal	36°03.0'N	005°49.5'W	137°T	8.3	10.2	11:31 CEST	2 nm off, clear of the Barbate and any Zahara net.
3	Off Punta Paloma	36°02.5'N	005°44.0'W	096°T	4.5	14.7	12:16 CEST	1.5 nm off.
4	South of Tarifa	35°59.0'N	005°36.0'W	118°T	7.4	22.0	13:29 CEST	1.1 nm south of Tarifa traffic zone, north of the bay. Report to Tarifa Traffic CHECK ON THE CHART
5	Off Punta de Guadalmesí	36°00.7'N	005°30.0'W	071°T	5.1	27.2	14:21 CEST	1.3 nm off. Keep in the bay.
6	Off Punta Carnero	36°03.0'N	005°25.0'W	060°T	4.7	31.8	15:07 CEST	1.6 nm south of the point of Algeciras.
7	Off Gibraltar South Mole	36°07.5'N	005°22.2'W	027°T	5.0	36.9	16:02 CEST	Cross the bay quickly, clear of the ships. Call Gibraltar VHF.
8	Queensway Quay Marina	36°08.1'N	005°21.3'W	050°T	0.9	37.8	16:16 CEST	Call the marina on VHF for a berth.

Tides and time

TARIFA · SUN 2 MAY · CEST (UTC+2)

LW	06:45	0.4 m
HW	13:00	1.1 m
LW	18:55	0.4 m

GIBRALTAR · SUN 2 MAY · CEST (UTC+2)

HW	01:01	0.8 m
LW	07:03	0.3 m
HW	13:24	0.8 m
LW	19:18	0.3 m

Sunday 2 May 2027, 4 days after the last quarter: neaps.

Timing the Strait. In the Strait the east-going stream begins at about high water Gibraltar, and the west-going stream about 6 hours later. In the central eastern Strait the streams run at up to 2 kn each way, and up to 3 kn inshore; close to the shore the stream turns progressively earlier and follows the coast. High water Gibraltar today is at about 13:24 CEST, so the east-going stream runs from about 13:20 to 19:20 CEST, starting earlier inshore. Leaving Barbate at 09:45 puts you off Tarifa at about 13:30, just after it turns in your favour.

On top of the tide. A surface current sets east into the Mediterranean through the Strait. It strengthens the east-going stream and weakens the west-going one.

Barbate has no station in the TICON-4 set; the Tarifa table is shown. [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 Barbate 07:30 CEST. Sunset at Gibraltar 21:09 CEST.

Weather

- **Levanter.** An east wind funnelled through the Strait, often strong and gusty. Gusts of 60 kn have been recorded at Gibraltar in easterly gales. The Ensenada de Zahara is sheltered from it.

- **Poniente.** A west wind through the Strait. Westerly gales have brought gusts over 70 kn at Gibraltar, and intense down-draughts east of the Rock. South-westerly winds raise a heavy sea in the bay anchorage.
- **Fog.** Fog and haze are common in the Strait in calm weather. Ships are close and fast.

FORECASTS TO CHECK

- AEMET coastal bulletins, aemet.es, predicción marítima: “Costa de Andalucía Occidental y Ceuta” and “Costa de Andalucía Oriental y Melilla”. Coastal text updated at 12:00 and 20:00 local time. AEMET warns at force 7 or more, sea 3 m or more, or visibility under 1 nm.
- NAVTEX Tarifa: 518 kHz, station G, at 0100, 0500, 0900, 1300, 1700 and 2100 UTC, in English; 490 kHz, station T, in Spanish.
- Salvamento Marítimo coastal stations broadcast forecasts on VHF. Channels and times:

CHECK THE PILOT BOOK
- AEMET zone Aguas costeras de Cádiz, sub-areas De Cabo Roche a Punta Camarinal, De Punta Camarinal a Punta Carnero (área Tarifa) and De Punta Carnero a Punta Chullera.
- Gibraltar Port publishes daily weather and tide times: gibraltarport.com, daily weather information.

Hazards

- **The traffic separation scheme.** The Strait has a traffic separation scheme and a mandatory vessel traffic service covering the scheme and the inshore traffic zones, between 5°15.0'W and 5°58.0'W. Tarifa Traffic works VHF 10 (67 secondary); westbound ships report to it when crossing 5°15.0'W. This route stays close to the Spanish shore, in the inshore traffic zone, and does not enter a lane. A sailing yacht must not impede ships in a lane and crosses at right angles if it must. Check the zone limits on the chart and what the VTS expects of a small craft.

CHECK ON THE CHART
- **Tuna nets (almadrabas).** Large fixed nets are laid off this coast in spring and summer and may extend up to 7 nm seaward. Off Barbate, Zahara and Tarifa, nets may be laid; off Barbate, nets are laid 1 nm south of the harbour entrance between April and August. In Spanish waters a net is marked by day with a white flag bearing a black “A” at its centre and outer end, and by night with a red light over a white light at the outer end and 2 white lights in a vertical line at the centre, visible about 2 miles. Get the 2027 positions from the Avisos a los Navegantes before sailing and plot them.
- **Bajo de Zahara.** Least depth 8.5 m. The sea breaks on it in heavy weather.

- **Algeciras Bay.** A major port: ships under way, at anchor in 4 anchorage areas (one is north-east of Punta Carnero), and ferries to Ceuta and Tangier. Algeciras Traffic works VHF 8, 13, 16, 68 and 74. Cross the bay quickly and keep clear.
- **Gibraltar.** A 1 nm exclusion zone round Europa Point light is open to vessels under 24 m. No anchoring up to 1.2 nm west of the west end of the runway. A marine conservation zone lies off Rosia. 5 kn in the inner port.
- **Territorial waters.** Spain disputes British Gibraltar territorial waters. Expect to be watched; follow instructions from either side's patrol boats calmly.

Ports of refuge

PORT	FROM THE ROUTE	USE IT WHEN	NOTES
Barbate	Start	Within the first 2 hours	Marina, waiting pontoon.
Ensenada de Zahara	At waypoint 2	Levanter rising	Anchorage sheltered from the east. Unsafe in onshore winds.
Tarifa	At waypoint 4	Emergency only	A small, busy ferry port under the Algeciras port authority, +34 956 585 400.
Alcaidesa Marina, La Línea	1.5 nm north of Gibraltar's marinas	Gibraltar full	VHF 9, +34 956 021 660, control tower 08:00 to 20:00.

Pilotage

LEAVING BARBATE

1. Leave the harbour and head south-west, keeping clear of the tuna net south of the entrance.
2. Turn south-east along the coast, 2 nm off Punta Camarinal.
3. Make sail if the wind allows; keep the engine ready for the Strait.

CROSSING THE BAY INTO GIBRALTAR

1. Off Punta Carnero, look across the bay for ships under way and at anchor before committing.
2. Cross toward the South Mole, listening on Algeciras Traffic and calling Gibraltar VTS on VHF 12 (also 16 or 20).
3. Pass north of the South Mole head (Q 2s) into the harbour, at no more than 5 kn.
4. Call Queensway Quay Marina on VHF 71 for a berth (+350 200 44700). Depth 4.5 m.
5. Clearance: go to the marina's pier master office, which clears yachts. Have passports, boat papers and insurance ready. HM Customs has an online pre-arrival declaration.

Borders. Under the UK and EU agreement on Gibraltar, provisionally applied from 15 July 2026, entry to Gibraltar is being aligned with Schengen and time in Gibraltar counts toward the Schengen 90-day limit (UK travel advice). How this applies to a yacht arriving by sea from Spain was not confirmed. Check before May 2027.

LIGHTS ON THE WAY

Cabo Trafalgar	Fl(2+1) 15s, 51 m
Camarinal	Oc(2) 5s, 75 m
Punta Paloma	Oc WR 5s
Tarifa	Fl(3) WR 10s, 41 m; fog signal 3 blasts every 60 s
Punta Carnero	Fl(4) WR 20s, 42 m
Gibraltar, Europa Point	Oc 10s, 49 m
Gibraltar South Mole head	Q 2s, 18 m
Gibraltar North Mole head	Q R, 18 m

Communications

Tarifa Traffic (Strait VTS)	VHF 10, 67 secondary · +34 956 684 757 or +34 956 684 740
Algeciras Traffic	VHF 8, 13, 16, 68, 74 · weather on 74
Gibraltar VTS	VHF 12, 16, 20 · Gibraltar Port Authority +350 200 46254
Gibraltar duty port officer (search and rescue)	+350 57334000
Queensway Quay Marina	VHF 71 · +350 200 44700 · info@queenswayquay.com
Ocean Village and Marina Bay	VHF 71 · +350 200 73300
HM Customs Gibraltar	+350 200 78879
Alcaidesa Marina	VHF 9 · +34 956 021660
Emergency	VHF 16, DSC 70 · 112
Salvamento Marítimo (Spain)	Rescue coordination centres for Cádiz, Tarifa, Algeciras and Almería: numbers CHECK THE PILOT BOOK

Contingencies

- **Levanter rises in the Strait.** Before Tarifa, turn back to the Ensenada de Zahara or Barbate. After Tarifa, carry on: the bay of Algeciras gives shelter once round Punta Carnero.
- **Late at Tarifa.** If Tarifa is passed after 17:45 CEST, the west-going stream is near; inshore it turns earlier. Keep close inshore, where the stream turns first, and expect a slow last 10 nm.
- **Fog.** Fog routine. Stay in the inshore traffic zone, keep a radar and AIS watch, and listen on VHF 10. Ferries cross the bay of Algeciras at speed.
- **Engine failure.** Sail into the bay and call Gibraltar VTS for help into the harbour.

- **Person overboard.** Shout, point, throw the danger buoy, press MOB, DSC distress alert, Mayday on 16. Tarifa is a rescue coordination centre.

Before leaving

- ☐ Forecasts read and logged before the go or no-go time
- ☐ Spanish notices to mariners (Avisos a los Navegantes) and Gibraltar Port Authority notices checked for the route
- ☐ Waypoints entered and checked against the chart
- ☐ Ship's log started in UTC
- ☐ Crew briefing: route, watches, safety gear, MOB, fog
- ☐ Gibraltar berth booked and clearance papers ready
- ☐ Courtesy flag for Gibraltar ready

- ☐ Fuel for 8 hours under engine, plus a reserve
- ☐ Water, food and hot drinks for 9 hours
- ☐ Lifejackets with crotch straps, jackstays rigged, harnesses
- ☐ Liferaft, grab bag, flares in date, handheld VHF
- ☐ Radar, AIS and navigation lights tested
- ☐ Passports, boat papers and insurance aboard

Sources

- Streams, VTS, Algeciras, Gibraltar restricted areas and weather: NGA Pub 131 (2025), pages 2 to 18.
- Gibraltar yachting, clearance and marinas: gibraltarport.com (yachting, clearance formalities, private marinas); Safety at Sea (2018); queenswayquay.com; marinabay.gi.
- Gibraltar entry and Schengen: UK Foreign Office travel advice, Gibraltar entry requirements (gov.uk).
- Alcaidesa: puertosdeandalucia.es and alcaidesamarina.com.
- Strait, Tarifa, Algeciras and Gibraltar: NGA Pub 131, Sailing Directions (Enroute) Western Mediterranean, 19th edition (2025), sector 1.
- NAVTEX: NGA Pub 117, chapter 3; AEMET maritime guide (2016).
- AEMET coastal zones: aemet.es, predicción marítima.
- Spanish ports: puertosdeandalucia.es port pages (positions, phones, berths).

- Lights: The Lighthouse Directory, Spain (ibiblio.org/lighthouse/esanw.htm and esane.htm) and Gibraltar (gib.htm).
- 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.