

Cartagena to Santa Pola

Round Cabo de Palos outside the Islas Hormigas marine reserve, north past the Mar Menor and Torrevieja to Tabarca, a walled island village in a marine reserve, and across to Santa Pola for the night.

DATE	Thursday 13 May 2027
DISTANCE	62.1 nm, 10 legs
TIME	12 h 03 min, including 1.5 h stopped
DEPART	07:45 CEST from Cartagena. 50 minutes after sunrise (06:57 CEST). A long day with a stop.
ARRIVE	About 19:48 CEST at Santa Pola. In the early evening, with about 1 hour 15 minutes of daylight in hand (sunset 21:04 CEST).
TIDES	Range about 0.1 m: no practical effect
WIND	Levante on the beam after Cabo de Palos; sea breezes 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. The stop at Tabarca depends on permission: see Hazards



Track and waypoints 1 to 9, with ports of refuge as squares.

Go or no-go

Decide at 06:45 CEST. Go only if all of these hold:

- ☐ No Levante above force 5: it is on the beam north of Cabo de Palos and heaps up the sea off the cape.
- ☐ Visibility 2 nm or more.
- ☐ Santa Pola berth confirmed.

☐ For the stop only: Tabarca permission or a confirmed berth or buoy.

If the weather is wrong, stay in Cartagena. If it turns after Cabo de Palos, Torrevieja is the stop.
Without permission for Tabarca, pass it at 6 to 10 kn and go straight to Santa Pola.

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	Yacht Port Cartagena	37°35.7'N	000°58.6'W				07:45 CEST	Depart.
1	Cartagena approach	37°34.4'N	000°58.6'W	178°T	1.3	1.3	08:01 CEST	Out between
2	Off Portmán	37°32.8'N	000°51.0'W	105°T	6.2	7.6	09:03 CEST	2 nm off.
3	South of Cabo de Palos	37°35.8'N	000°40.5'W	070°T	8.9	16.4	10:32 CEST	South of the l cut inside.
4	South-east of Las Hormigas	37°37.0'N	000°35.0'W	075°T	4.5	20.9	11:17 CEST	Outside the re
5	East of Las Hormigas	37°41.5'N	000°35.0'W	000°T	4.5	25.4	12:02 CEST	Outside the re
6	East of Isla Grosa	37°44.0'N	000°39.5'W	305°T	4.4	29.8	12:46 CEST	2 nm off the is
7	Off Torrevieja	37°57.0'N	000°38.0'W	005°T	13.1	42.9	14:56 CEST	2.5 nm off the
8	Tabarca, north side	38°10.0'N	000°28.7'W	029°T	14.9	57.8	17:26 CEST to 18:56	Inside the rese Stop only whe CHECK ON
9	Santa Pola approach	38°10.5'N	000°33.0'W	278°T	3.4	61.2	19:30 CEST	South-east of CHECK ON
10	Club Náutico Santa Pola	38°11.3'N	000°33.5'W	334°T	0.9	62.1	19:48 CEST	Position appr CHECK ON

Tides and time

CARTAGENA · THU 13 MAY · CEST (UTC+2)

LW

01:21

0.2 m

HW	09:22	0.3 m
LW	16:25	0.1 m
HW	23:19	0.3 m

SANTA POLA · THU 13 MAY · CEST (UTC+2)

HW	02:22	0.2 m
LW	15:03	0.1 m

From the Alicante I station.

Thursday 13 May 2027. **Tides.** The range here is 0.1 to 0.3 m: tides make no practical difference. Wind and air pressure move the sea level more than the tide does.

Santa Pola uses the Alicante station.

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 Cartagena 06:57 CEST. Sunset at Santa Pola 21:04 CEST.

Weather

- **Cabo de Palos.** The corner between the Murcia and Alicante coasts: wind accelerates and the sea is rougher there.
- **Levante.** North of Cabo de Palos the coast faces east, so an easterly is onshore.

FORECASTS TO CHECK

- AEMET coastal bulletins, aemet.es, predicción marítima: “Costa de Andalucía Oriental y Melilla” (Aguas costeras de Almería) and “Costa de Valencia y Murcia” (Aguas costeras de Murcia, del Mar Menor, de Alicante, de Valencia). High-seas areas Alborán, Palos and Baleares.
- NAVTEX Cabo de la Nao: 518 kHz, station X, at 0350, 0750, 1150, 1550, 1950 and 2350 UTC, in English; 490 kHz, station M, in Spanish. Check the times against the Admiralty List of Radio Signals. [CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)

Hazards

- **Cabo de Palos-Islas Hormigas marine reserve.** A strip of sea running north-east from Cabo de Palos past the Hormigas islets, between 37°38.726'N 000°41.822'W, 37°40.826'N 000°37.672'W, 37°39.626'N 000°36.722'W and 37°37.476'N 000°40.872'W. Inside it boats in transit must keep between 6 and 10 kn, anchoring is prohibited, and fishing and jet skis are banned. A circle of 0.5 nm round the Hormiga light (37°39.316'N 000°38.952'W) is an integral reserve, for authorised science only. The route goes round the outside.
- **Isla de Tabarca marine reserve.** Between 38°09.550'N 000°24.530'W, 38°08.223'N 000°25.054'W, 38°10.860'N 000°29.710'W and 38°09.560'N 000°30.222'W, round the island. Transit at 6 to 10 kn, as far offshore as possible. Anchoring is prohibited except in an emergency, the buoys are for dive boats only, and all recreational fishing is banned. Swimming and snorkelling only within 200 m of beaches and 50 m of the rest of the coast. Boats that are not just passing through report entry and exit on VHF 9, 08:00 to 22:00.
- **Stopping at Tabarca.** The island's harbour and any buoy field near it are in inner waters, under the regional government's rules, which could not be checked. Confirm before the day whether a visiting yacht may berth or pick up a buoy. Without that, pass by.
- **Mar Menor and Torrevieja.** Shallow water and fish farms off the Mar Menor; keep 2 nm off.

Ports of refuge

PORT	FROM THE ROUTE	USE IT WHEN	NOTES
Cartagena	Start	Within the first 2 hours	Yacht Port Cartagena.
Torrevieja	2.5 nm from waypoint 7	Weather turns north of Cabo de Palos	Real Club Náutico Torrevieja, +34 965 710 112.
Santa Pola	Destination	First choice	Club Náutico Santa Pola, +34 965 412 403.

Pilotage

LEAVING CARTAGENA

1. Leave the marina and the harbour between the breakwaters, watching for ships.
2. Head east along the coast past Portmán.

TABARCA, THEN SANTA POLA

1. At Tabarca, call the reserve service on VHF 9 if stopping. Keep 6 to 10 kn inside the reserve.
2. From Tabarca, cross north-west to Santa Pola.

3. Call the Club Náutico Santa Pola (+34 965 412 403) for a berth. VHF and depths:

[CHECK THE PILOT BOOK](#)

LIGHTS ON THE WAY

Escombreras islet	Fl 5s, 65 m
Cabo de Palos	Fl(2) 10s, 81 m
Las Hormigas	Fl(3) 14s, 24 m
Isla Grosa	Fl 3s, 97 m
El Estacio	Fl(4) 20s, 32 m
Torre Vieja breakwater	Fl G 3s
Tabarca	Oc(2) 10s, 29 m
Santa Pola	Fl(1+2) 20s, 152 m

Communications

Yacht Port Cartagena	VHF 9 · +34 968 121 213
Marine reserve services (Palos and Tabarca)	VHF 9, 08:00 to 22:00
Real Club Náutico Torre Vieja	+34 965 710 112 · night duty +34 679 183 104
Club Náutico Santa Pola	+34 965 412 403
Emergency	VHF 16, DSC 70 · 112
Salvamento Marítimo (Spain)	Rescue coordination centres for Cádiz, Tarifa, Algeciras and Almería: numbers CHECK THE PILOT BOOK

Contingencies

- **Levante north of Cabo de Palos.** Stop at Torre Vieja.
- **No permission at Tabarca.** Pass by and swim at Santa Pola.
- **Running late.** If Torre Vieja is passed after 16:30 CEST, skip the Tabarca stop.
- **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
- ☐ Spanish notices to mariners (Avisos a los Navegantes) 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
- ☐ Tabarca permission confirmed, or the stop dropped

- ☐ Fuel for 12 hours under engine, plus a reserve
- ☐ Water, food and hot drinks for 12 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

- Cabo de Palos-Islas Hormigas reserve: Orden APM/660/2017 (boe.es).
- Isla de Tabarca reserve: Orden APA/102/2019 (boe.es).
- Torrevieja: rcnt.com. Santa Pola: clubnauticosantapola.com.
- Spanish ports: puertosdeandalucia.es port pages; club and marina websites listed above.
- Lights: The Lighthouse Directory, Spain (ibiblio.org/lighthouse/esane.htm, esmc.htm, esvc.htm).
- NAVTEX: NGA Pub 117, chapter 3. AEMET zones: aemet.es, predicción marítima.
- 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.