



# **Cruising Southern Spain**

and

## **The Costa del Sol**

by

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Ronda & Port Balis  
Spain

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## Chapter one

### The Western Mediterranean



There two main routes into the Mediterranean if you exclude the option of buying a boat already located there, which can have it's own issues, or sticking it on the back of a lorry from the UK.

The most romantic and enjoyable, if your boat is a suitable size, is from the English Channel via the French Canals and Rivers into Port St |Louis or Sete on the Southern French Coast.

The maximum dimensions for your boat if you choose this route are **Draft** 1.8 metres – 5ft 9inches. **Beam** 5 metres – 16ft 4inches. **Height** 3.5 metres – 11ft 4 inches. The locks are designed to accommodate barges so the overall length is huge. The dimensions above are the size of the locks. You need fenders and maybe a plank to protect your topsides and lining up a boat, in a cross wind, to enter a lock, with only inches to spare, is not easy

if your boat is near the beam limit.

This route can be done comfortably in about three weeks or an entire summer. You can find full details of the rules and regulations and routes in my best selling book **French Canal Routes to the Mediterranean**.

The other option is across the Channel and down the West coast of France to La Rochelle. You then make the only 'overnight' necessary on this route to Northern Spain then past the 'Ria's onto Coruna and the down wind sailing along the Spanish West coast all the way to Gibraltar. Apart from the jump from France to northern Spain all of it can be done in day sails. Expect to take a season doing it and many people take a couple of enjoyable years on this passage.

You can find the route clearly laid out in my book **Gentle sailing to the Mediterranean**. The fastest I have ever done the passage from the UK to the Med is 3 weeks but that involves a 5 day passage directly across Biscay and hardly any stops down the Spanish and Portuguese coasts.

The last hurdle before entering the Mediterranean is the Straits of Gibraltar and you can find tide tables and information about this part of the passage in my book **Strait sailing to Gibraltar**.

The following chapters are written assuming you have come down the Atlantic coast and are entering the Med via the Straights of Gibraltar and then gently cruising along the Costa del Sol towards – well somewhere or maybe just staying put. In chapter seven I deal with the passage from the exit of the French Canal system at Sete or Port St Louis, to the Costa del Sol.

It is often stated that the Mediterranean is non tidal and for the most part that's correct except there are some quite strong currents around headlands and sometimes off shore. These are influenced by both wind and the constant 'evaporation' which makes the shallow Med more saline than the Atlantic. If you take a direct passage from Gibraltar to Almirimar, you will at some point encounter a 2-3 knot current which runs parallel with the shore and runs either east to west or west to east. Around Capo de Gata, quite close inshore, there can be some pretty strong currents running particularly after bad weather. Along the Moroccan coast there are 2-3 knot currents which are charted and can make a pleasant day sail last into the night.

There is no AA = RNLI lifeboat 'get you home' service in the Mediterranean. The coastguard all speak English, which is the language of merchant shipping, and will dispatch helicopters and lifeboats if you get into serious problems, but towing the boat into a harbour is not part of the service. They will contact a tug service for you and arrange for a commercial organisation to tow you in, at commercial rates. Worth having a look at your insurance policy and checking in what circumstances the insurers will pay out. Certainly not for running out of fuel, engine breakdown, lack of wind or fishing net wrapped around the prop. But then you will be carrying a mask, wetsuit and fins together with a very sharp knife in order to free up your prop when the 'rope cutters' on the shaft don't work or are overwhelmed.

The cost of fuel is important as is finding the most economical cruising speed for your motor which also involves having a clean hull. The cheapest fuel in all the Mediterranean is found in Tangier, Gibraltar, Ceuta and Smir and Tunisia. Something like half the price or marina filling stations elsewhere. There are 3 fuel berths in Gibraltar, opposite the runway, and Ceuta, which is a Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast sells at similar prices as Gib. The other Moroccan and Tunisian ports all sell fuel to cruising boats at fishermen's prices and it's often worth while paying them a visit to bunker even if it's a bit out of the way.

Do not even think about going into Algeria for cheap fuel. There are very strict regulations about entering Algerian waters, including pre purchased visas, for all on board as well as prior written permission to bring the boat into their waters.

Diesel fuel in the Mediterranean costs roughly the same as at a filling station for a car in that country. Almost every marina has a fuel dock and almost every marina berth has a potable water point as well as electric points. Ice frequently available in bags. You do not need solar panels, wind generators, or water makers but a good fridge freezer, a microwave and air conditioning are really useful.

It is best to convert your cooking gas supply to 'Camping Gas' as it's difficult to find Calor Gas supplies. Calor do a kit for this conversion so its fairly straight forward to do in the UK before you leave. Camping Gas is available as 'exchange' refills everywhere. The least expensive, normally around 17€ a bottle, is from a gas shop normally selling big cylinders for houses but it's also normally available from a ferretería (hardware store) and supermarkets. (Because the sea air and moisture makes the bottles go

rusty on the outside I carry a tin of blue Hammerite Metal Paint so the shops can't argue about the bottle condition!)

There are motor engineers in every port and there are sail makers around who will travel to your boat if there is not one in a particular marina. Most marinas have WiFi, although often you have to go to the Capitainary to get a good signal. In this day of the internet, weather forecasting is to hand. But it's worth remembering that weather in Med can change drastically and quickly without warning.

There is a saying about the Mediterranean that either there is no wind or it's on the nose. In my experience this is often true. You can approach a headland with the wind hard on the nose thinking that when you turn the corner 90° you will be on a reach or at worst close hauled and as you alter course so does the wind and you are back motoring into it.

To be fair the winds mainly blow along the coast lines in one direction or another and frequently come from the same compass point for several days in a row. The winds come up strongly in the afternoon and drop away to nothing at night. A good time to be 'parking up' in a new marina is in the morning before noon and in the evening after 19.00. The land breeze in the afternoon can make going astern in beam wind an interesting experience!

Most berthing is done stern to or bows to, as the marinas do not have to have pontoons that rise and fall with the tide and not having 'finger' pontoons saves money and enables them to squeeze more boats in.

The marinas and their staff don't care which way round you berth but you may eventually! If you put most sailing boats in 'bows to' you will find it really difficult climbing over the anchor and dropping maybe a couple of metres to the pontoon. If you go in stern to, then having tied up, you can lay a plank or passeral from the stern to the pontoon and walk elegantly ashore.

Depending on your language skills, or the skills of the marina receptionist, in high summer it's well worth telephoning ahead to your destination marina and reserving a place. Essential in the Balearics.

If you are making longer passages with overnights then it is worth having radar and an IAS transceiver. The Mediterranean is quite a busy place off shore particularly in the approaches to major ports and cities. There are a multitude of ferries and cargo ships trading around the Mediterranean as

they have done for thousands of years. You can see their main routes if you visit web sites like

<http://www.marinetraffic.com>,

Basically you just need a chart plotter, a VHS to talk to the marina on arrival and your mobile phone. Clearly it's sensible to carry a paper chart or two of the area you're cruising but you don't need much more.

Until you get to Almirimar, at the far end of the Costa del Sol, by far the best sailmakers and canvas work is by:

**LazyJacks Canvas**

[info@ljcanvas.com](mailto:info@ljcanvas.com) Tel:+34 635658348

Business area is Gibraltar and all Spanish marinas between Tarifa and Malaga. Make and repair bimini, sprayhood, tonneau covers, sail covers Upholstery. Sail repair – English speaking.

**Spanish Marinas**

Unless otherwise stated almost all marinas in Spain operate on **VHF 9** Theoretically they also monitor VHF 16 but in practice most offices do not remember to switch it in.

To use your mobile phone to talk to them from the boat at sea is perfectly normal and that's what most 'locals' do.

Almost always there is a 'waiting berth' near the office and entrance to the marina and most also have a fuel dock alongside the waiting berth which you should only use if you intend fuelling up.

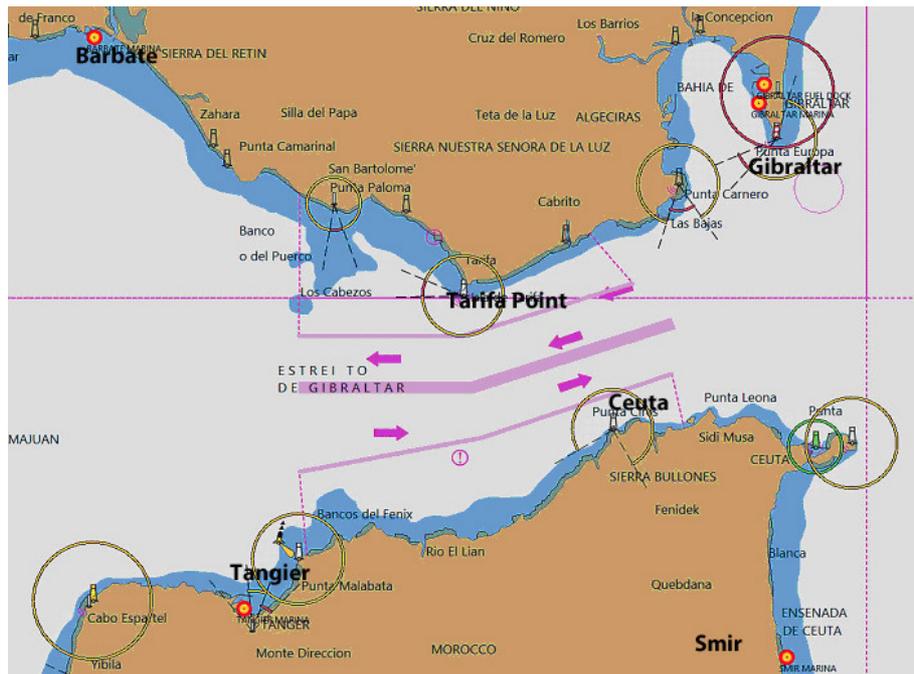
You can expect a 'marinero' (sailor in Spanish) to take your lines at the waiting dock and when you finally park up.

*Normal practice* is to secure to the 'waiting berth' and then walk to the office with your papers: Passports – Insurance papers – Ships Papers and credit card. (Unless you have valid third party insurance you will not be allowed to stay)

The paperwork is completed in the marina office and a copy of it handed to the Guardia Civil at the end of each working day. The Guardia Civil enter the details in their computer and track all foreign pleasure yachts whilst they are in Spanish waters.

## Chapter Two

### Approach from the West



Having rounded Cape St Vincent it's about 200 miles direct to Gibraltar or a few gently 'day sails' around the Algarve visiting ex-pat sailing communities holed up more or less permanently in several of the ports and marinas.

There are some lovely rivers including one that can take you up into the centre of Seville and, as you leave Portugal, there is the old town in Cadiz to visit with historic names like Trafalgar abounding.

You are probably going to want to wait for a fair wind and a favourable tide to get you through the Straits and into Gibraltar. Barbate is the red dot on the top left of the above chart.



**Barbate** is run by The Andalusia Agency who controls municipal marinas all the way along the South coast of

Spain. It means there is a standard system of payment which does not always appear to be graded with the quality of the marina or it's surroundings. On the website below there is a drop down menu for each marina and it's charges for any particular size of boat

[.puertosdeandalucia.es/en/activity/calculadora-de-tarifas-de-atraque](https://www.puertosdeandalucia.es/en/activity/calculadora-de-tarifas-de-atraque)

**BARBATE:** is situated on the southern side and is a good place to wait for weather and a fair wind not to mention a West going tide to help you along. It does not have a lot else to recommend it. Not a lot there except for tunny fishing nets that are laid right up to the entrance and careful examination of their charted positions is essential. One of them ends only metres from the southern entrance wall and there is another further along the coast on the direct route towards Tarifa.



[barbated@eppa.es](mailto:barbated@eppa.es)

Tel: 856 108 399 – 600 140 312

Not particularly nice surroundings and a bit of a hike to get into town where, there is not a lot excepting a large supermarket on the way in.

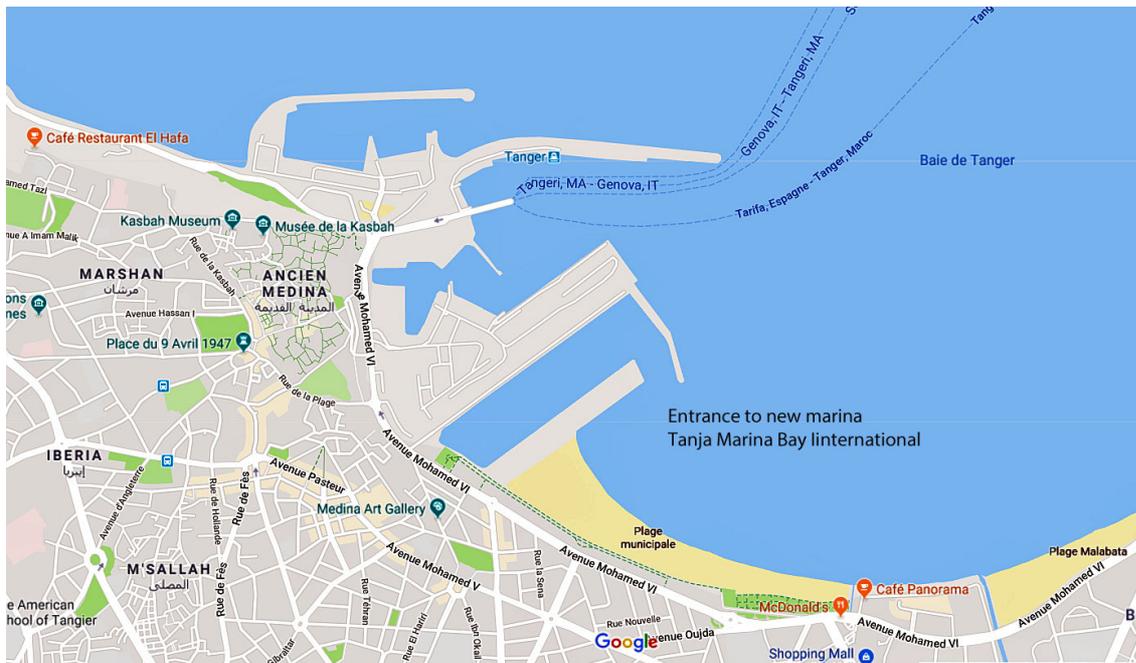
When you leave for Gibraltar just follow the coast round, keeping fairly well inshore, but watching out for the huge tuna fishing nets. It's about 35 Nm miles to Gibraltar and in the Straits, if you motor sail and keep fairly close inshore, the tidal streams are much weaker than those in the shipping lane area. Wind over tide can make the area challenging and I have experienced gusts of 60 knots off Tarifa point.

It is the wind strength and direction which is most important to get right for this relatively short inshore passage.

## TANGIER – TANGER

If you have come straight from Cape St Vincent you might need to wait for a fair wind or tide before proceeding up the Strait to Gibraltar. Certainly the nicest and most welcoming port in Morocco and the best placed on the Southern entrance to the Strait is Tangier with it's new modern marina. On the approach chart page 7 it is the red dot on the bottom left corner.

This brand new facility is named: **Tanja Marina Bay International**  
[info@tanjamarinabay.ma](mailto:info@tanjamarinabay.ma) Phone: +212 (0) 5 39 331 717  
[www.tangerport.com](http://www.tangerport.com)



As you sail into Tangier Bay from any direction you can see the port nestling below the outline of the Souk and old town – ‘Ancien’ Medina.

You sail in past the old port until you are almost on the beach, then the entrance to the new marina will open up to starboard. It now has all facilities including fuel available and the charges are available from the web site or telephone.

I cannot recommend Tangier highly enough. The old town and the souks are a wonderful visit and you will find excellent inexpensive

beach restaurants right in front of you on the beach and an elegant drink waits in the lovely garden of the Riff hotel a bit further on out of town.

When you leave the delights of ‘Tanger’ or Tangier, on the Atlantic and head towards the Mediterranean Sea you are running parallel with the East bound shipping lane which is fine. Ceuta, which is a Spanish enclave, with very inexpensive fuel (normally similar to the prices in Gibraltar) is well worth a visit.

Ceuta is in the bottom right of the approach chart on page 7

There are some pretty dramatic whirlpools and over-falls all the way along this North Moroccan coast and it should not be attempted in bad weather particularly wind over tide. The late John Noakes of Blue Peter ‘*Get down Shep*’ fame, who was no mean sailor, lost his boat in a gale between Tangier and Ceuta just off this Moroccan coast. In good weather there is no problem.

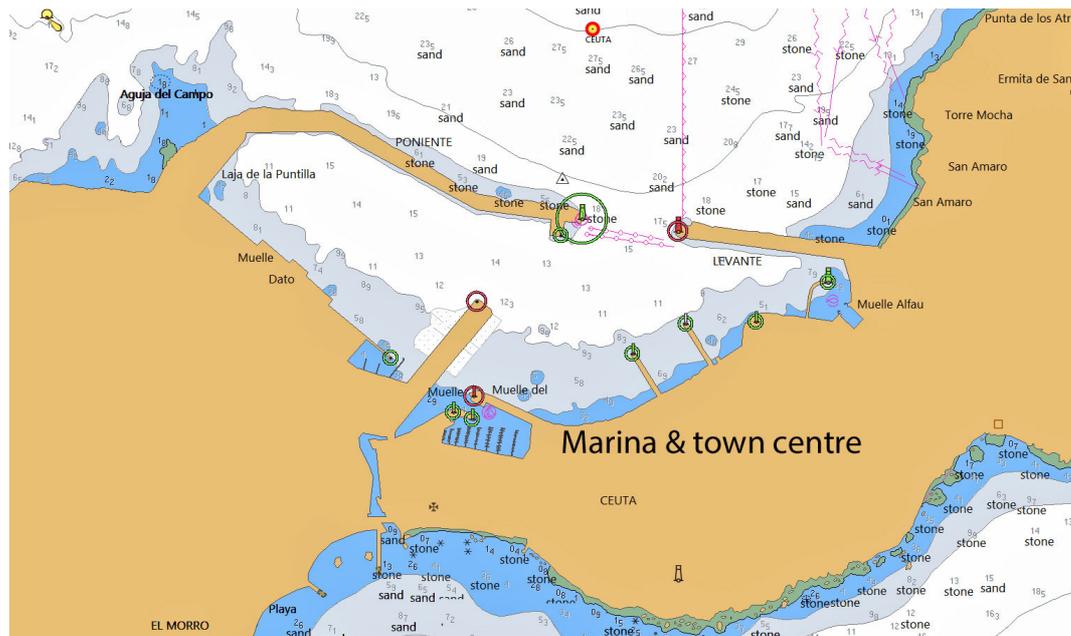
Its 30nm from Tangier and is a duty free port.

From Ceuta to Gibraltar is a leisurely 15 miles so to visit this unique part of Spain is not a massive detour.

## CEUTA

Located directly across the Strait from Gibraltar and the other ‘Pillar of Hercules’ from ancient time,, it is a duty free port and Spanish enclave in Morocco. It has long been a destination for folks seeking duty free goods and fuel, as well as its excellent tapas bars and lovely beaches.

The fuel berth is immediately to port as you turn into the marina from the main harbour. Sometimes you need to call the office on VHF 9 or by telephone on Int 34– 956 52 50 51 to get served and they are closed from 14.00 – 17.00 as is common practice in most Spanish places. Just past the fuel dock is the local Guardia Civil HQ with all their fast patrol boats and big black ribs. As the fuel dock is actually inside the Guardia Civil compound do not try to get off the boat and walk round to the marina.



[.mahersa.es http://www](http://www.mahersa.es) The cost of diesel is displayed on their web site on the top line.

They work out the mooring fee by a slightly complicated measurement of length by beam to arrive at a square metre then... I think it's much the same cost as La Linea or Gib. The facilities are OK and the welcome friendly. There is an interesting side trip to do in the dinghy with the outboard by turning left out of the marina into the 'moat' which defends the town and runs all the way south to the beach. Fun to do.

## MARINA SMIR

There is one further marina/town worth visiting before heading north to Gibraltar and that is SMIR. Like Tangier it is a true Moroccan marina with good facilities. There is a line of restaurants all along the main quay and if you order your food from them they will deliver the meal, frequently on china plates with proper knives and forks to your boat. When the meal is finished they collect the bowls, plates and cutlery.

The advantage of this is that it is a very Muslim part of Morocco, unlike Tangier, and alcohol is not served in the restaurants proper but they are very happy for you to drink your own!

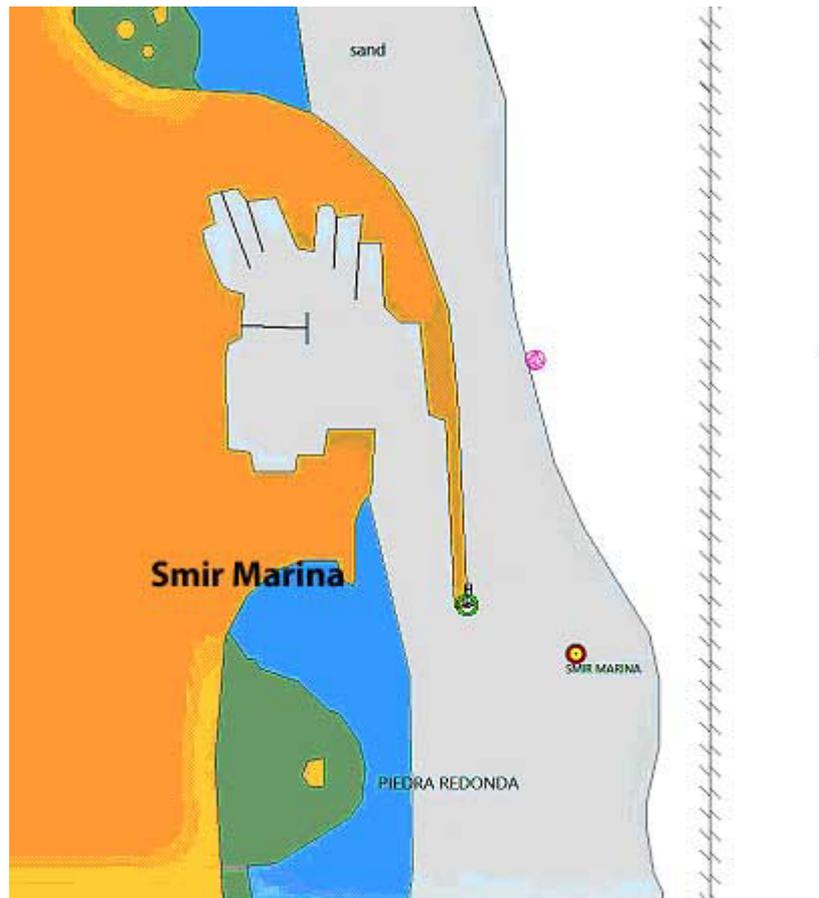


A word of warning. Things are not quite as ‘modern’ as Tangier because this marina was built at great expense some 20 years ago and is very popular, but not much of the proceeds have been ploughed back into general maintenance. A nice way of saying some of the boat facilities are a bit run down.

Be sure when you are at the office checking in to get an electricity cable converter. Their plugs on the pontoons are like no others in the world, but you won’t realise until you try to put one of your collection into the strange socket.

The port authorities, Police, Customs, and Immigration who are immediately next door to the Capitainery, are probably the somewhat shady looking characters lounging on old motorcar seats placed on the tired grass. They may or may not be in uniform. Do not mess with them.

Their computers may well not be state of the art but I suspect the software is. They will want to see and stamp in (and eventually out) your passports, see your insurance and the ships papers. Registration document, SSR or Part 1. You should not have to give them ‘backsheesh’ the tourist board put a stop to those demands some years back, realising that foreigners like us do not understand this system of paying for the service you are receiving!



The approaches and entry to this marina tend to silt up and it's important to keep close to the Eastern outer breakwater until you are off the fuel dock to port. The Moroccan coastguard vessels are straight ahead of you, as you come in, and you should keep close to them.

Once past the fuel dock turn to port and moor up outside the Capitainary and go into the office with all passports and the ships papers to book in. Prices are much the same as mainland Spain for example. The young ladies running this procedure all speak good English.

You will probably be approached by a well dressed Moroccan offering you and the crew a guided tour of the Tetuan Souk which is a taxi ride away. It is actually a good visit and if you have the time and inclination worth doing. There are normally two prices – one is for the taxi to and from Tetuan and another for the guide. All things are negotiable but unless you speak reasonable French it is probably better to deal with the guide. Tetuan is different from Tangier and I have always enjoyed it.

Following this encounter, you visit the port officials who probably don't or won't speak English. Just be polite.

When you depart you take back the electricity converter cable and pay up the dues then take the passports to be stamped out to the 'officials'. You can buy diesel on the way out but if your heading for Gibraltar its probably not that much better a deal. If you're heading for mainland Spain then fill up!

There is a large boat yard here with travel lift and you may live on board whilst anti-fouling and working on your boat. There is a 'superette' at the gated entrance to the marina complex and a bank with a machine that will dispense local currency.

Take care to keep close to the breakwater when you leave, particularly if you have re-fuelled at the duty free pumps, to avoid the shallows and then hang a left and set course for the headland to the north and Gibraltar.

Once past the headland (see page 7) you have to cross both shipping lanes to get to Gibraltar. Not as challenging (unless there is a fog) as it seems and just be aware that the merchant ships know the rules of the road and in the first instance, will expect you to know them. Even when sailing across this end of the Straits I keep my motor running just in case.



## Chapter Three

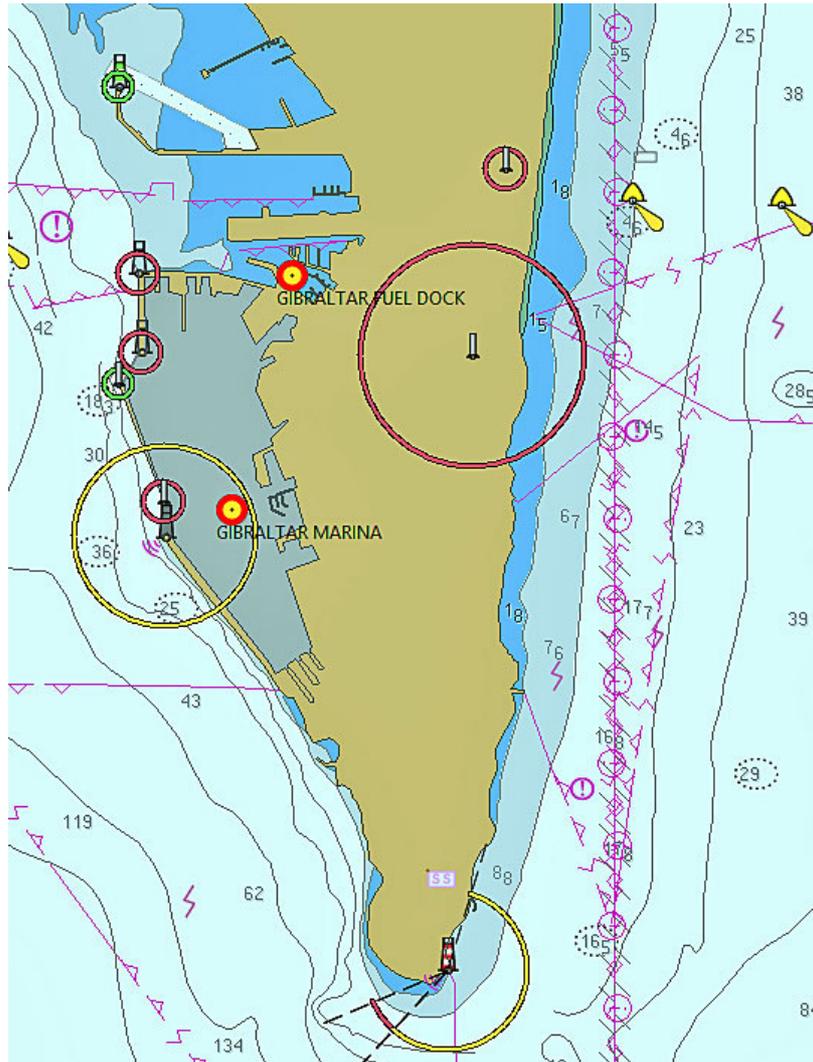
### GIBRALTAR BAY



Whilst Gibraltar is the historic British doorway to the Mediterranean these days the entire bay has become an important shipping centre due to the major dock yard and oil facility in Algeciras.

From which ever direction you sail into the bay the first thing that surprises is the quantity of shipping at anchor on both sides of the Rock.

As you approach the main Gibraltar harbour breakwater near the mark 'Gibraltar Marina' on the chart you turn in through the gap and Queensway Quay Marina is straight ahead. In the outer part of the harbour there is plenty of space to heave to and prepare fenders and lines before you enter the marina proper.



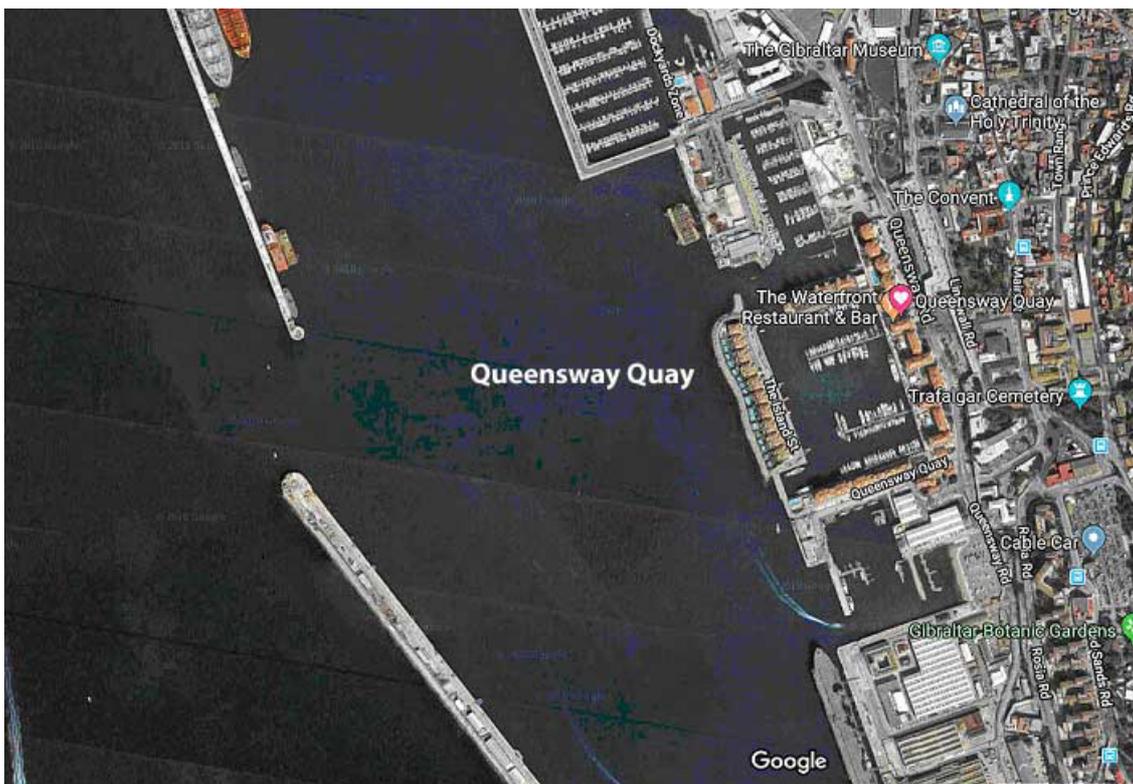
It is essential to call them up on VHF 71 to get permission to enter and it's sensible to have been in contact before you arrive, as it is a very popular marina and there is not always space.

Channel 71 +350 20044700 or +350 20044699

[info@queenswayquay.com](mailto:info@queenswayquay.com)

This is one of the marinas where you will be directed straight to your berth and a 'marinero' will always take your lines. It is a privately owned marina surrounded by excellent restaurants, café's and bars and probably one of the nicest in the Western Med.

I kept my boat there for over 6 years and cannot recommend them highly enough. Very nice people running an excellent marina. The town centre is a short walk away with even more pubs, bars, restaurants and British shops. Our favourite place in Queensway Quay was the Waterfront and in town the Calpe.



There are a couple of other marinas in the outer harbour but they are exclusively for small local boats and do not have facilities for visiting yachts.

If you have not been able to berth in Queensway Quay then you must leave the outer harbour and head for the runway and the fuel docks. There is a narrow buoyed channel between the runway and the land which you are obliged to follow to keep clear of arriving and departing aircraft.

At the end of this channel off to Starboard are 3 different fuel berths side by side. Normally the prices are about the same – that is very cheap – and you just go alongside the one that takes your fancy and fill up.

Opposite the fuel docks is Ocean Village and Marina Bay. Call them on VHF 71 to berth. Again it is probably better to have made an advance booking 00 350 200 73300 or [pieroffice@oceanvillage.gi](mailto:pieroffice@oceanvillage.gi)

These two marinas are set in the boardwalk complex around the 5 star luxury ‘hotel’ liner which is permanently moored there.



This area is right by the runway but despite being an ‘international’ airport there are relatively few flights each day. The boardwalk area with its casino and shops is busy until the small hours of the morning.

The two small local chandlers – Shepards and HireU shop compete with each other nearby. There is an excellent marine engineer at Marine Maintenance Ltd. The British supermarket Morrisons is a walk away from both Queensway Quay and Ocean Village.

If you have been unable to find a berth actually in Gibraltar there is another commercial marina, in Spain, just the other side of the runway in the town of La Linea – **Alcaidesa Marina**.

Sail back out of Gibraltar and pass well clear of the end of the runway and you will see another breakwater. (See plan Gibraltar Bay page 14)

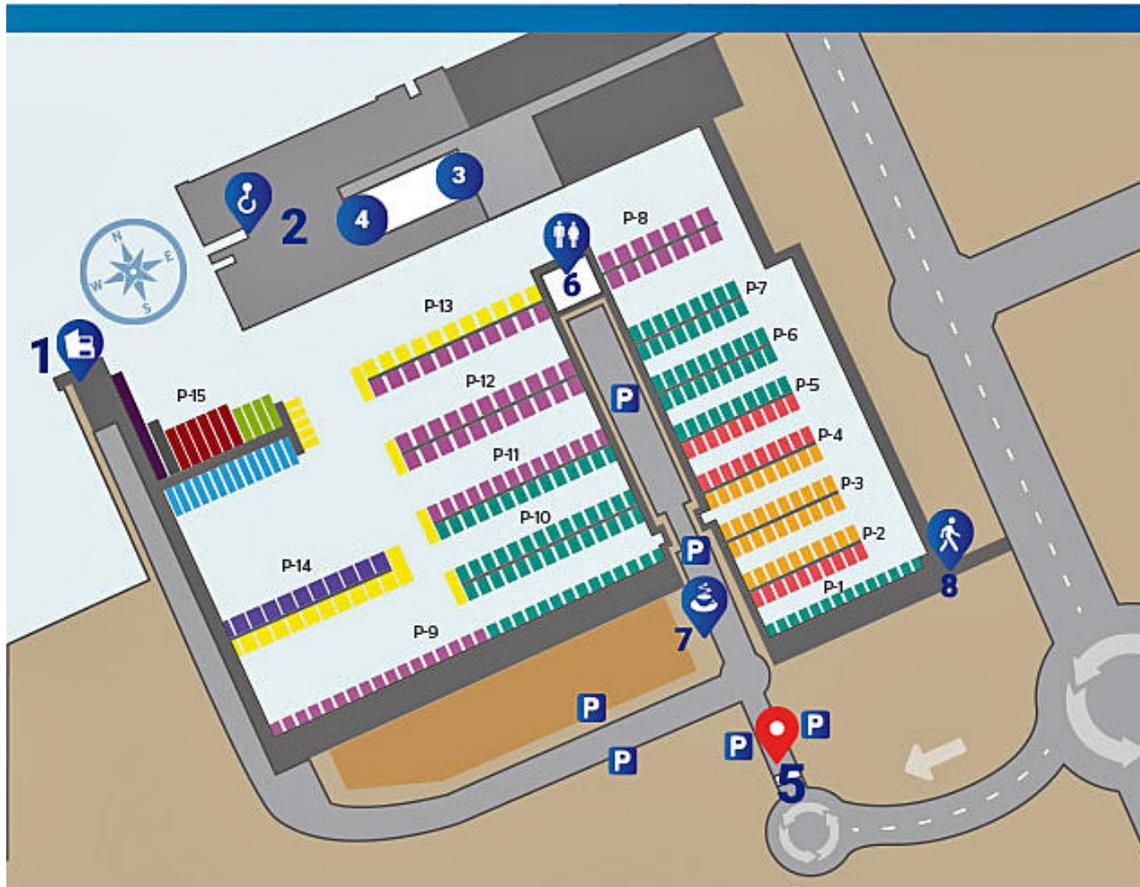
## **Alcaidesa marinas**



Behind this breakwater lays the 650 berth **Alcaidesa Marina**. It is a large development with a small boat yard and large travel lift. If you have a Volvo engine beware the system here where only the Volvo franchise is allowed to work on your engine and they charge top dollar. For other items in the boat yard outside contractors must be pre approved by the marina.

## BERTHS

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Up to 90 metres |  25 metres    |  12 metres |
|  50 metres       |  20 metres    |  10 metres |
|  40 metres       |  16-18 metres |  8 metres  |
|  30 metres       |  15 metres    |   |



In terms of berthing costs there is not a lot of difference between Queensway, Ocean Village and Alcaidesa marinas. That varies a bit depending on the size of your boat, but be aware that Alcaidesa quote their rates without VAT so you have to add 21% to all their charges. The two Gibraltar marinas just quote the final figure. For my boat there could have been a £100 a year saving moving to the Spanish marina but it is a long, long walk to La Linea town and even further into Gibraltar Main Street. Both the Gib marinas are surrounded by bars, restaurants, shops, gyms, chandlers and a multitude of other facilities whilst the Spanish marina is surrounded by car parking and a walk into town.

## **Boatyards**

Throughout the south coast of Spain almost every marina has a boat yard with travel lift attached to it and will haul, block up or cradle, pressure wash your boat. They will also have in-house workers who will paint, polish anti-foul etc. There will also be some accredited free-lance specialists who are allowed to work in the yard.

The Spanish yards invoke very strict 'labour' rules involving professional qualifications, insurance and public health which sometimes do not even allow owners to work on their own boats for health and safety reasons. The vast majority will not allow owners to live aboard. The skills of local workers obviously varies.

There are no user friendly boat yards in Gibraltar Bay based in any of the marinas.

There is however a family run Boatyard in Algeciras based in the Tax Free zone which means there is no VAT/IVA to pay on top of your bill.

**Astillero y Varadero El Rodeo Isla Verde**

Or in English

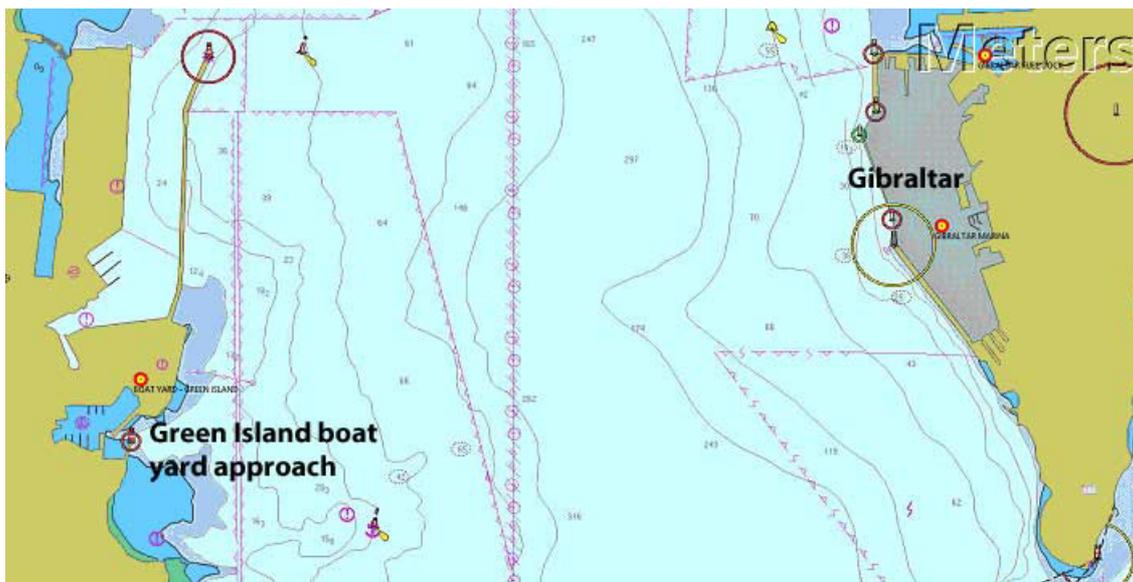
**Green Island Ship and Boat yard**

**GREEN ISLAND YACHT CENTRE – Isla Verde – El Rodeo**

0034 956 600 511 \_ [info@isla-verde.es](mailto:info@isla-verde.es) [www.isla-verde.es](http://www.isla-verde.es)



The 'contact' there is Miguel – Michael, who speaks perfect English and many of the guys doing the work speak enough to get the job done. There are good new showers and toilet facilities. I hauled there for spring anti-foul, polish and sea cock checks etc and found their workmanship excellent, friendly and helpful. Huge travel lift and very reasonably priced compared to Alcaidesa.



Situated at  $36^{\circ} 07'.28''N$   $5^{\circ} 26' 08''W$  it is in the 'Freeport' area of Algeciras directly across the bay from Gibraltar Harbour. You do not have to add 21% Spanish VAT/IVA to it's charges. The prices are very competitive compared to the La Linea marina travel lift facility. They have chandlers and can obtain most items within 24 hours if not in stock. Excellent workshops and professional shipwrights, electricians and osmosis treatments.

It is one of the very few haul out places on the Costa del Sol area where you can live on board whilst on the hard. They handle every sort of craft from super yachts to really small boats. They have experts in every department and are efficient, helpful and really nice people. They do gel coat repairs brilliantly and if they do not have the specialist you need then you can bring one in or they will suggest one.

In recent years we decided not to live 'on board' whilst on the hard instead stayed in a local hotel for less than 40€ a night and eat out at night in local cafes. We normally use: Hotel Marina Victoria, De la Marina, 7, 11201 Algeciras, It is walking distance from the yard and although basic is comfortable and every room has a good en-suite bath/shower room, TV and Internet and is very clean. They speak English. A very Arab area of Algeciras, we always felt perfectly safe.

The boat yard always recommends **Globales Reina Cristina** at around 60€ a night which is a bit further away but has a restaurant. Once a very grand 4 star hotel that has seen better days and appears to cater mainly to package tour visitors. It's interesting, as it was the HQ of the Germans during WW1 when they kept watch on ships entering and leaving Gibraltar.

I use [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) to book the hotels.

If you want to buy anti-fouling at rock bottom prices, use the internet site: <https://www.promonautica.com/>. They are based in Barcelona but will dispatch to anywhere in Spain.

The charge for my 3 x 2.5ltrs Hemple Cruiser was 6€ for transport and 133€ for the antifouling in 2017. They have 30% discount on Hemple Antifouling, 25% on fenders, 200€ for life raft servicing and discounts on flares etc

Francisco speaks English and you can email him in English – [info@promonautica.com](mailto:info@promonautica.com) All their prices are very reasonable and Francisco is most helpful.

Otherwise there are good deals from Shepards and HireU in Gibraltar.



## Chapter Four

### Gibraltar to Malaga



In southern Spain there is a marina every 10 miles or so and they mainly fall into two categories. Those that are part of a town and where there was or is a fishing or merchant port, and those that were built in the time of Spanish coastal house building 'bonanza' to 'enhance' the surroundings and make the properties more attractive.

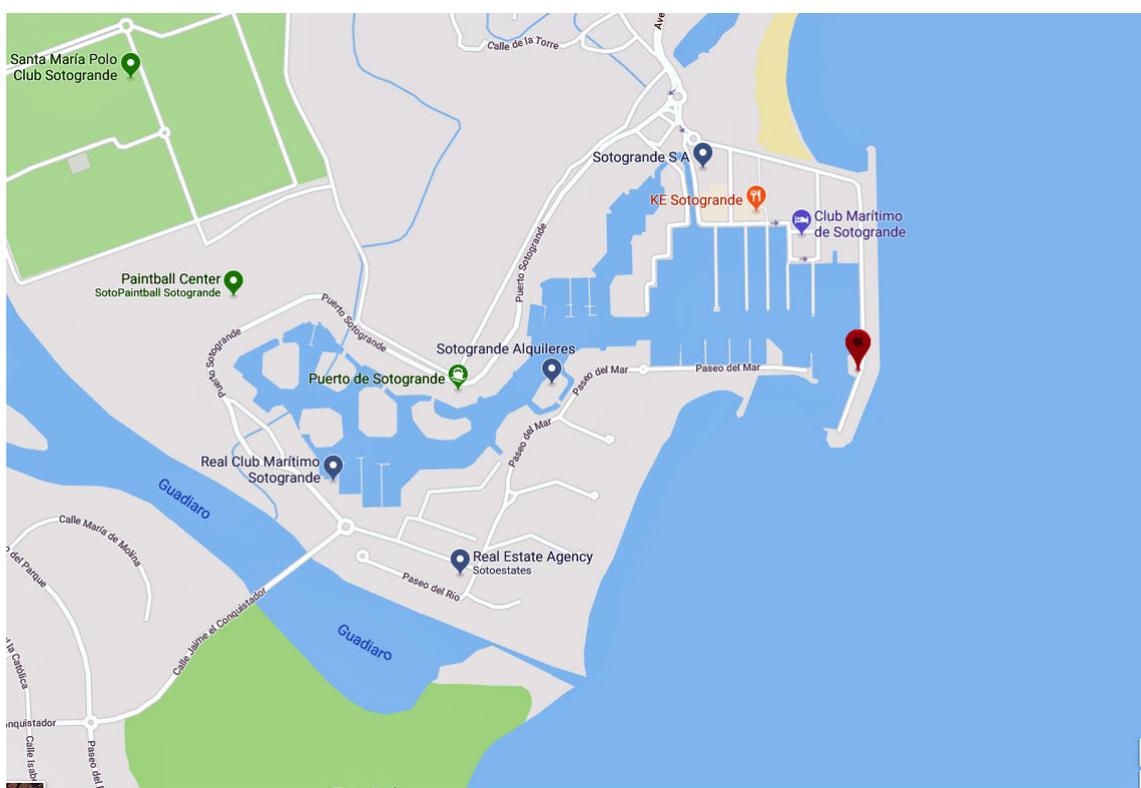
The marina's built to enhance housing tend to be less interesting places to spend time in but are of course useful overnight stopping places on the way to somewhere more interesting.

Prices are similar all along the coast with one or two spikes like Puerto Banus and major lows like Almirimar. Lots of folks have the idea they can anchor and save marina fees. Well in the summer months you can

probably find somewhere to sling the hook – outside Alcaidesa marina behind the breakwater for a start but the winds can be fierce and the secure anchorages are few and mainly have marina's built in them. In winter it's a real no no. Cold, wet, windy and positively dangerous sometimes but there are excellent winter berthing bargain fees to be had as all the marina's vie for winter customers to fill their vacant summer visitors berths.

Leaving the British comforts of Gibraltar it is 12 miles or so to the first truly Mediterranean marina

## SOTOGRADE



Port Office+34 956 790 000  
 puertosotogrande@puertosotogrande.com  
 Canal 9 VHF Canal 16 VHF



It is said that Sotogrande is the capital of Gibraltar because it is where all wealthy Gib citizens have their luxury villa. Certainly Sotogrande is at the top end of developments which have a marina facility to enhance them.

From the cruising yachtsman's point of view despite the kilometres of luxury detached houses and elegant apartments there is nothing here apart

from some restaurants and health clubs and lots of estate agents. You really need a car to get around with. They have a travel lift and boat yard

Just another 5 miles along the coast to the East is the other financial end of the 'properties built round a marina' scenario. Another development called:

## DUQUESA



T: [+34] 952 80 18 00 E: [info@marinasdeandalucia.com](mailto:info@marinasdeandalucia.com)



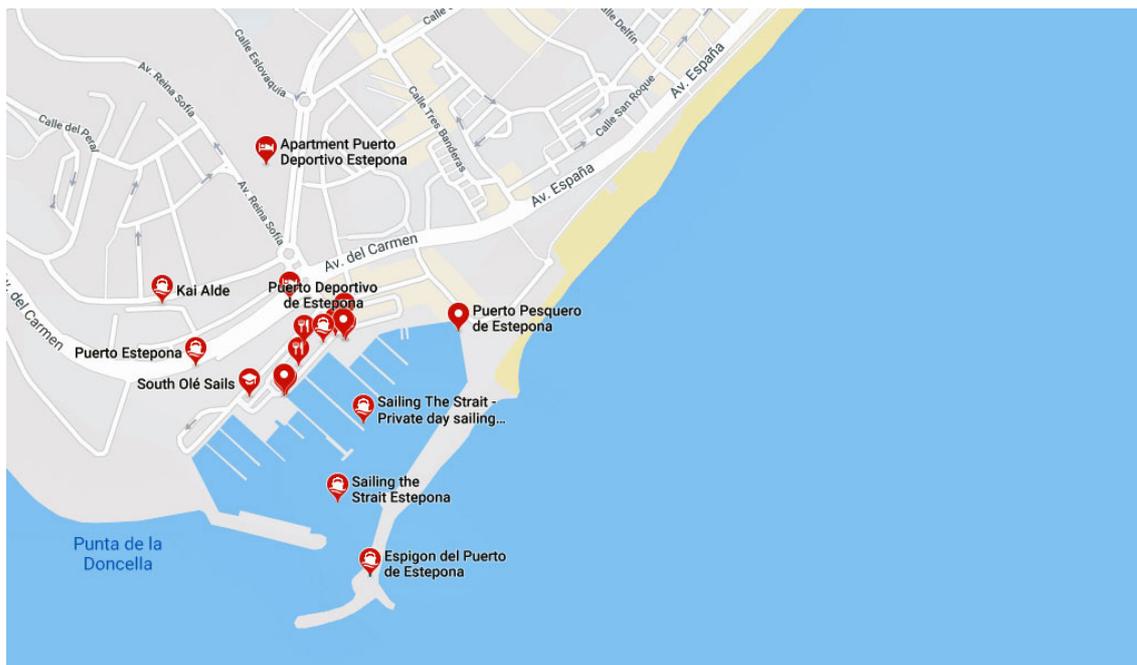
At the other end of the property market and with only around 325 berths as compared to the 1600 in Sotogrande it is another place with not much infrastructure. Quite a lot of bars with sad bored looking expats wondering why they are not enjoying it all more. In the main complex are a number of bars, many foreign run as the names suggest. Bar La Fuente, CJ-s family bar, Leisure Lounge, Jolly Saylor, Ryders, Cork Tree, Kinsale, I, Hemmingways, Penguin.

On the east side a number of I bars face the Marina which due to the afternoon sun can make a very pleasant place to have a snack or a drink

and watch the world go by in H2O, Dolphin Bar and La Marine on the corner. There is a small travel lift and boat yard but the place is normally fairly full of smallish local pleasure boats. More life than Sotogrande, but not the centre of the universe.

But only another 5 miles along the coast is the first town which has a marina or port.

## ESTEPONA



Tel ☎34) 952 801800      VHF Channel 09

[estepona@marinasmediterraneo.com](mailto:estepona@marinasmediterraneo.com)

The visitors/waiting dock is to port with a small white office on it. 447 berths, up to 3.5m draft and up to 35m LOA. The fishing boats leave very early in the morning. No fuel here. Every time I have visited I have been presented with a complimentary bottle of local Spanish red wine.



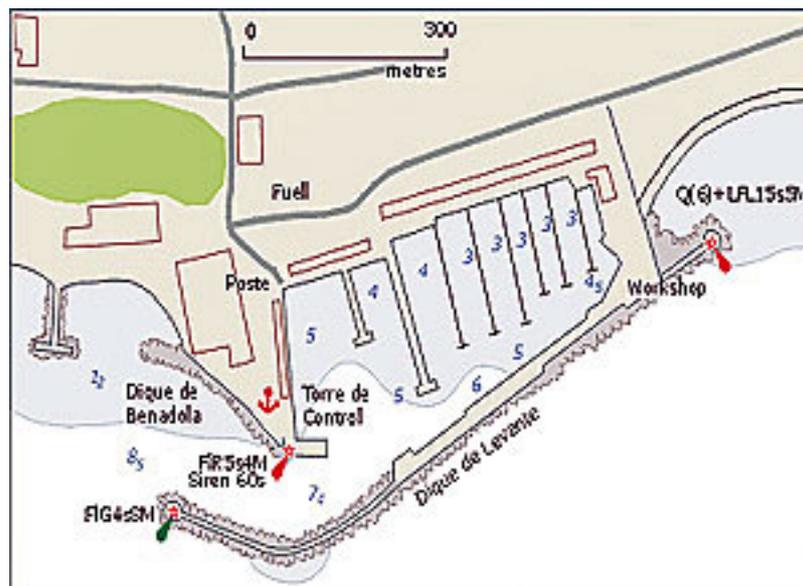


Estepona started life as fishing port with an extensive and vibrant town some six or seven minutes walk away. The marina part is well maintained and developed and has all the necessary facilities. Friendly marina staff and a very nice town. This is somewhere you can easily spend several days and some people never leave.

As well as the normal bars and restaurants around the port and marina, there are excellent engineers (because of the fishing boats) electronic and chandlers' shops and sailing schools. The first real port after Gibraltar.

Another eleven miles up the coast is the most expensive marina in the Costa del Sol, the luxury superyacht marina of Puerto Banus

## Puerto José Banús



**marina@puertojosebanus.es +34 952 909 800 VHF 09, 14, 16**

This 445 berth marina is home to the rich and famous. Super-yachts berth here and none of the permanent boats are modest. There is a minimum stay of 30 days in the season and in the smallest of boats you could be paying in excess of 150€ a night. No facilities, no toilets, no showers, no wifi.



Excellent world class restaurants and bars surround the marina area and the most luxurious shops that are situated in this marina, some examples are Christian Dior, Gucci, Bvlgari, Versace, D&G, amongst many others. There are wine bars and luxury cars and yachts with crews who lay out carpets to where the car is parked.

It was built in 1970 with the aim to create not only a luxury port, but also an exclusive area inside Marbella. Around 5 million people each year decide to visit this place, mainly visitors from the UK and the UAE.

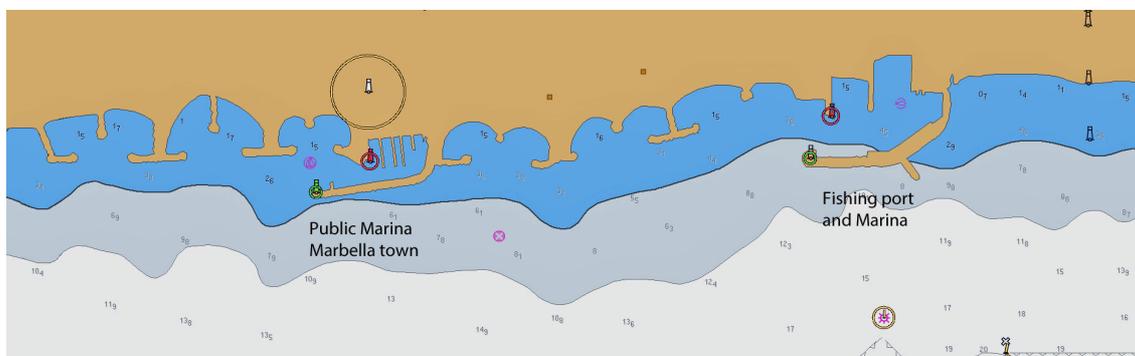
Outside the gated marina area is a very upmarket town with a good shopping centre and nicely laid out. It was all created around the marina area but is done 'in the best possible taste.'

You may visit in your boat and if there is room they will not turn you away but it might be less expensively visited by road rather than sea.

Just four miles further along the coast are the original two ports of Marbella. The marina and the fishing port.

# Marbella

There are two marinas in Marbella and both are fairly small.



int. 34 952 77 55 24 is the number for the first marina VHF 9

The first marina proper has only 376 berths and in the summer is frequently full. It is situated just below the 'old town' and the marina area is part of the famous Paseo Marítimo waterfront teeming with restaurants, bars and tourists enjoying the golden beaches on either side.

Superb fish restaurant at the entrance to the marina area. There are several 'tour' boats and 'sail experience' boats operating out of here as well as a regular ferry service to and from Puerto Banus for the tourist trade. Very unlikely you will find a berth here in the summer.

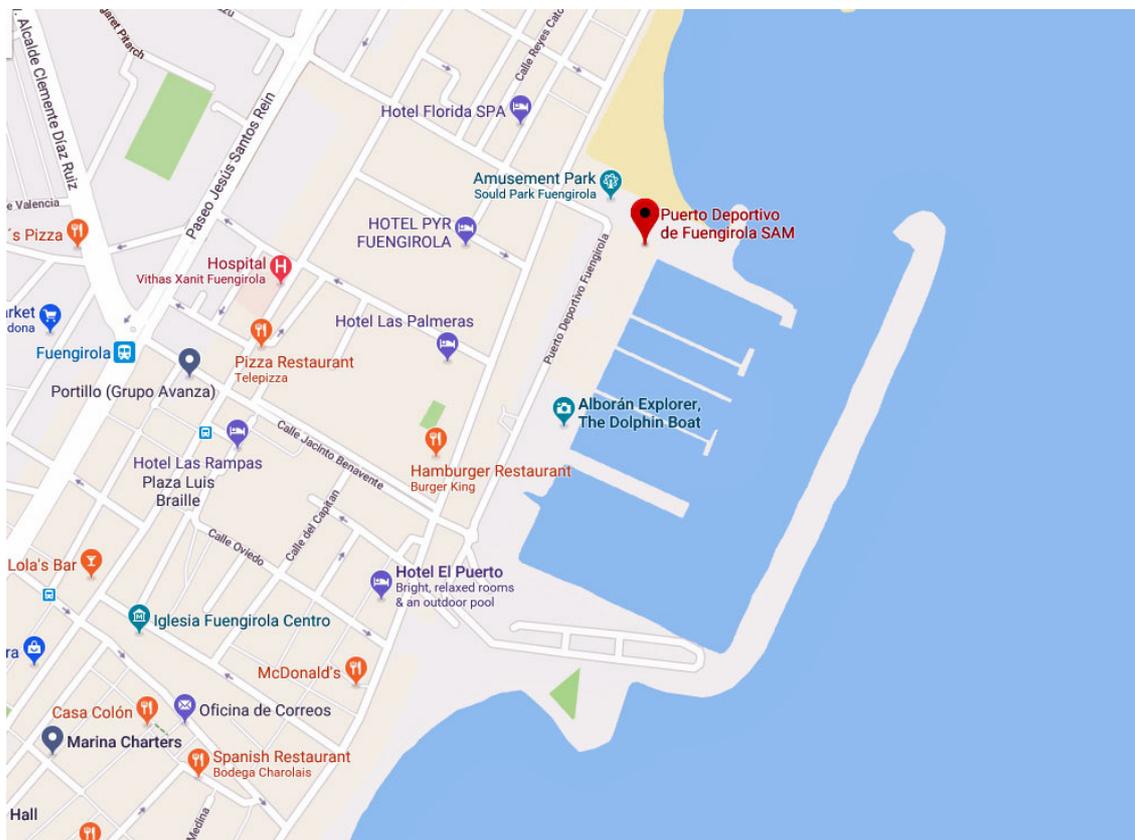
Just three quarters of a mile further east along the coast is the fishing port and marina of Puerto Pesquero La Bajadilla, s/n, 29603 Marbella, [www.puertosdeandalucia.es](http://www.puertosdeandalucia.es) Telephone 00 34 951 50 77 65

This is really the commercial fishing port of Marbella but has a few visitors berths. Not very attractive surroundings and a good fifteen minutes walk into Marbella town. I doubt you would find a vacant berth in the season but it could be possible to over winter here but again prices are high compared to others on the Costa.

If coming from Estapona you will probably have decided to give Puerto Banus and Marbella a miss so the next marina it is realistic to enter is Fuengirola which is another seventeen miles away.

It is about thirty miles from Estepona to Fuengirola so even for the smallest and slowest of boats it's a fairly easy day passage.

# Fuengirola



Tel:+34 952 47 40 27 [www.puertodeportivofuengirola.es](http://www.puertodeportivofuengirola.es)  
 puertofuengirola@gmail.com

It is a small marina and fishing port with the accent on the fishing. It has 226 marina berths and once you get to 13/14 metres LOA there are not many visitors' berths.

When you round the breakwater and enter the marina there is a fuel berth to starboard and then a T pontoon. Tie up to this and walk to the shore into the office to enquire about berthing.

The two downsides of the marina are the fishing boats 'dashing' in and out night and day and the disco's which operate night into day.... It is however a 'real' place and the town and promenade have a lot to offer. You are in a part of Spain not just a tourist resort.

There is a train to Malaga rail station with a connection to the airport and a bus which you should pre-book to Gibraltar.

If you did not get into Fuengirola for what ever reason then Benalmadena is just another six miles across the bay and only thirty-six miles from Estapona.

## Benalmadena



This picture says it all. This is probably the largest purpose built marina in the Costa del Sol and the most successful. Winter and summer it teams with tourists visiting the shops, bars and restaurants surrounding this vast marina.



When you round the curved breakwater you should pull into the waiting quay to port where the fuel station is also located and go into the office to secure a berth.

They like to put visitors on the concrete finger directly opposite for the

very good reason that in some conditions it is totally untenable and no local would accept it!



The problem is the surge. This happens to a greater or lesser extent in almost all the Costa del Sol marinas but many like Gibraltar have installed extra breakwater type facilities to minimise it's effect but not Benalmadena who continue to moor visiting boats on a quay which is dangerous to both boat and crew in westerly gales.

I wrote the following after the most terrible night we have ever had in the Mediterranean.

*During the night the wind was only blowing around 20-25 knots – not a lot - but into the harbour making the surge frighteningly violent  
'I am up all night placing most of the fenders on the stern and doubling up mooring lines after 4 broke. It is not so much the wind but the vicious*



*surge which affects this quay particularly. As well as the sickening jerks on the mooring lines we are rolling 30 degrees side to side. The bloke on the catamaran a few spaces down falls off his passerelle trying to get ashore and we have to haul him out of the water.'*

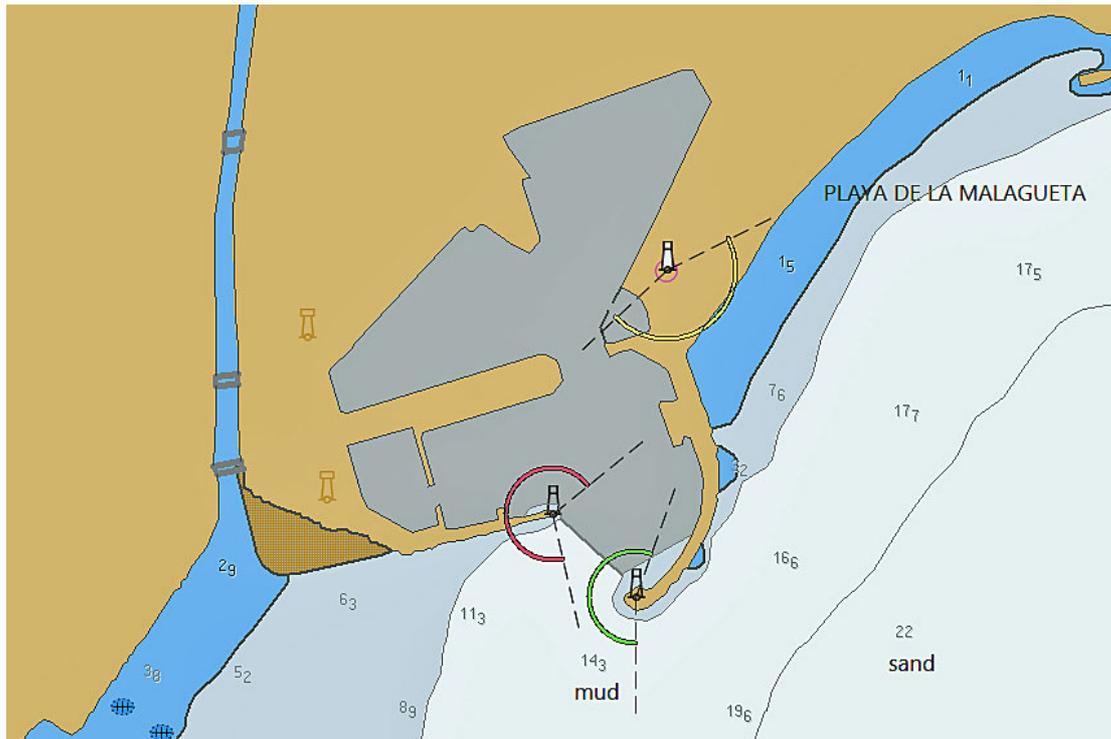
Apart from the problem of the surge in strong westerly winds the marina does have facilities to offer the cruising boat. There is a good chandlers and both English and Spanish marine engineers. There are electronics companies with riggers.

The 'tourist' facilities are second to none and it is the ultimate 'kiss me quick' marina. The town outside is rather bland and geared to the motor car rather than walking.

Nine miles further into the bay lays the commercial and industrial port of Malaga.

## MALAGA

This city does not really have economical facilities for visiting yachts and is very much geared up ferries and merchant ships.



Out of the 2 yacht clubs based in the City, visiting yachts are more likely to find space in the “Marina Malaga”, run by the Real Club Mediterraneo which like almost all Spanish sailing clubs is expensive to berth in.

They keep a few berths for visiting yachts but are really a private exclusive yacht club run for wealthy local people.

(If you want to join a Spanish yacht club expect to pay an entrance fee of between 2,000 & 5,000 Euro non refundable, on top of annual membership fees.)

## Chapter Five

### Malaga to Alicante

#### VELEZ MALAGA



A better bet on leaving Benalmadena, is to set course for Velez Malaga which is some 25 miles directly across the bay.

Watch out for the Black Bull on the headland as you turn into Velez Malaga bay. These were once 'sherry' adverts.

The EU passed a law that prohibited all roadside advertising of alcoholic beverages, The Spanish Court eventually allowed these signs to remain on the grounds that they have become a part of the landscape and have "aesthetic or cultural significance".

As you round the 'bull' headland into the bay you will encounter buoys marking the swimming area into which boats may not enter and there are several fish rafts which are fairly obvious in day time but require care at night as the 'lights' on them are modest.



Puerto de Caleta de Vélez Malaga is mainly a fishing port with the domestic marina facilities at the far end.



The fuel dock is immediately on the left as you round the entrance.

Despite being a bit scruffy it has a small lift out area with a travel lift. The waiting pontoon which is at the end of the second concrete finger is normally disgustingly dirty with seagull excrement and walking down it to the office to secure a berth is a pretty unpleasant experience. They never bother to clean it.

It is part of the Juncta de Andalucía Group of marinas who charge fairly standard rates across all their marinas. Expensive in the summer, for fairly modest facilities and no WiFi. Having said that outside the marina are a couple of supermarkets and a fishing boat chandlers where you can buy items at mind blowingly low prices compared to yacht chandlers. There is a good barbeque restaurant just outside the port gates where you can eat on the beach if your Spanish is up to it.

The rest of the little town is split with the main road to Torrox (a German expat enclave) running through the middle of it. Probably not the most attractive place in the world.

### **Velez Malaga really marks the end of the Costa del Sol**

From here you are heading toward the Costa Brava but with some excellent wintering and passage ports and marinas in-between.

The next port of real interest along the coast towards the Costa Brava is Almirimar but it is some 63 nm and some may think that is too much in one day. There are a couple of stopping places on the way worth considering which reduce the distance.

Firstly there is 17 miles down the coast:

## MARINA DE ESTE



**+34 958 640 801**      <http://www.marinasmediterraneo.com>

This is very much a marina created to make a point of interest for a major housing project which is far from anywhere. There is not a lot there and mainly it services small 'run around' type motorboats. Pretty expensive there is always the possibility of being turned away as they have very few 'visitor' berths and nothing much to do or see.

# MOTRIL

Is some 27 Nm down the coast from Velez Malaga and is a commercial port with a Spanish private yacht club at the far end.. The visitor's berths seem mainly to comprise of vacant berths of members who are away.



This club is very family orientated and has a friendly club house with inexpensive simple meals and drinks.



No wifi and not cheap, it does break the passage between Velez Malaga and Almirimar in half. The land breeze on a summer afternoon can make mooring up quite challenging despite the help of the marinaros. It drops around 19-20.00 to nothing so maybe its worth getting in late.

The distance to Almirimar is 32 nm so it's hardly worth stopping off at Adra which is the next port along the coast another 22nm away. Because of the long gentle bay the direct route keeps you some 5 nm off shore.

## Adra

E-mail: [adra@eppa.es](mailto:adra@eppa.es) – [rcna@larural.es](mailto:rcna@larural.es)



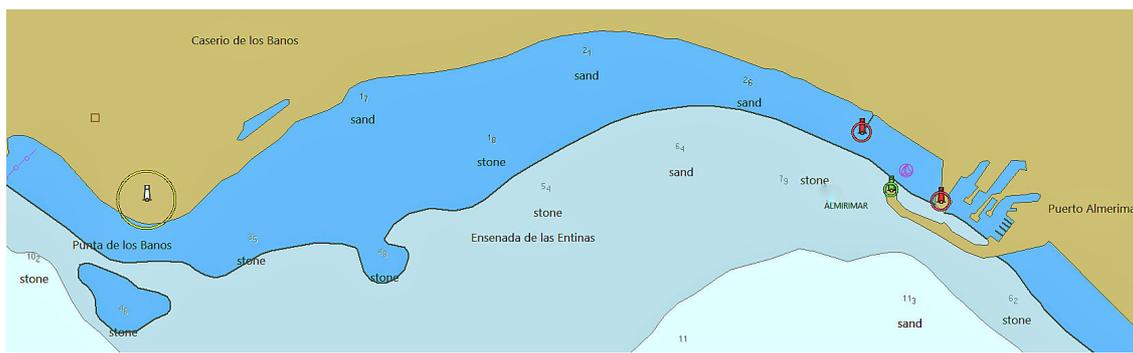
950 403 487 VHF: 9 & 16

From Motril it is 22 nm to Adra and from there it is only another 12 nm to Almirimar.

Adra is another private yacht club albeit for smaller boats. It does have visitors berths although it only has a total of 178. It is close to the town but it's all somewhat industrial. There is fuel and a travel lift.

## ALMIRIMAR

VHF 9 950 49 73 50



It gets quite shallow off the 'Punta de Los Baños' as you start to head into the bay and then it's difficult to see exactly where the marina is until you're quite close inshore because of all the background buildings. Coordinate:  $36^{\circ} 41' 48'' \text{ N} - 2^{\circ} 47' 48'' \text{ W}$  will help you locate the marina..

Almirimar has a capacity of 1.100 mooring spaces up to 60 meters in length. One of the original purpose built marinas to support a housing



project, it still has not reached anywhere near its full commercial housing potential.

It is one of the most important marinas for cruising yachts on the south coast of Spain.

The berthing fees are extraordinarily low and its winter rates for leaving the boat for six or eight months probably the least expensive in all the Mediterranean.

### OFERTAS 2018 INVERNAJE EN AGUA WINTERING RATES IN WATER 2018

| metres      | ATRAQUE | ATRAQUE  | ATRAQUE  | ATRAQUE  |
|-------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
|             | 1 MES   | 3 MESES  | 6 MESES  | 8 MESES  |
|             | 1 MONTH | 3 MONTHS | 6 MONTHS | 8 MONTHS |
| 10 x 3,50 * | 166 €   | 472 €    | 891 €    | 1.118 €  |
| 12 x 4,00 * | 193 €   | 549 €    | 1.036 €  | 1.300 €  |
| 15 x 4,50 * | 255 €   | 724 €    | 1.367 €  | 1.715 €  |
| 18 x 5,00 * | 313 €   | 887 €    | 1.676 €  | 2.103 €  |
| 20 x 5,50 * | 383 €   | 1.087 €  | 2.052 €  | 2.575 €  |
| 25 x 6,00 * | 633 €   | 1.799 €  | 3.397 €  | 4.263 €  |
| 30 x 6,50 * | 821 €   | 2.333 €  | 4.407 €  | 5.530 €  |

### Sin Agua/Luz water and electricity not included



The Marina Almerimar has a 24.000 m2 dry dock with a capacity for up to 150 yachts ready to offer you the best service in the maintenance of your ship.

- ✂ CLEANING OF THE HULL
- ✂ SAND BLASTING
- ✂ PAINTING CABINETS
- ✂ OSMOSIS TREATMENTS
- ✂ MECHANICAL REPAIRS
- ✂ MANUFACTURE OF RIGGING
- ✂ MAST TRIMMING
- ✂ YACHT MAINTENANCE WORKS
- ✂ FUEL SUPPLY
- ✂ CARPENTRY
- ✂ BOAT TOWING
- ✂ UNDERWATER SERVICES

The boat yard has a couple of large travel lifts and has all the trades available if you don't want to DIY. After Gibraltar Bay's Green Island it is the only place I know where you can live on board whilst the boat is on the hard.

There are excellent British chandlers beside the boat yard with expert electronics installation at probably the lowest prices on the Costa del Sol and good deals on anti-fouling,

Excellent sail makers, re-upholstery facilities, electronic and mechanical repairs as well as brokerage facilities.

A&C (Angela and Colin Cuberos) Services Tel:669 277171

Angela does Interior upholstery and canvas work.

AnC Sails

C/Mar de Alboran 32 , 04711 Almirimar

Contact Colin Dixon for Sails, rigging, canvas work Tel:+33 606 84 04

[comercial@anc-sails.com](mailto:comercial@anc-sails.com)

In Spain couriers are very inexpensive. It is possible to have a sail picked up or delivered from Almirimar to almost anywhere for around 15€



Almirimar has a lot to offer and unlike Benalmadena, it has few visiting British or foreign tourists but hums with Spanish folks and families visiting the 'resort'.

As you would expect there is a large UK ex-pat population as well as German and Scandinavian. Whilst many of the bars and restaurants are Spanish owned and run there are several British serving English roast beef on a Sunday.



Our personal favourite is MacGowans, which is up towards the boat yard set on a green space with half a dozen other restaurants on either side.

The owner has had the very clever idea of serving free English tapas with every drink. You can have free 'mini' fish and chips, curry, hamburger, chilli con carne etc etc with every drink you order. Louise and I have passed many enjoyable lunchtimes here, drinking our fill and eating more than enough for lunch.. Really nice people and 'good mine hosts'.

If it's your thing there are excellent beaches on either side of the marina area.

The local airport is Almería Airport and a taxi or 'private hire' car is normally about 60€. Ask in MacGowans and they will probably find you someone to pick you up from your boat and run you to the airport or deliver you back when you return.

Easyjet, Ryan Air, Jet2, BA all fly out of Almeria airport as well as many other international airlines.

There is a major supermarket near the main berthing area and there are dozens of smaller shops all round as well as English speaking doctors.

Once you decide to leave and head East again, there is Capo de Gata to get round which should only be done in fair weather with preferably favourable winds



It's around 25 nm across the open part of Almiria Bay and from Almirimar to Garrucha it's a long 67nm. In good weather you can keep close inshore around the Capo de Gata but otherwise it's better to pass between it and the west bound traffic lane.

Once around the 'Capo' there are several small bays which offer good anchorages and there is also the private yacht club marina of San Jose about 35 nm from Almirimar.

## San Jose

950380041 [correo@clubnauticoandesanjose.com](mailto:correo@clubnauticoandesanjose.com).

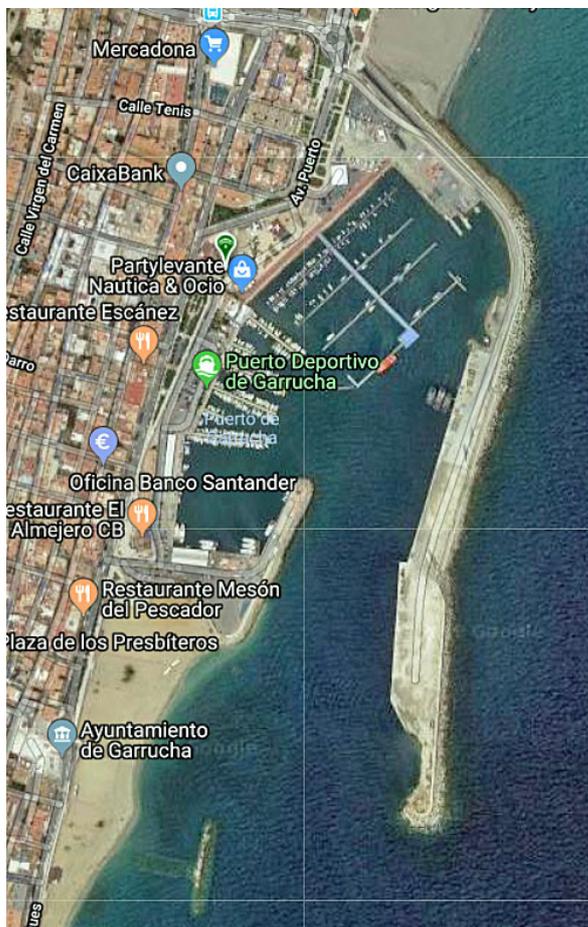


It's not going to be less than 100€ for a 10-12 LOA boat. Because it is small and private it's frequently full particularly in the season.

There are often small fishing nets laid to small buoys very close to the entrance and are unlit. It's primarily for members and you need to call or email to make a reservation.

# Garrucha

[garrucha@eppa.es](mailto:garrucha@eppa.es) Tel.: 950 808 090 – 600 149 115



The marina is at the northern end of the port past the private yacht club to port.

It is one of the very few places where you moor up alongside rather than bows/stern to. Mainly I suspect because they have not laid the underwater fixings to hold you off.

There are normally half a dozen cruising boats in here with many arriving late from Almirimar.

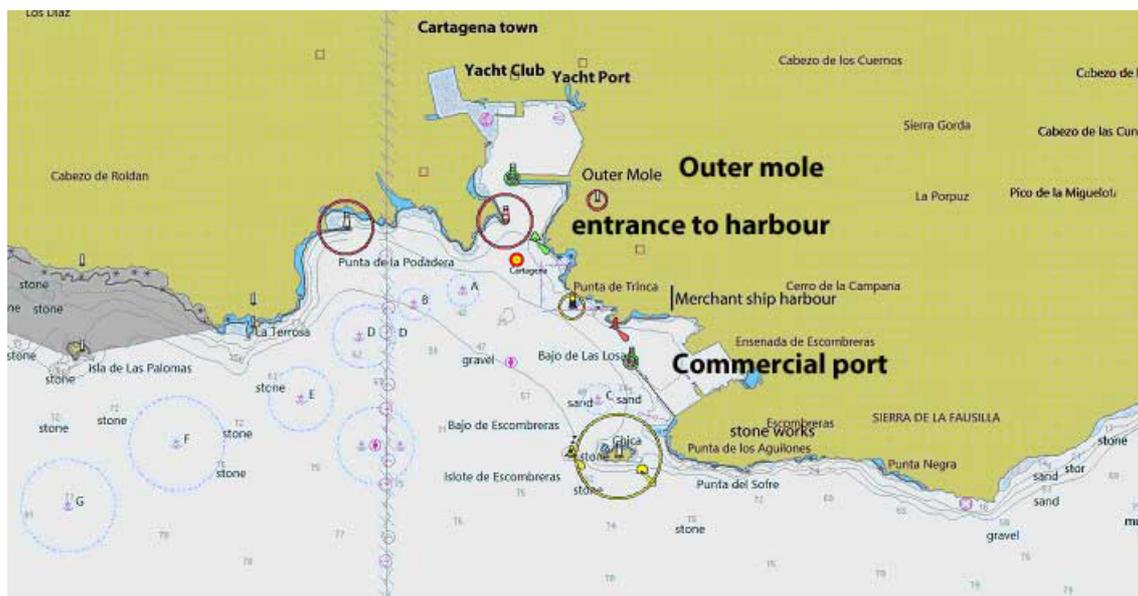
There is never more than one person on duty so you will not get help with your lines except from another cruiser and you can choose where you want to berth yourself.

I really doubt you will get a useful response from the telephone. (unless you speak Spanish or the email) Because the private yacht club in the same harbour is so popular there are very few boats in this marina staying on an annual basis so staffing levels are low. There is always a place vacant and mooring alongside is a pleasant change.



The security is strong looking but it's fairly simple to climb round the gate when you arrive to go to the little wooden hut at the end of the central concrete pontoon. In there you can rent a key to the gates and find the WiFi code. There are a lot of restaurants all around and several supermarkets within easy walking distance. It's not a bad place to be for a few nights if you have to wait for weather and because it's such an important staging post between Cartagena and Almirimar there is always a pleasant crowd of boating people.

# Cartagena

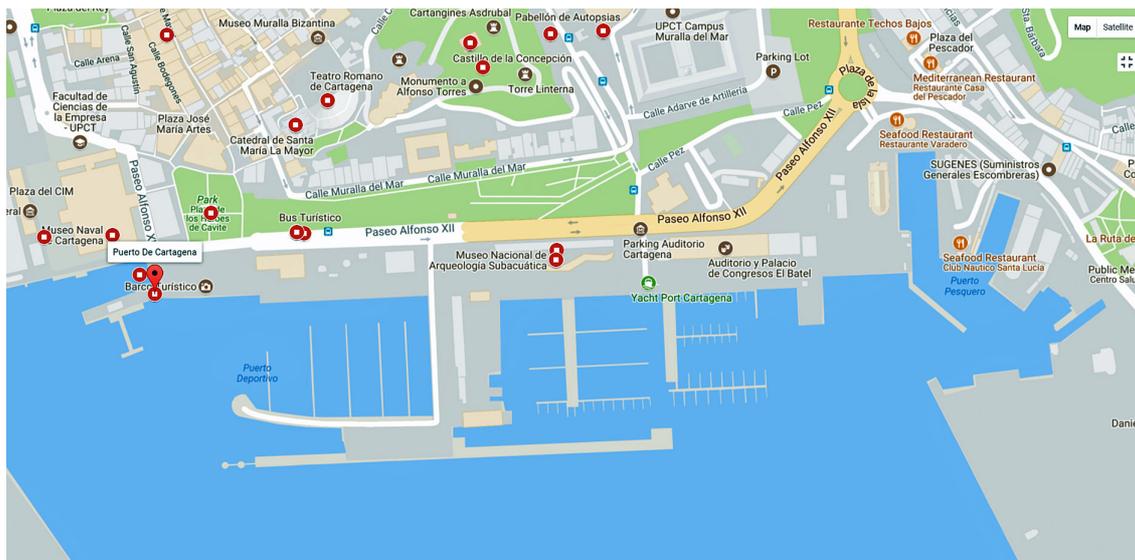


To Cartagena it is an easy 47 nm and one of the most secure harbours in what was once a major military boat yard facility and is now a lovely well protected destination beside a town that dates back 3,000 years. Founded by the Carthaginians around 220 B.C., the city boomed during the Roman period. Among its many Roman ruins are a 1<sup>st</sup>-century B.C. theatre and Casa de la Fortuna, a villa with murals and mosaics. The Muralla Púnica (Punic Wall) interpretation center, houses the remains of a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century B.C. defensive wall.

Once a major military dockyard and submarine base there is still frequently a Spanish warship presence moored to the inside of the outer mole.

Once past the dogleg of the outer mole and in the inner harbour you will see two marinas ahead of you – The one to Port is the **Yacht Club (Real Club des Regatas)** of Cartagena and the slightly larger one to Starboard is **Yacht Port** Cartagena.

They both monitor VHF 9 and it is easy to get confused as to which you are talking to. Sometimes it is better to close the marina of your choice before calling them up or use the mobile phone. The prices of both are more or less the same. The **Yacht Club (Real Club des Regatas)** is very open to the public on some berths but is closer to the town whilst the privacy and security of **Yacht Port** is excellent, as are the facilities, but it is a little further from the town. For what it's worth Louise and I always preferred the **Yacht Port**.



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Yacht Club</b><br/> <b>(Real Club des Regatas)</b><br/> + 34 968 50 15 07  <br/> VHF Channel 9<br/> <a href="mailto:contacto@clubregatascartagena.es">contacto@clubregatascartagena.es</a></p> | <p><b>Yacht Port Cartagena</b><br/> +34 968121213<br/> Latitude : 37° 35' 44" N<br/> Longitude : 0° 58' 39" W<br/> VHF Channel 9<br/> <a href="mailto:marina@yachtportcartagena.com">marina@yachtportcartagena.com</a></p> |
|--|--|

There is a large liveboard community, some just wintering and some for longer, in Cartagena. Its prices are 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Almirar and it is becoming a very popular cruising destination.

The town is lovely and only as short walk from either marina. There is a huge Carrefour supermarket a not too far from the town centre. You can get a taxi back with all the shopping right to your berth for 4-6€.

There is only one chandler in Cartagena but you can always buy on line from <https://www.promonautica.com/>. Who will dispatch to anywhere in Spain for only a few euros, including your marina address. Normally takes two days.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CARTAGENA TO DENIA



As you sail out of Cartagena past the quarry and the strange rock formations along the coast line, you are heading into Murcia and somehow it is different from the Costa del Sol. There are some major summer beach holiday destinations like Torrevieja Benidorm, Alicante. Denia is the jumping off place for the Balearic Islands which are the most crowded and popular in all of Spain.

There are a couple of obstacles when you turn north. The first is natural and is simply a matter of charting a course between the islands and rocks off Capo de Palos and I always keep inshore and go through the first southern gap. The other, which comes as a bit more of a surprise, is the two extensive fish farms which lay right in the middle of your track towards Torrevieja.



It is a proper harbour – really big and something of a working salt port still.

There are three marina facilities – a large commercial marina with restaurants and bars around it *Marina Salinas*’ and a yacht club *Real Club Nautico Torrevieja* which is nearer to the town and for once not expensive. It appears to be slightly cheaper than the commercial marina and *Marina Internacional* which is also a Club Nautico but is part of a property development.

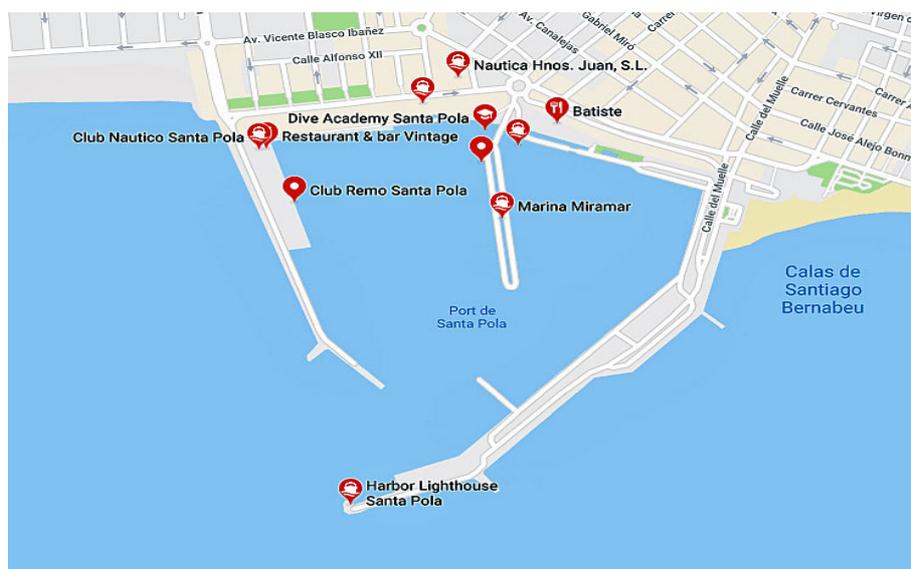
It is also sometimes possible to anchor between the Salt Quay and the Marina Internacional. There is no logic to the anchoring as sometimes it is permitted and sometimes not!

The prices are ‘reasonable’ and the town is well cared for and an attractive place to visit. There are naturally quite a few ‘ex-pat’ boats here and all the facilities are good.

| Marina Salinas   | Real Club Nautico  | Internacional Marina  |
|--|--|---|
| 965 70 97 01<br><a href="mailto:info@marinasalinas.com">info@marinasalinas.com</a> | 96 571 01 12<br><a href="mailto:info@rcnt.com">info@rcnt.com</a> | 965 71 36 50<br>Coordenadas: 37° 57' N – 0° 41' W<br><a href="mailto:info@cnmi.es">info@cnmi.es</a><br><a href="mailto:info@puertodeportivomarinainternacional.es">info@puertodeportivomarinainternacional.es</a> |

## Santa Polo

0034 966 694 752 [info@marinamiramar.com](mailto:info@marinamiramar.com) [www.marinamiramar.com](http://www.marinamiramar.com)

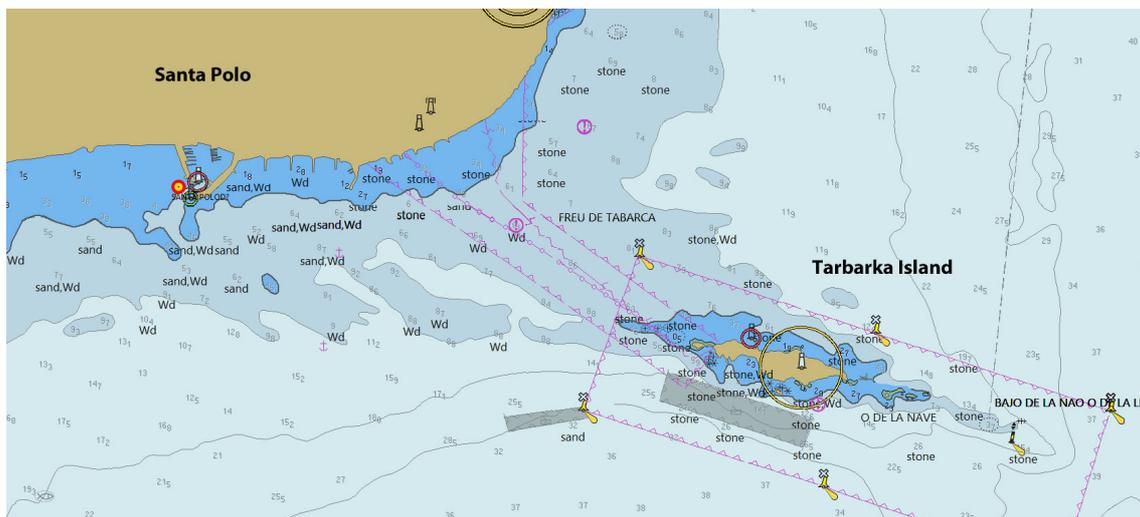


It's a mere 18 miles north to the small harbour of Santa Polo where the yacht club shares one side and the relatively new ‘Marinairamar’ shares the

other half with easy access to the lively ‘Paseo Adolfo Suarez’ Who’s bars, hamburger joints, restaurants and night life goes on and on.



There is not a lot of reason to stop at Santa Polo as Alicante is only some 11 nautical miles further north – or a total of 25nm from Torrevieja.



As you come out of Santa Polo or come north from Torrevieja you see off to starboard the rocky island of Tarbarca, The safe passage between Tarbarca and the shore is 1.75nm and if you keep in the middle or favour the shore line there is no problem, except from the numerous small ferries carrying tourists as fast as they can to and from the little island.

Before 1700, the island was known as *Illa de Sant Pau* ('Saint Paul's Island') and believed to be the island on which St. Paul disembarked. The island was a refuge for Barbary pirates up to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is now a major and important marine reserve.

## Alicante



This is a major port and cruise ship destination and the turn into the long passage between the mole and the shore



Alicante is the capital of the Alicante province. Its old town, Barrio de la

Santa Cruz, has narrow streets, coloured houses and a nightlife scene. An elevator or a steep climb, leads to medieval Castillo de Santa Bárbara, set on a hilltop with sweeping views of the Mediterranean coast.

Alicante is seriously big in every way and although it is 'always' fully booked they normally find a place for you if it's only for a night or two. It is one of the very few marinas with finger berths which means it's probably better and easier to go bows in and step off the side. The only thing it does not have is total WiFi coverage so you need to go to the office to get a good signal.. There are large concrete roads in the middle of it so berth owners can drive down to near their cars. The city has everything and it is of course a major tourist destination with the largest international airport in the area.

From the Autobus station there are transfers to the Airport every 20 minutes or so and the journey takes between half an hour and three quarters of an hour. About 25€ taxi ride (negotiate before you set off and there is a 4.50€ surcharge for going to the airport) or 20 minutes in a car.

Excellent chandlers, marine engine shops and all it lacks is WiFi on the berths, you need to go to the office to get a decent signal.

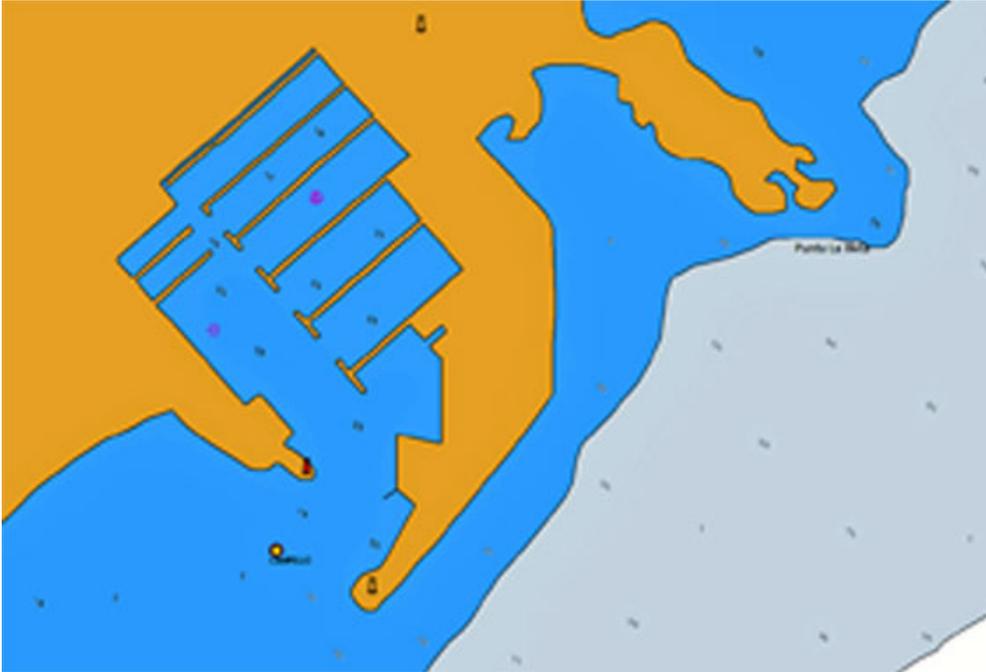
Just for once on the Spanish Mediterranean coast, there is a paucity of good marinas or ports to head to as you go North towards Denia which is the main departure port for the Balearic Islands and the first substantial marina after Alicante.

I have listed notes on El Campello. Puerto Blanco, Calpe but the first real option is Altea if there is room for you. The Spanish Yacht Club marina of Morayra is the best of them all if rather expensive. Good facilities like supermarkets in the town. There is an excellent anchorage just outside and from there it's less than 60 miles to St Antonio in Ibiza.

It is only some 55nm to Denia which is the next truly major port. It has all facilities and is the 'home' base of many of the Balearic Islands Yacht Charter Companies. It is so relatively inexpensive and close to the islands that some companies store their fleets here using all the excellent facilities to maintain them. When they get bookings they simply sail the boat to a suitable marina in the Islands and hand it over there.

Make no mistake. In the season the Balearic Islands are crowded with mainly charter boats and visiting yachts. The prices in the marinas are eye-watering expensive and the anchorages over crowded. This beautiful cruising ground is a victim of its own success.

## El Campello



Continuing north towards the Balearic Islands ‘jump off’ ports and the French Canals it is a mere 10 miles to El Campello although probably not practical for most of us. Charted depth in the entrance is 1.3 metres and it is really the home of small motorboats and shallow draft yachts. It is a Spanish sailing club marina and it’s probably best to get in touch with them before entering.  
Club Nautico de Campello Tel(34) 965 631 748

A little further up the coast and some 17 miles from Alicante is the Spanish sailing club marina of **Villajoya**. It too has questionable depths in the entrance and little room to manoeuvre a cruising boat once you get in.



Best to contact them before approaching: Club Nautico Vila Joiosa  
965 89 36 06

## ALTEA



Is about 30nm from Alicante

The first really practical Spanish Sailing Club Mariana is ALTEA with plenty of depth in the entrance: In harbour entrance: 4m. In outer harbour: 3,5 m. In marina: 3m.

It has all the facilities you would expect from a commercial marina including a 50 ton travel lift, fuel dock and WiFi areas. Gets pretty full in the summer so it's probably worth calling ahead to make a reservation: (+34) 96.584.21.85 Club phone: (+34) 96.584.15.91

## Puerto Blanco

Is another shallow entrance marina which takes a maximum size of 13 metres. It is probably best for smaller craft with not much room to manoeuvre when you get inside – be careful for the semi submerges breakwater rocks as charted laying in the approach.



96 585 9200 eMail: [administracion@puertoblanco.es](mailto:administracion@puertoblanco.es)

Just across the bay is the larger and more accessible:

## CALPE



By Sea: Alicante 35 miles. Ibiza 65 miles. Formentera 65 miles.

34 96 583 18 09 [reservas@rcnc.es](mailto:reservas@rcnc.es)

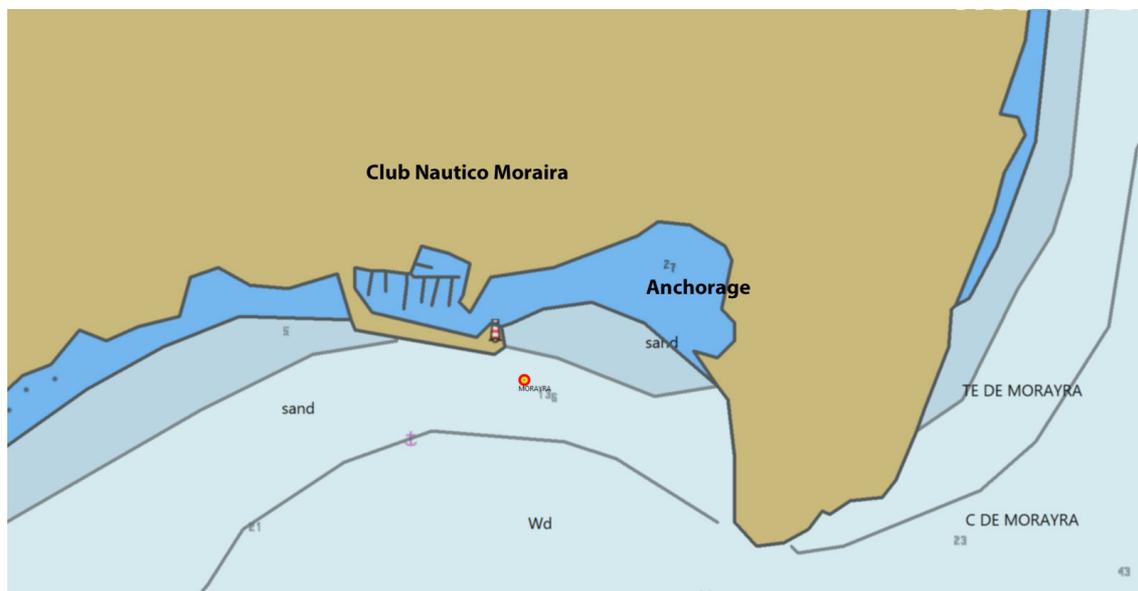
Another Spanish Yacht club marina it has all facilities with a good town behind it. Certainly not cheap and you really must reserve a berth in the season either by email or telephone. It boasts 264 places in the marina with all the facilities but it is very much orientated to serving and looking after club members. However a nice place to visit.

Just around the next headland on the other side of the bay is:

## MORAYRA

My personal favourite for departing to or coming from the Balearic Islands and normally my first port of call after Alicante, which is less than 40nm to the south. From Morayra to Formentara is around 60nm and to St Antonio, Ibiza around 65nm.

The anchorage is superb. It is always crowded until around 19.00 when suddenly everybody goes home and there are seldom more than a couple of other boats overnight.



It is so well protected with the availability of the marina next door I have overnight here more than anywhere else in the western Mediterranean.

The **Club Náutico Moraira** – 96 574 44 61 - [info@cnmoraira.com](mailto:info@cnmoraira.com) is welcoming and friendly with excellent facilities in the marina and the town nearby. Expensive, but more likely to have space for a couple of nights

than anywhere between here and Alicante.



Just around the next headland is the major marina complex of:

## **DENIA**

Many of the Balearic Islands Yacht Charter companies keep their boats here as it is so much cheaper than anywhere in the islands and has all the facilities needed to ‘fix a boat’.. From Alicante it is less than 55 miles and is a full on commercial marina with excellent facilities, It is the favourite and closest departure port for boat heading to the Balearic Islands.



Only 55nm to St Antonio just beyond are all the anchorages around Ibiza and it’s only an overnight from here to Majorca.

It is an important and busy ferry terminal for the Balearic Islands, so there

is a constant stream of passenger ships arriving and departing.

As you enter immediately on the left is a big fuel dock and from there you can arrange a marina berth. There is also another Spanish Yacht Club situated in the port with its own fuel dock and facilities.

When you enter the port the fuel dock and marina check in is the spur immediately on the left and beyond that the extensive marina. Opposite is the Yacht Club facility. It's a bit of a hike around to the town and the supermarket, past all the bars, cafes and restaurants around the marina catering for tourists.

The next chapter deals with the passage from the **French Canals to Denia**:



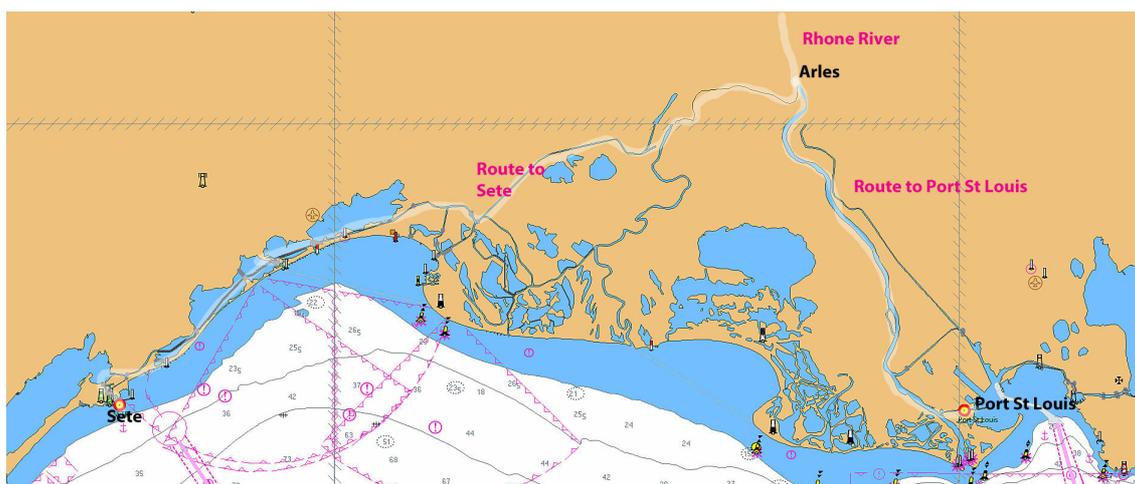
## CHAPTER SEVEN

### French Canals to Denia:

To be more precise you have come south through the canals to the River Saone and down to Lyon. Then you have entered the mighty Rhone River with its huge commercial locks and headed south with the current to near **Arles** where you make the decision to either hang a right and use the canals to get to **Sete** or carry straight on and take the very straight tree lined canal to **Port St Louis**.

Full details of the route from the English Channel to the French Mediterranean in:

### FRENCH CANAL ROUTES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN



If you are heading off towards Corsica, Sardinia and the Greek Islands then you will head for Port St Louis and Port Napoleon Marina

If you are heading for the Balearic Islands and the Costa del Sol then you will head for Sète and the Port de Plaisance de Sète.

If you have your mast on deck, then both places have cranes to put the mast back up for you.

Port Napoleon probably has a more full on service for masting and de-masting and you can send your mast by road from the French Channel port you entered the canal system to Port Napoleon to await your arrival.



### **Capitainerie Port Napoléon**

Presqu'île du Mazet

13320

Port St Louis

France

+33 (0)4 42 48 41 21

[contact@port-adhoc.com](mailto:contact@port-adhoc.com)

On the other hand it's a pretty unattractive place set in the middle of nowhere. Good facilities for working on the boat but not somewhere you would want to spend too much time.

The waterway down to **Sète** is interesting and fun to navigate. One huge lock, where you do not need to tie up, which raises or lowers the level about 6 inches!

A bit of a wait for the railway bridges to open to let you into Sète town but a superb tapas type café where you sit outside to while away an evening, is located beside the last big bridge.

The town is full on 'French' and the marina (Port de Plaisance) has every facility. Sète is a very good experience and a fun place to be.

The office is at :

**Le port de plaisance de Sète**

Môle Saint Louis,

34200 Sète

Téléphone : 04 67 74 98 97

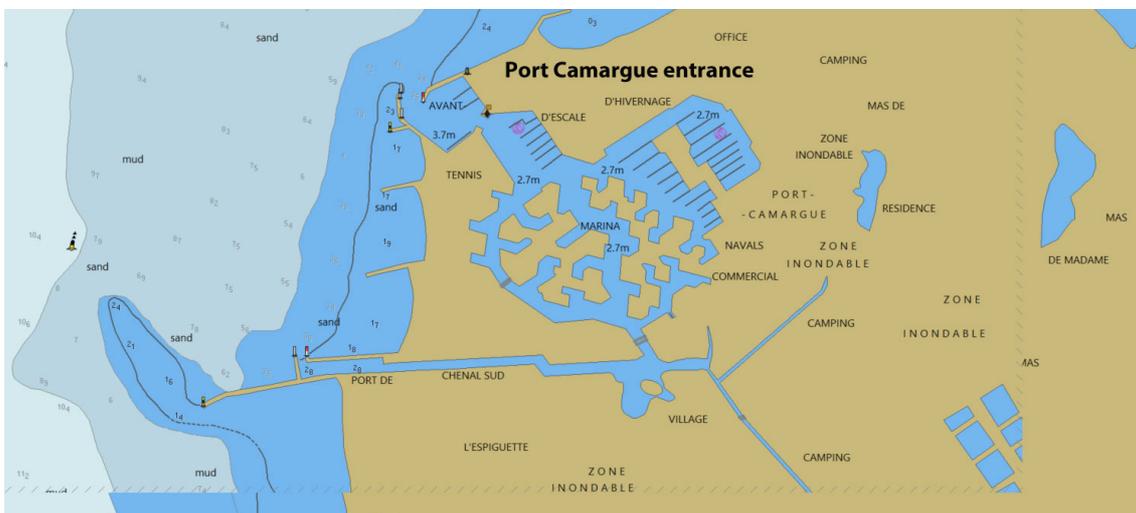
Mail : [portstclair@portsuddefrance-sete.fr](mailto:portstclair@portsuddefrance-sete.fr)

## Sete Harbour



If you have chosen **Port Napoléon** exit the French Canals Route then the passage from there to Sète is some 60 miles and probably more than you want to do first time back in the sea. You need to avoid the well buoyed shallows round the Bouche de Rhone – Mouth of the Rhone – which takes you a way off shore and with low laying marshland it feels like a long way off!

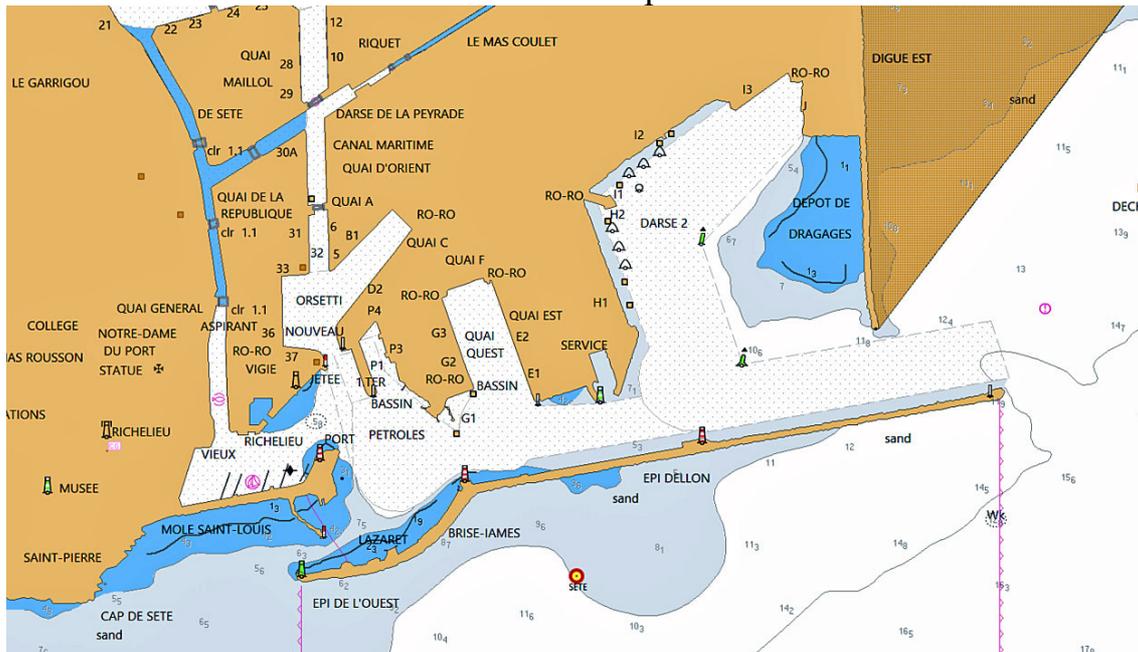
The answer is to go into the northern entrance of Port Camargue which is a mere 50nm from Port Napoleon.



It is one of those marinas that were built to enhance a property development in the middle of nowhere. Very geared to the French holiday trade there is not a lot there but it does cut down the duration of the first sea passage after the canals.

From Port Camargue to Sete is a mere 20 miles the next day. You can enter either side of the detached mole and make your way to the marina.

Sete harbour plan

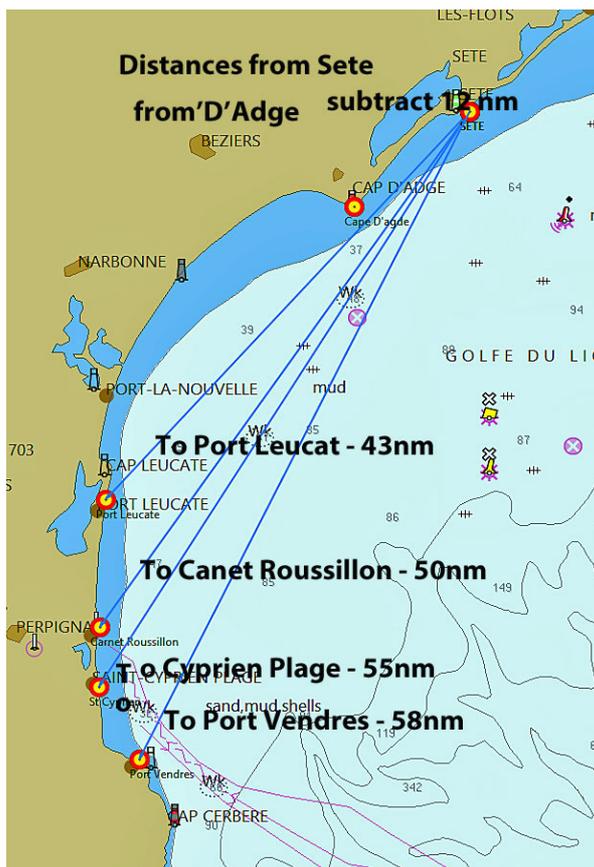


From here heading South to the Balearics it's a matter of taste as to how many marinas you want to visit – there are lots just in France. Coming out of Sete there is a 10nm passage to **Cape D'AGDE**.



Like Port Camargue, this is a marina or rather three marinas, built to enhance a property development but on a grand scale. The place is very popular with French holiday makers and there are a multitude of 'water' activities going on all the time.

## Cap D'Agde



From here to the French Frontier with Spain there are four possible ports for the average cruising boat to enter.

The others are either shallow or have low bridges which precludes sailing boats.

Assuming you give Cape d'Agde a miss and set out from Sète towards Spain and the Costas then you can head for:

Port Leucate – 31 Cape D'Agde  
 C Roussillon – 38 Cape D'Agde  
 Cyprien Plage – 43 Cape D'Agde  
 Port Vendres – 46 Cape D'Agde

The first three are full on French holiday resorts teaming with the French on holiday and 'le Camping' but Port Vendres is an

ancient safe harbour with real world characteristics.

With all of the above it is better to call ahead on VHF or mobile phone to make berthing quicker and simpler.

## Port Leucate

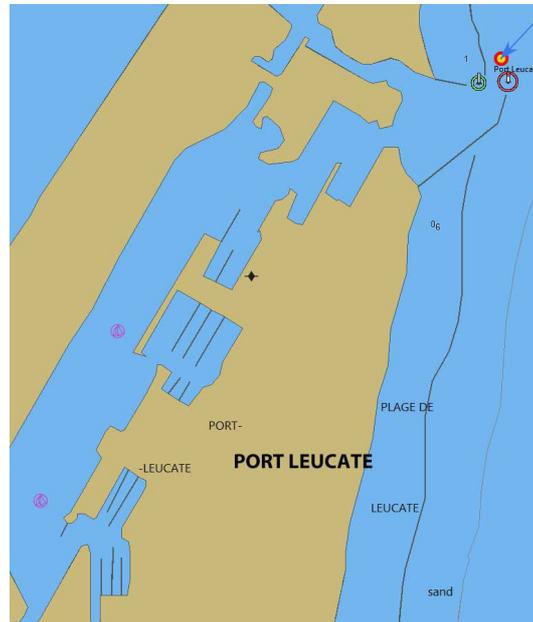
31nm from Cape D'Agde

V.H.F. Canal 09

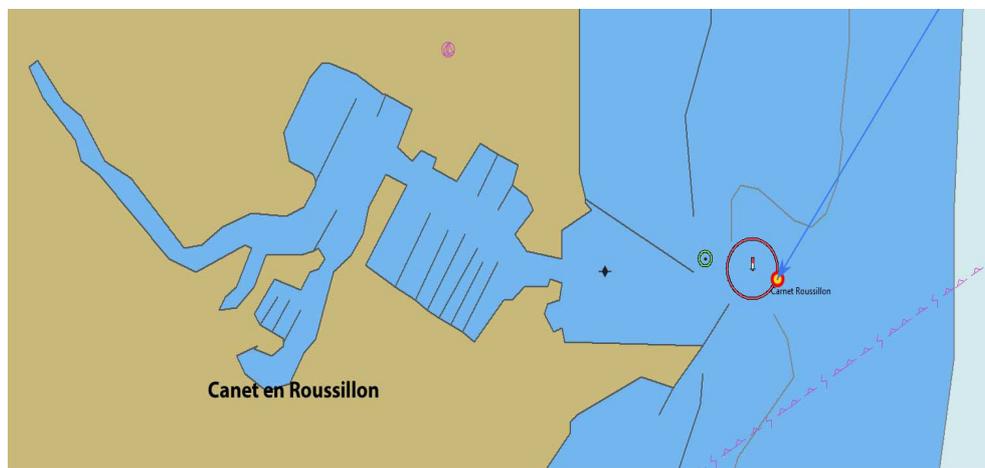
Tél. : 04.68.40.91.24

Email : [capitainerie@port-leucate.fr](mailto:capitainerie@port-leucate.fr)

There is a supermarket just outside the main gate plus all the 'holiday resort' features you would expect from a French coastal town.



## Canat en Roussillon



38nm from Cape D'Agde

VHF Channel 09, Tel:+33 (0)4 68 86 72 73,

<http://www.port-de-canet.com> , [contact@port-de-canet.com](mailto:contact@port-de-canet.com)

Because of the proximity of the city of Perpignan, a short bus ride away, this is the major marina complex in the area, Canat en Roussillon has 1300 berths, and excellent facilities for repairs, with travel lifts from 30 to 200 Tons capacity & suppliers for all work related to sailing.

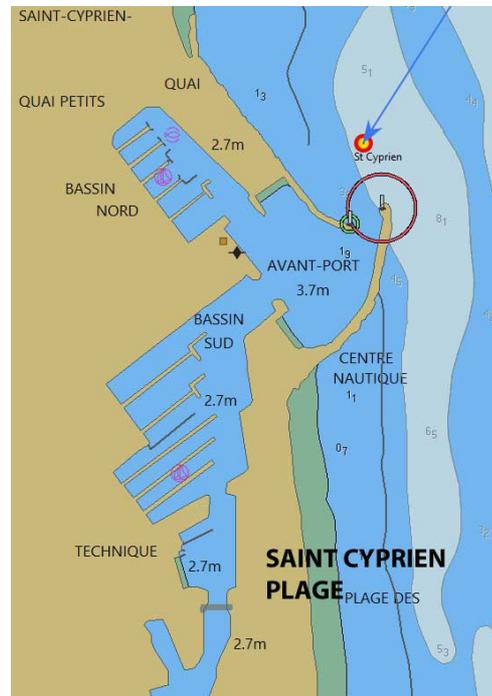
## Saint Cyprien Plage

43 nm from Cape D'Agde  
 VHF Channel 09 Tel:+33 4 68 21 07 98,  
<http://www.port-st-cyprien.com/>  
[contact@port-st-cyprien.com](mailto:contact@port-st-cyprien.com)

This is the beach resort for the city of Perpignan a short bus ride away.

Very crowded with holiday makers in the season. 440 visitor's berths. Fuel, laundry, WiFi, chandlery, provisions, bars and restaurants, bank, pharmacy, yacht club. Max length 20m. Depth 3.5m.

Boatyard with 45 ton travel lift,



And now the last port in France:

## Port Vendres

46nm from Cape D'Agde

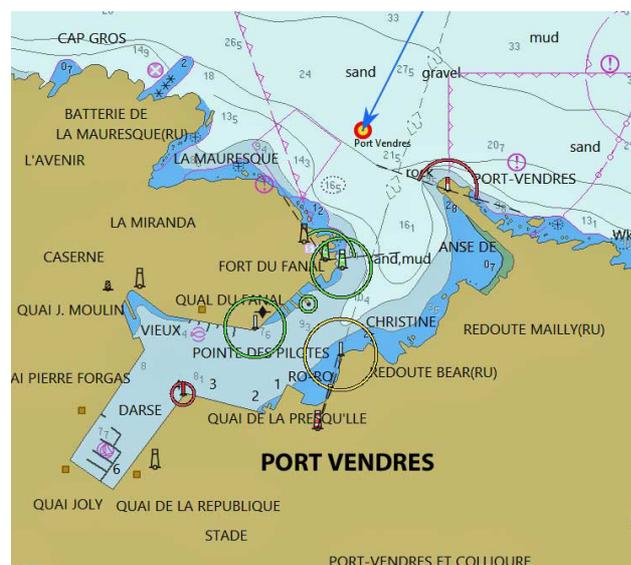
Very small marina so it is advisable to book ahead.

[port-vendres.plaisance@perpignan.cci.fr](mailto:port-vendres.plaisance@perpignan.cci.fr)

VHF Channel 09  
 Tel:+33 (0)4 68 82 08 84  
 30 visitor's berths on pontoon  
 laundry, WiFi, provisions,  
 chandlery, fuel berth, travel  
 lift (10 and 25 tons), repairs.

The last French port before  
 entering northern  
 Mediterranean Spain and my  
 favourite, on this coast, after  
 Sete.

A classic 'safe' harbour!



**From Port Vendres you are 10 nm from the border with Spain**

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Northern Mediterranean Spain to Denia.



This stretch of coast is of course one of the main departure points for entering and cruising the Balearic Islands. From Barcelona area to Minorca it's around 110 nm and from Denia it's a mere 55nm. This is why Denia is the most important mainland Spain port and marina servicing the islands.

The Balearic Islands are arguably the most popular cruising ground in the Mediterranean Sea and are certainly the most expensive. Well worth going there out of season but in season challenging with so many yacht charter companies operating to full capacity.

Having said that my favourite Mediterranean port is Mahon and we have spent many happy times there.

The ports and marinas between Barcelona and Denia are not very user friendly – mainly yacht clubs for smaller boats. An alternative route is to go via the Balearic Islands down to Denia.

### French frontier to Barcelona

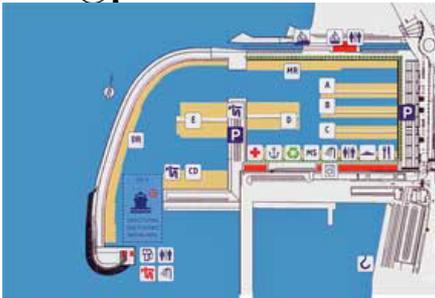
Its about 30nm from the French Port Vendres to the Spanish 485 boat marina of **Roses**. Depends how offshore you keep from this rocky coastline:

#### ROSES

VHF canal 9

Tel. 34- 972 154 412

[info@portroses.com](mailto:info@portroses.com)



This is a small marina yacht club with not a lot of visitors' berths so it's worth booking ahead in the high season

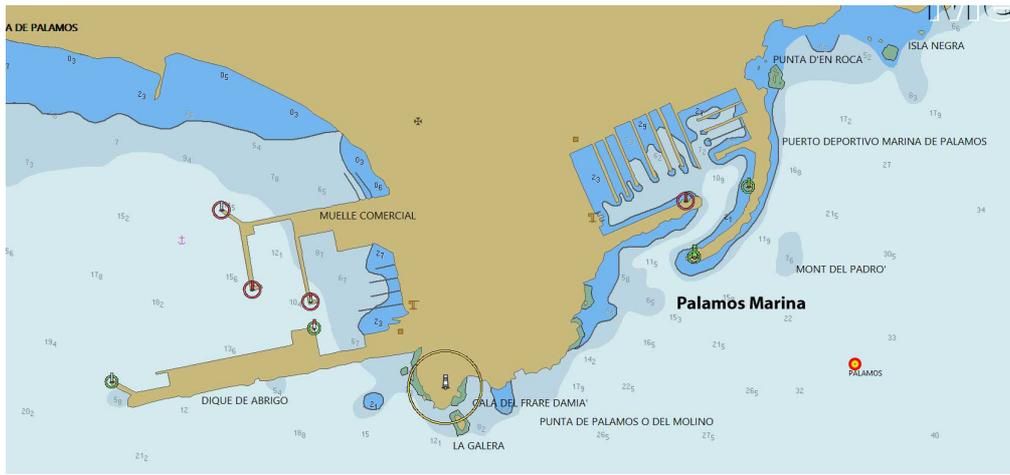
From Roses to Palamos it's 30nm but if you do not divert into Roses after departing from Port Vendres, it's only 48nm. I normally do this.

### Palamos

#### Marina Palamos

VHF Channel 9 Tel:(34) 972 601000, [nauticpa@lix.intercom.es](mailto:nauticpa@lix.intercom.es)

Palamos is an important fishing port. It has a hospital, cinemas, theatre and other cultural activities. The town itself is an old Catalanian city, of particular interest is the wonderful fishing museum. There are a large number of visitor's berths.



On the western side of the peninsular is:

**Club Nautic Costa Brava**

Tel:+34 972 31 43 24 VHF Channel 9 [cncb@cncostabrava.com](mailto:cncb@cncostabrava.com)

One of the oldest clubs on the Costa Brava. Full service marina with 255 moorings, 24 hour security, chandlers.

**Towards Barcelona**

It is 30 – 45 nautical miles from Palamos to a group of yacht club marinas all with excellent facilities and rail link into Barcelona.



**Arenys del Mar Yacht Club** CH 9 VHF 93 792 16 00 [INFO@CNARENYS.COM](mailto:INFO@CNARENYS.COM)



**Port Balis** (My home port) Tel 93 792 99 00

[info@cnelbalis.com](mailto:info@cnelbalis.com)

If you become a member (2,000€ entry fee!) the permanent berthing rate goes right down and after a couple of years it's a very inexpensive deal.

El Prat – Barcelona airport is a train ride away from this large marina. Excellent club restaurant at reasonable prices. Good haul out yard with many chandlers, electronics and wood work.

### Mataro

Canal 9 VHF Tel: 93 755 09 61 - 93 755 09 01 [info@portmataro.com](mailto:info@portmataro.com)

Has lift out facilities and visitors berths available. Within the marina is a yacht club and fishing club.

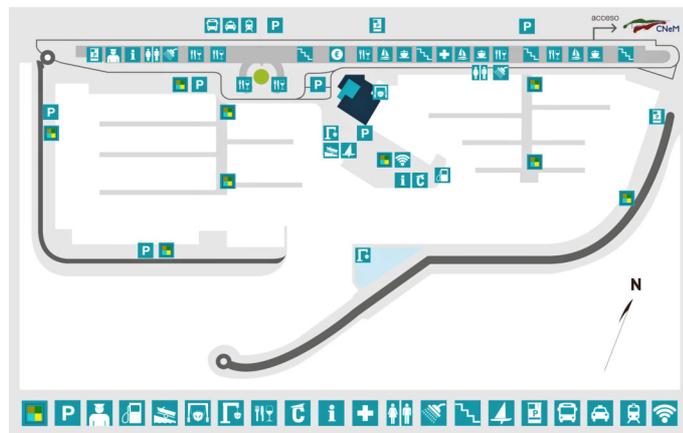
### Masnou

VHF 9

T (+34) 93 540 30 00 ·

[portmasnou@portmasnou.es](mailto:portmasnou@portmasnou.es)

1,058 moorings for lengths up to 22 metres. A commercial, well appointed marina. More expensive than the previous 3 because of its proximity to Barcelona.



## BARCELONA HARBOUR MARINAS



Just outside the main harbour to the north is the Barcelona Olympic Marina.

Te VHF Channel 91: (34) 932 259220

<http://www.portolimpic.es> , [portolimpic@pobasa.es](mailto:portolimpic@pobasa.es)

Very little room to manoeuvre and very crowded. I found the place and staff pretty unfriendly and it's situated in an unpleasant suburb of Barcelona. Almost essential to book ahead,

### **INSIDE BARCELONA MAIN HARBOUR:**

There are 3 marinas in the heart of the City:

**One Ocean** (previously Marina Port Vell) is now a super-yacht marina with prices to match.

**Real Club Marítimo** is a full service marina in the middle of the city at the bottom of Las Ramblas.

**Puerto Forum** caters principally for super-yachts.

They all have minimum LOA and in the high season minimum berthing periods. – eg. One month. None of these are for ordinary mortals!

### **SOUTH OF BARCELONA MAIN HARBOUR:**

Just 13nm from the main Barcelona harbour entrance Is the excellent and inexpensive:

**Port Ginesta S.A**

Tel:+34 936 643 661 <http://www.portginesta.com> , [info@portginesta.com](mailto:info@portginesta.com)

13 miles SW of Barcelona at the tourist resort of Castelldefels. It is only ten kilometres from El Prat – Barcelona Airport. A 30€ taxi ride.



A full service marina with all facilities, fuel, waste

disposal, pump-out, laundry, WiFi, swimming pool. Mini market.

Boatyard with 75t travel lift, 6 ton crane, shore storage, repairs.

Not unsurprisingly many ex-pats keep their boats here permanently.

Reasonable rates, and close to Barcelona.



There are three marinas just south of Ginesta, as you head towards the Costa del Sol, via the coast route rather than through the Balearic Islands.

### **Garraf**

Tel. 936 320 013 [info@clubnauticgarraf.com](mailto:info@clubnauticgarraf.com)

Really a small boat yacht club with a max LOA of around 15m.

Set in a park –

### **AIGUADOLC / SITGES**

**34 93 894 26 00** [info@portdesitges.com](mailto:info@portdesitges.com)

A marina built to enhance a major property development it has some 700 berths and is a ‘resort’ spot for the surrounding housing estates.

### **GELTRU – Club Nautico de Vilanova**



93 815 02 67 [cnv@cnvilanova.cat](mailto:cnv@cnvilanova.cat)

A large yacht club with some visitors berths.

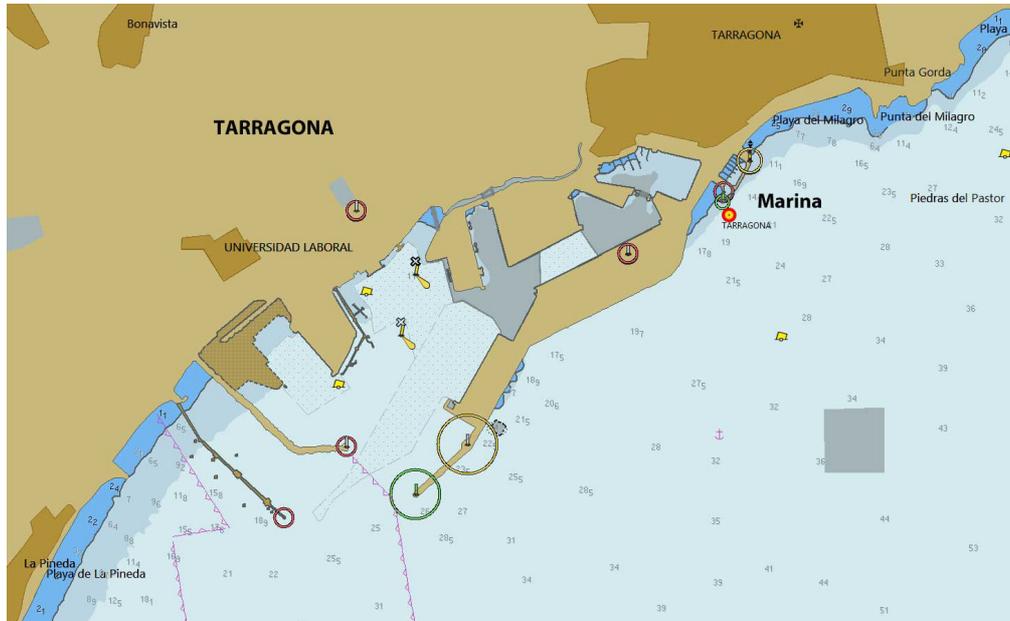
Surrounded by holiday and retirement houses.

Probably need to book ahead in high season.

Some 23nm further south brings you to the major port of:

## Tarragona

Tarragona is a very large commercial port just 4nm north east of Cap de Salu which is about 80nm south west of Barcelona. Position  $41^{\circ} 06'15''N$ ,  $01^{\circ} 15'03''E$  . with a marina just outside to the north.



Most of the marinas are aimed at super-yachts but there are options for berthing:

### **Port Esportiu de Tarragona (Marina)**

Tel:+34 977 21 31 00 / +34 977 21 30 00, VHF Channel 9

<http://www.portesportiutarragona.com> ,

[recepio@portesportiutarragona.com](mailto:recepio@portesportiutarragona.com)

Full service marina fuel, WiFi. Just north of main harbour

### **Club Nautico Cambrils**

Tel:+34 977 36 05 31, VHF Channel 9

<http://clubnauticcambrils.com> , [info@clubnauticcambrils.com](mailto:info@clubnauticcambrils.com)

**Located 4nm west of Cap de Salou.. 41deg 03.7'N, 1deg 03.8'E**

### **Port Barà**

Puerto Deportivo Roda de Barà Tel:+34 977 13 81 69

<http://www.novadarsenabara.es/> , [info@novadarsenabara.es](mailto:info@novadarsenabara.es)

Half way between Vilanova y Geltru and Tarragona Marinas only July and August are classed as high season. fuel berth. Boatyard with 110 travel hoist, 10 ton crane, repair services.

**Port Torredembarra, S.A.**

Tel:+34 977 64 32 34, VHF Channel 9

<http://www.port-torredembarra.es/website/> ,  
[info@port-torredembarra.es](mailto:info@port-torredembarra.es)

A marina 6nm east of Tarragona. All services. 41deg 08.03'N, 1deg 24.15'E

**Port of Tarraco Marina Super-yacht marina (min. length 30m)**Tel:+34 977 244 173, **VHF Channel 11**<http://www.porttarraco.com/> ,  
[info@porttarraco.com/](mailto:info@porttarraco.com/)

All facilities, repair services.



It's a long 50nm passage from Tarragona area round Punta Bana into the Spanish yacht club Nautico at:

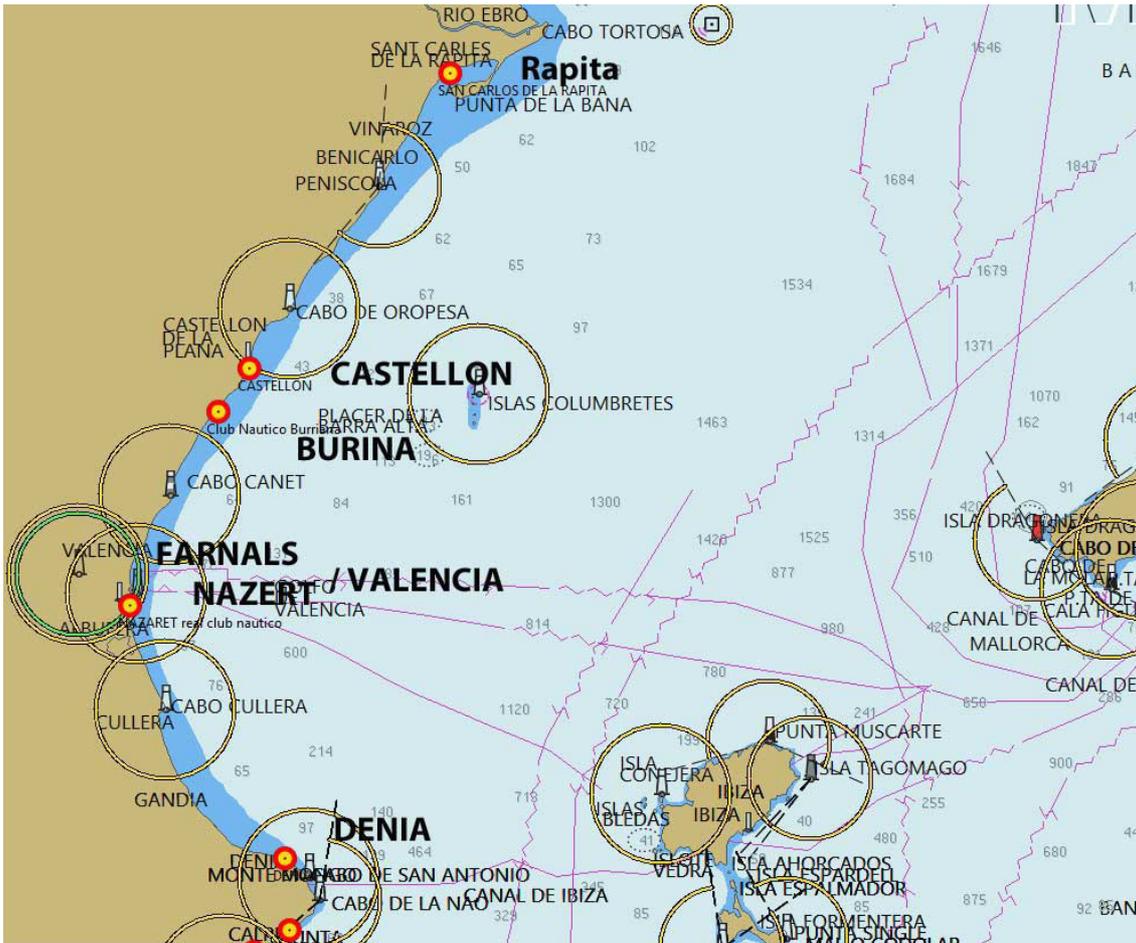
**LA RAPITA**

Tel. 971 64 00 01

<http://www.cnrapita.com/>[administracion@cnrapita.es](mailto:administracion@cnrapita.es)

This is a 470 berth yacht club marina with all facilities.

You are now on the last leg of the passage from the French canals to the Costa del Sol although there are a couple of longer passages of over 50 miles involved.



About 49 nm south of Rapita, just following the coast, is Castellón or another 7 or 8nm further on is the Spanish yacht club and the commercial marina in Burrina.

From Burrina it's only 30 nm to Valencia/Nazaret and from there, just another 40nm, to Denia and round the corner towards the Costa del Sol.



## Castellón

Deep inside the main port is the Marina Port Castellón

Tel: 964 737 452

VHF 9

[marinaportcastello@marinaportcastello.es](mailto:marinaportcastello@marinaportcastello.es)

It's fairly small and tight in the actual marina so its worth calling ahead. Fuel and the usual facilities

Alternatively just a little further south is the commercial marina of:

## Burrina



**Tel.: (+34) 964 227 200 info@burriananova.com**

<http://www.burriananova.com/>

It has 335 berths to 20 metres and all normal facilities.

Just 5nm north of Valencia is the seaside resort marina of:

## FARNALS



### **Pobla Marina, Valencia**

Tel:+34 961 463 223 ,VHF Channel 09

<http://www.poblamarina.es> , [info@poblamarina.es](mailto:info@poblamarina.es)

5 miles north of Valencia. This is a nice little seaside town. 2 chandleries.  
80 tonne travel lift. Vessels up to 18m. Spanish holiday resort, Very few  
ex-pats!

## Valencia - Natzaret



This is the commercial ferry port of Valencia. There are large ferries arriving and departing constantly so it's worth keeping a good lookout.

Entered north of the main harbour with a separate entrance is:

**Marina de València** which claims to be the biggest in Europe with 800 berths for boats from 7 to 70 metres. It is certainly large and serves the major city of Valencia.

T +34 963 812 009 [marina@marinavalencia.com](mailto:marina@marinavalencia.com)

<http://www.lamarinadevalencia.com>

It is a bit of a hike into the city

Alternatively there is the Spanish Yacht Club to the south of the main harbour towards the river and bridges.

### **Real Club Náutico de Valencia**

**Telefono:** 963679011

**Email:** [rcnv@rcnautico.com](mailto:rcnv@rcnautico.com)

This is very family yacht club much geared to dinghy racing. You should call or email ahead for a berth.

The next destination en route for the Costa del Sol is **Denia** a 40nm passage to the south. This port serves the Balearics .

## DENIA

Many of the Balearic Islands Yacht Charter companies keep their boats here as it is so much cheaper than anywhere in the islands and has all the facilities needed to 'fix a boat'.. From Alicante it is less than 55 miles and is a full on commercial marina with excellent facilities, It is the favourite and closest departure port for boat heading to the Balearic Islands.



Only 55nm to St Antonio just beyond are all the anchorages around Ibiza and it's only an overnight from here to Majorca.

It is an important and busy ferry terminal for the Balearic Islands, so there is a constant stream of passenger ships arriving and departing.

As you enter immediately on the left is a big fuel dock and from there you can arrange a marina berth. There is also another Spanish Yacht Club situated in the port with its own fuel dock and facilities.

When you enter the port the fuel dock and marina check in is the spur immediately on the left and beyond that the extensive marina. Opposite is the Yacht Club facility. It's a bit of a hike around to the town and the supermarket, past all the bars, cafes and restaurants around the marina catering for tourists.

From here on you need to refer to earlier chapters in this book. You are almost in the Costa del Sol. Many European boats never leave the Mediterranean. The climate is good and the people friendly.

***Fair winds and safe landfalls***

Other books in the series:

**[French Canal Routes to the Mediterranean](#)**

**[Gentle Sailing Route to the Mediterranean](#)**

**[Gentle Mediterranean Routes to the Islands](#)**

**[The Pacific Crossing Guide](#)**

**[Caribbean Islands Cruising Guides](#)**

**[Strait Sailing to Gibraltar](#)**

**[Living Aboard Around the World](#)**

**[Easy Navigation](#)**