



Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

Is there pre-Covid fuel in your tank?
Log competition winners
Cruising mainland Spain





Light at the end of the tunnel?

CA President **Julian Dussek** really hopes that some optimism is now justified



How many members are itching to go back to their boats abroad? I certainly am having not seen mine for 18 months. Now that we have the promised traffic light system, I am hoping the countries I want to go to are green, but am mindful that when driving, lights suddenly change from green through amber to red as you approach. I'm keeping my fingers crossed. All being well we should be returning to normal life by the summer but I note that I wrote last August that I had hoped that the coronavirus would be nearly extinct.

CA House at Limehouse is returning to normal, the bar and galley are open and you can hire one of the cabins at a very reasonable price. With fewer tourists anticipated this might be a good time to have a break in London and take advantage of the lack of crowds.

Campaign for 180-day visas

The biggest threat to cruising outside the UK, especially in the European Union, arises from the United Kingdom having left the EU. The first major limitation on cruising in the EU is the restriction of visits to only 90 days in any 180. We campaigned hard to try and persuade the UK government to negotiate reciprocal terms with the EU; the UK offers EU citizens the option of a six-month visit. Many members wrote to their MPs who frequently took up the issue and questions were even asked in the House of Commons but all to no avail. Wendy Morton, Minister for the European neighbourhood and the Americas said in April 2020 on this topic "Seeking to do so is not part of the UK's approach to negotiations with the EU on our future relationship", and she meant it.

Recently musicians had a high-profile campaign because of the severe limitations on their movements within the EU, and we jumped on the

bandwagon when Sir Robin Knox-Johnston wrote to Oliver Dowden, Minister for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport requesting that he negotiates also for more freedom for cruising yachts. The result was a derisory letter from a junior aide.

We are now campaigning hard for individual European countries to offer extended stays for visiting yachtsmen and women. France already does so but it is a cumbersome procedure and we wish to get it simplified. Members of the Barge Association, with whom we have an amicable relationship, have been helpful about this. Sweden also offers a long stay visa and we are campaigning in other countries for similar arrangements.

VAT on boats and HMRC

The second major problem is the appalling behaviour of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. The details of the problems have been set out clearly over the year but they fall into two categories. One concerns boats at the present time, and the other relates to the future, where it will be impossible to leave the UK for more than three years without incurring VAT demands on return. A statement on the current position is on the CA website at www.theca.org.uk/news/rats/vat-campaign-update, but I think we are making some progress and have had a meeting with HMRC. I want to thank all those members who have written to their MPs on this topic; many of those MPs have taken the issue up with HMRC and the Treasury but have received a similar message to that from Wendy Morton saying in effect "this is the situation and that is that". However, some MPs have expressed an interest in taking this further. I think that with enough pressure we might be able to get a resolution.

I am well aware of the fact that our membership comes from 43 countries and we have a large number of European members. It may appear to them that we

are inward-looking and not favourable to them. If so I apologise wholeheartedly. Members based in Britain cherish cruising in Europe, enjoying the culture, gastronomy, the history, and the friendship that they receive almost everywhere. It is what we strive to retain.

What is Project 1?

Project 1: this arcane title is actually the name of one of the CA's most adventurous projects, the next version of Captain's Mate now in its final stages of development. A phenomenal amount of work has been going on over the last few months led by Ivan Andrews and Sam Steele. They have recruited a group of editors who have worked tirelessly over the last few months, paradoxically aided by the Covid restrictions which have kept people at home.

Becoming more family-friendly

I will end with a disappointment. In the halcyon days we held a seminar twice a year for new members when they could come to Limehouse and hear several good talks and meet each with a good meal, wine and beer. Covid obviously stopped us doing this over the last year and Judith Grimwade put together an excellent programme of lectures online. Topics covered sailing in the popular areas, Baltic, Mediterranean, inland waterways, and Biscay, plus preparing for long term cruising and an introduction to what members might get out of the CA. Of 700 members contacted, only 75 actually attended and this was on a horrible wet Saturday. Was lockdown lethargy responsible? Two members used the Q&A facility to say that the CA needed to be more family friendly, something we consider frequently. I am keen to receive suggestions about how to do it.

I hope the traffic lights stay green and wish you all an enjoyable season's sailing.



Sir Robin leads top sailors in VAT protest



In a letter published in *The Times* newspaper on May 14, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, Patron of the CA, highlighted the devastating effect of HMRC's demands for VAT on boats returning to the UK. His letter was counter-signed by many other sailing names including Sir Ben Ainslie, Mike Golding OBE, Pip Hare,

Dee Caffari MBE, Libby Purves OBE, Paul Heiney and Bob Shepton, in addition to the President of the CA, Julian Dussek.

Sir Robin's letter concluded:

"Boats (private pleasure craft) are subject to VAT regulations on 'Goods' by HMRC. We are asking the Government to add British-registered pleasure craft, on which VAT has already been paid, to the list of exceptions to VAT demands on returned goods in order that British sailors can

continue to enjoy the centuries-old practice of extended cruising abroad."

The CA's President, Julian Dussek, was also interviewed by *The Times* about the issues faced by so many of the association's members and added that up to 30,000 UK-owned boats in the EU would be affected by these rulings.

- The new VAT regime is already the subject of an extensive campaign by the CA, as Julian reports on page 5.



Above left, Jean Andrews welcomes the Duke to CA House. Above right, Stuart Bradley tries to show the Duke the back of the Handbook. Below, from the Daily Telegraph, January 2016

Recalling the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to CA House

Following the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, who died on April 9, aged 99, the Cruising Association sent condolences to The Princess Royal, his daughter and an honorary member of the CA. We received a response saying that Her Royal Highness was touched that we thought to write to her, and sending her thanks.

Prince Philip visited CA House on July 22, 1998. Jean Andrews, MBE, then President of the CA, welcomed him to CA House and remembers his pointing gesture seen in the photo – a gesture often seen from his son, the Prince of Wales, and even his great-grandson, Prince George.

Stuart Bradley recalls a moment of discomfort in the Library as he tried to turn over the Handbook to show the Duke the map of coverage on the back, while the Duke held on to the book tightly.

- Our apologies to Jean Andrews, who was inadvertently described as Jean Simmons in the May Newsletter.



An easier way to arrive in France?



The CA, through its local representatives, is helping to make cruising to France easier for non-Schengen citizens.

Since leaving the EU, boats arriving in France from the UK or Channel Islands are required to sail to one of a small number of "Ports of Entry" (mainly the ferry ports) and search out the relevant authorities, usually the Police aux Frontières, to register the arrival of their boat and crew. Going through a Port of Entry would also be necessary before departing France for any non-Schengen country, presenting sailors coming from the UK to France with a potential problem.

Two of the CA's Honorary Local Representatives (HLRs) have been working with the local marinas, the marina associations and local officials to simplify the process. Now, as a direct result of their efforts, the French government has announced a process to allow entry at any French port. A form is becoming available from web sites which can be downloaded, completed and submitted by email to the local administrative Port of Entry prior to arrival. Providing all is acceptable, boats may then enter another port. This is already underway for Le Havre and other ports will follow on rapidly.

See [lehavreplaisance.com/library/file/PAF-le-Havre-Immigration-Form_anglais_odt_2-1\(5\).pdf](http://lehavreplaisance.com/library/file/PAF-le-Havre-Immigration-Form_anglais_odt_2-1(5).pdf)

Channel Section Secretary Bob Garrett told us: "This announcement does raise a number of issues, including how passports will be marked and whether the GHIC provides sufficient insurance cover. We wanted members to be aware of this new initiative as soon as possible, but we are continuing to work on the details and will update members as soon as we know more."

- Entering Schengen from outside the EU: a RATS advice section starts on page 20.
- The CA 180 Day Team France guide to getting an extended visa for France is at www.theca.org.uk/rats/brexit_advice/france

Right, a full tank will reduce condensation but also means that the tank of fuel is progressively aging. Below left, a Racor 10-micron fuel filter with clear bowl

What will you find in your fuel tank?



Many boats have covered few or no sea miles in the past year, and the diesel in their tanks may be contaminated with water, diesel bug or both.

Peter Weide looks at the best and most cost-effective options for treatment

Many of us have not been near our boats for over a year. All the major fuel manufacturers agree that diesel should not be stored longer than six months and given that it is often almost two months old before you get it, that leaves a lot of old degraded diesel in our fuel tanks.

Water gets into diesel in two ways: from condensation, and from the biodiesel (FAME) content which is hygroscopic, leading to a build up of saturated and free water. The free water causes degradation at the mildly acidic interface between water and fuel. Additionally the water will likely have allowed microbial infection to take hold (diesel bug) further increasing this acidic reaction. Collectively this degradation can cause discoloration and ultimately agglomerate to become sludge that sinks to the bottom of the tank. It is not well-known that FAME molecules are nonpolar, which means they can actually absorb sludge back into the body of the fuel. This fuel now has a lower calorific value, higher suspended contaminants, saturated water and reduced lubricity.

All is not lost, however. Although it is not possible to add a magic additive to reverse the oxidation, regardless of what the snake oil salesmen say, the effects can be mitigated.

A low-micron filter is cheaper than fuel polishing

In extreme cases it may be necessary to have the fuel "polished", which is usually a very expensive service involving a man with a van and a very low micron filter rig. But before Googling that service, consider that a marine engine already has a "polishing" system, in that often 50% or more of the fuel is returned to the tank. Install a low-micron/water block filter in the line after the tank and you will achieve the same effect. This would help to remove the suspended contaminants. It is worth considering a duplex filter arrangement so a filter can be changed while the engine is running... and keep spare filters on board.

The lower calorific value can be offset with a multifunction additive containing a cetane improver and lubricity improver; it should also contain a detergent to keep the system clean, as modern diesel will leave deposits, and much more so when degraded, plus a demulsifier to help water drop out and a biocide to kill any trace microbial infection.

Have as little fuel as possible in the tank before refilling with fresh fuel. The challenge then is to keep the new fuel fit for purpose.

Keeping fresh fuel in good condition

A good additive as described above will also have a stability improver, which will not recover degraded diesel but can help prolong the oxidation effect when taking on new fuel.

The single greatest contaminant in diesel is water, yet this can be easily removed by regularly draining off via the drain plug, or with a patent diesel dipper, or using standard parts as described by ASAP (see www.asap-supplies.com/fuel-systems/fuel-polishing and click "Read more" or go to d2h64ghtfy39p0.cloudfront.net/files/Categories/Basic_Fuel_Polishing_System.pdf). They will remove the water and accumulated sludge. If the tank does not have a drain, then fitting a dip tube flange will allow a tube to draw water off the very bottom of the tank into the diesel dipper so ensuring water and sludge can never build up. The objective is to ensure all water is removed from the very floor of the tank before it becomes a problem.

Should a tank be topped right up? This would be effective at reducing the condensation, but can also mean the diesel is getting older. I believe it is better to reduce the volume in the tank before refilling, and ensure a procedure is in place to ensure free water is drained off regularly. You could also install a hygroscopic in-line filter to the fuel tank air vent pipe to reduce the introduction of water vapour from the breather pipe.

Some Nordic countries do not allow boat owners to use biocides in fuel. However, a biocide should only be used as a one-time treatment to kill diesel bug, which can only thrive in the presence of water. If there is no water in the tank, there will be no diesel bug, so a biocide would not be necessary.

Do not use additives that claim to remove the water. Decades ago this was acceptable but a modern high-speed common rail engine is extremely sensitive to any water in any form and can be seriously damaged. Modern day fuel management is about ensuring water is removed, preferably as it is formed, and treating with a good multifunction additive.

Peter Weide was a chief engineer at sea, ship repair yard director and latterly head of UK sales for a marine engine manufacturer. He is a co-director of Marine 16 and inventor of the Patented Diesel Dipper. He is always happy to answer queries and give advice at info@marine16.co.uk. See www.marine16.co.uk



Our winning logs for 2020

The CA's log competition for 2020 was like no other. Every skipper had to change their plans as Covid took over our lives and our borders. **Cathy Brown**, who judged the contest, reports on this year's winning entries

Hanson Cup

Best log of a cruise of any duration. Won by **James Littlewood**, *Paddington V*. The top prize, for the best log of the year, goes to James Littlewood's account of his voyage through the inland waterways of the Netherlands aboard his 13m motor yacht *Paddington V*, co-skipped by his wife Carol. It began with a North Sea crossing to Vlissingen, and took them through the inland waterways to Ossenzijl, where the boat overwintered.

This log has absolutely everything – excellent photographs, useful maps and charts, all the passage-making information needed to follow the route – and generous coverage of all the incidental pleasures of cruising: eating and drinking, shopping, cycle touring, local history, wildlife, and plenty more besides. It also touches on Covid restrictions and Brexit implications.

Most of all, the log is a very entertaining read, laced with self-deprecating humour. There's even a sub-plot, in the form of a 125-year old book entitled *Friesland Meres: Through the Netherlands in a Norfolk*

Wherry, by Henry Montagu Doughty, which James read during lockdown. Where possible, he took new pictures of scenes illustrated in the Doughty book, which are printed side by side, another delight of the log.

Finally, there is an excellent appendix including all kinds of useful information, from charts and pilot books carried to practical advice about equipping a boat for long-term cruising, and all the documentation required.

Anybody contemplating a voyage through the Dutch inland waterways should download this substantial publication from the CA website and read it from cover to cover. It will be a hard act to follow! *You can read extracts from the log starting on page 34.*

The osCA sponsored by Haven Knox-Johnston

Best video log. Won by **Graham Keating**, *Maunie of Ardwall*. This YouTube video was the only entry in the new osCA vlog category (launched for 2019) but it is of such impressive quality that it would almost certainly have won, even if there had been hundreds of entries.

It is made to a highly professional standard, complete with background music, use of imaginative camera angles, elegant transitions between sections, and lots of useful information.

Entitled *The post lockdown shakedown: a cruise west from Dartmouth*, this was a short home waters cruise, going only as far as the Tamar, via the Yealm, not far for a Vancouver 38 which has crossed the Atlantic and Pacific under the same ownership.

But there is no shortage of interest, with everything from useful pilotage notes, and an internal tour of the boat, to explanations of such technical issues as AIS, wind against tide sea conditions, reefing – and even gin time!

Good use is made of Google Earth to

pinpoint the locations covered, and the vlog also conveys the couple's enjoyment of being at sea after the restrictions of lockdown – especially once the cruising chute is hoisted for the return leg!

Lacey Trophy

Best member's website or blog, won by **Chris Adams**, *Swallow*. The Scottish Islands were the favourite destination in the 2020 log competition, when Covid restrictions encouraged staycation cruising. This blog, elegantly presented in WordPress, covers two cruises Chris and his wife Ann made in their Ardfern-based Hallberg-Rassy 342 *Swallow* last summer.

There are lots of lovely pictures, excellent use is made of Google Maps to show routes and locations, and there is a fitting tribute to Antares charts, such a benefit for those exploring Scottish waters.

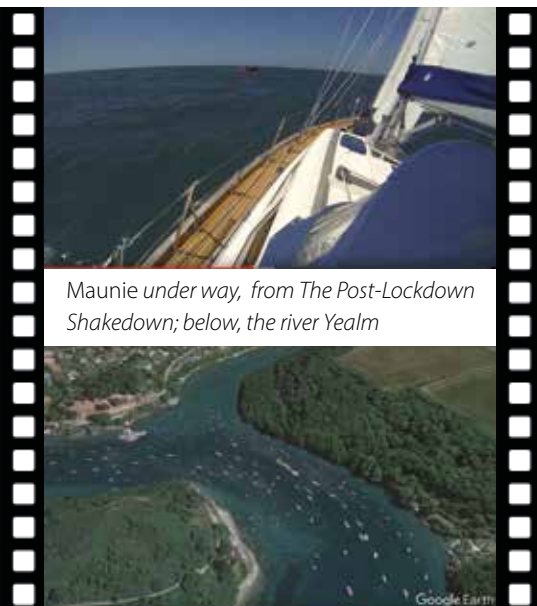
This blog highlights all the pleasures of this spectacular cruising ground, particularly its deserted anchorages, wonderful scenery and wildlife – dolphins, eagles, puffins, otters and deer.

Love Cup

Best log of a cruise under 30 days' duration. Winner, **Malcolm Denham**, *Misty Blue*. This was another cruise cut short by Covid restrictions. Malcolm and his wife Julie abandoned plans to take their Maxi 1100 *Misty Blue* to the Spanish Rias and settled for a shorter cruise from their base in Arzal on the Brittany coast to the Île de Ré and back.

The log of their "unintentional cruise south of the Loire" shows that despite the change of plan they still had a very enjoyable time: it is packed with excellent cruising information, delightful pictures and useful maps.

Better still, it is accompanied by a really good appendix crammed with pilotage information which would be extremely helpful to anybody setting out into this enduringly popular cruising ground.



Maunie under way, from *The Post-Lockdown Shakedown*; below, the river Yealm



Opposite, Swallow, pictured in Loch Scavaig, was the subject of the Lacey Trophy winner. This page, Dittisham, from the Dolphin Cup-winning blog

Dolphin Cup

Best photographic log, won by **Helen Shrewsbury** in *Cerulean*. No entries in this year's log competition matched the very closely defined conditions for the Dolphin Cup, but in consultation with the CA admin team, it was decided to award this trophy simply for the best photographic log. The conditions for the trophy have been updated for 2021.

Helen Shrewsbury is a worthy winner. Her blog, about the trials and tribulations of buying a boat in a pandemic, and then its eventful refit and eventual sailing experiences, is copiously illustrated throughout with excellent pictures.

Dugon Cup

Best log of a cruise in a vessel of not more than 32 feet. Won by **Anne Busch**, *Sireneuse*. Like many of the entrants in this year's log competition, Anne Busch and her sister Janey, who owns *Sireneuse*, a Hallberg-Rassy 31, had more ambitious cruising plans scuppered by Covid restrictions.

These two ladies of a certain age settled for a more limited exploration of the Danish Islands – and this delightful log celebrates the pleasures of unambitious, small boat cruising, clearly demonstrating that you don't need big distances or big boats to enjoy a couple of months on the water to the full.

The log is beautifully illustrated with fine photographs, showing interesting places visited ashore as well as useful passage-making information. There is good use of maps, too, putting everything in context. It is a delight to read.

Practical Boat Owner Award

Best photographic log of a cruise under one week's duration, won by **Mick de Pomerai**, *Operatix*. The account of the voyage of *Operatix*, an Oceanis 37, entitled *Gulf of Corinth – Escaping the*

Ionian is perhaps more travelogue than log. But what it lacks in pilotage advice is made up for with excellent photographs, and a lot of really interesting content about Greek history and culture and the wider experience of cruising in this corner of the Mediterranean.

Yachting World Cruising Award

Best log of a family cruise, won by **Alan Kohler**, *eXcel of Cumbrae*. This was one of my favourites of all the entries in this year's log competition – something completely different. Forced by Covid restrictions to abandon his plan to take his grandchildren through the Crinan Canal aboard his Xc38, Alan came up with the idea of taking them day sailing – entirely permitted within the rules.

So this log records some of the shortest voyages ever mentioned in the CA log competition, in one case only 200 metres! But as he points out, it is not the length of the voyage that matters when cruising with young children, but the experiences gained. And short day sails and playing in the dinghy proved the ideal solution.

This log, including copies of the prize certificates awarded to the youngsters for their attainments, neatly illustrates why the *Yachting World* Family Cruising Award is one of the most important prizes on offer in the CA log competition. *You can read Alan's log starting on page 40.*

Hammett Trophy

Best log of a cruise using the CA's crewing service, won by **Peter John Bell**, *Dofesaba II*. The Crewing Service is an important benefit of CA membership, enabling people without boats to get cruising experience, and people with boats to get help, when needed, in taking them where they want to go. On this trip along the south coast of Spain and Portugal, Peter Bell and his wife Mary took on two crewing service volunteers for the final leg from the Spanish border to

Lagos, where they left their Southerly RS 42 *Dofesaba II* for the winter.

Peter explains that in the normal run of things, skipper and potential crew would meet in person before sharing a voyage, but in this strange year, a Zoom call was the only contact before Terry and Siobhan stepped aboard for ten days. But it was a highly successful arrangement, by all accounts, suiting both parties.

Dingle Cup


Best log of a cruise submitted by children of CA members. Sadly, once again this year there were no entrants for this trophy. Please would everybody encourage their young crew members to submit entries this year. There are no restrictions, so conventional logs, blogs or vlogs would all be extremely welcome!

Summary

Once again, the 2021 sailing season is being affected by Covid restrictions, at home and abroad. But the entries in the 2020 log competition show that even in difficult times, there is plenty of scope for excellent logs, in all the categories of the competition.

Indeed, there were a number that just missed out on trophies that I would have liked to reward. Look out for them all on the CA website at www.theca.org.uk/cruising_info/logs.

Please, if you go cruising in 2021, near or far, home or abroad, keep a log, blog or vlog, and share your experiences with fellow CA members. It's always a delight to see what fellow members achieve with their boats, especially in these complicated times!

Cathy, a former editor of *Cruising*, is a journalist and author of our regular Last Word column (page 98). 



Hanging around in St Helier

It was July in St Helier and the forecast was good. Jersey has a nine-metre tide that goes out fast, and the marina has a sill across its entrance that limits your exit. So we planned meticulously and by mid-morning had shopped, showered, washed our catamaran and topped up her water tanks. That just left the fuel tank to fill and we'd be set fair for France.

Approaching the fuel dock there was a heavy roll of thunder. By the time we were handed the fuel gun, lightning was pinging around the harbour walls. With our tank full, the elderly attendant lowered a bucket for payment as we were now several metres below the wharf. Then the heavens exploded with a deluge of biblical proportions and the light on the harbour control tower turned red. Everybody hurtled for shelter, including us. We couldn't go anywhere anyway. The red light meant nobody could leave the harbour until the approaching ferry had entered.

There's something other-worldly about that much rain. You become cocooned. You stop thinking - until a distant voice began calling our boat's name. Craning our necks round the companionway doors all we could see through the torrent, and a long way up, was a blurred white oval surrounded by a black dome. It was the face of the attendant, on his knees, peering over the edge of the dock from under a large umbrella. 'Look to your mooring lines,' he called down politely, 'the tide goes out very quickly.' We stared in horror. Voyager's stern was out of the water. We knew about the tide, but despite all our careful planning had allowed ourselves to become distracted - by rain. A jemmy, and several mangled fingers later, the red light on the tower changed to green and we fled.

Sandra Clayton



Tell us your blunders

Have you ever done something really dumb while sailing? We want you to tell us about the silliest mistake you have ever made on a boat... or maybe the silliest you're willing to admit to. The best will be published in each issue of *Cruising*, alongside a cartoon by wonderful marine illustrator Claudia Myatt. The original artwork will be the prize for the winner each quarter.

Send your entries to editor@theca.org.uk before May 1 for the June issue with the subject line "Boating blunders". They should be no more than 300 words.

Our experience of the Crewing Service



Janet Milln tells us:

We have been members of the CA since 2002 but in 2018, sadly, we decided to sell our Warrior 40 which we had sailed around the Med for many years.

In 2019 we joined the crewing service and through that have had experiences of sailing a Lagoon 39 back and forth across the Channel, a Hanse 37 in Portugal, a Beneteau 45 going down to La Rochelle and Philip helping a Rival down from the Western Isles to Strangford Loch. And the skippers and crew were all great people too. We were a little worried about being crew after being skippers but if you sit on your hands and go with the flow it becomes easier.

Sadly no crewing in 2020 and perhaps 2021 but after that anything is possible.

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers. Even if you can't get to your boat because of Covid, you may be able to help another skipper. We hope to resume crewing meetings in person this autumn.

There's just a taste of what's on offer in our crew and skipper listings in the quotes here. To read more, go to www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome - or check the Crewing Service forum.

CREW: "I have sailed dinghies since I was a teenager and started sailing yachts in 2010. I'm totally flexible and am happy to muck in and do whatever is required. Having sailed... in the UK, Mediterranean and Aegean, I'm looking to gain further experience with a view to completing my Yachtmaster in the next year or two.."

SKIPPER: "Crew sought for July, all or part of, sailing from the west country to Wales & Northern Ireland and return on a well-found, comfortable 32 ft boat with excellent performance. Starting from a west country port at the beginning of July and returning to Newlyn or Penzance."

A GUIDE TO MEDITERRANEAN SAILING

Mainland Spain



In the final part of our series on Mediterranean cruising destinations, **Gerald Freshwater** considers a location that many use only in passing, or for overwintering – mainland Spain

Spain's Mediterranean coast effectively forms the Western edge of the Med, from its beginning at the border with Gibraltar, to the top left corner at Portbou.

There are many harbours and marinas, but, for those used to Northern Europe or the Baltic, relatively few anchorages. Spain has quite a few marine reserves, often locally organised, where anchoring is discouraged or forbidden. Short-term mooring buoys are often quickly taken up, especially at weekends, when the Spaniards go day tripping. Many bays are well sheltered on the landward side by cliffs, but very open to any Easterly wind.

Anchoring some way off the many beaches is commonplace, but the inshore water is often marked off by yellow buoys to denote boat-free swimming areas, with only a narrow passage to shore for

dinghies. Such anchorages are not always sheltered, and one would not wish to leave a boat unattended for long.

Getting there and getting around

As one of the most popular holiday destinations for Brits, there is a plethora of flights to many airports on mainland Spain, and nowhere that one might keep a yacht is very far from one. Even better, the popularity keeps prices low. One can fly to Malaga, Almeria, Murcia (close to the Mar Menor), Alicante, Valencia, Barcelona, Tarragona and Girona, then travel on by bus, train or taxi to the harbour of one's choice.

For those keeping a boat there over more than one season, driving is a fairly straightforward option, either through France or direct to Spain at Bilbao or Santander. Roads through France are good (though expensive; motorway tolls may amount to €100), and Spanish motorways are even better, and cheaper too. It is quite practicable to drive from Bilbao to Alicante in a day, though there is much missed in such a quick trip. The journey can also be made by train, though a change must be made at the border with France. Spain is investing heavily in new railways, and larger centres are increasingly connected by high-speed trains.

Car hire in Spain is very cheap compared

to anywhere else in Western or Northern Europe. If you are staying for a few days, hire one and travel inland a bit. So many Spanish towns and cities retain their old buildings in the centre, and castles abound, mostly in various stages of ruin. A few have been turned into Paradors, state run hotels, which have a well-deserved reputation for excellent accommodation and dining.

Books and charts

Most people use the Imray/Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation pilot guide, *Mediterranean Spain* by Steve Pickard. This single volume replaced the two

Thanks to Andy MacKellar and Jeff Kempton for additional information.

On the CA website, go to **Cruising Info > Mediterranean > Spain** for detailed information on northern and southern Mediterranean Spain, together with links to cruising reports and HLRs (which can also be found in the CAptain's Mate app).



Windmill in the Mar Menor



Pros

- Tourists are very welcome, including sailors!
- English spoken very widely, and well
- Plenty of marinas, with good overwinter options and easy access to maintenance
- Good weather

Cons

- Dependence on marinas
- A bit pricey compared with other Med areas
- Busy and expensive in high season; August is best avoided if possible

Left, the restaurant on piles in the outer lagoon of the Ebro delta, near Sant Carles de la Ràpita, can only be reached by boat, avoiding the shallow (but chartered) sandbanks. Below, old fishing boat, now preserved, in the harbour at Cadaqués, Catalonia



previous pilot guides which covered the coast from Gibraltar to Denia, and Denia to the French border. The second edition of *Mediterranean Spain* was due to be published in May 2021.

Imray also produces M-series charts covering the Mediterranean coast of Spain in four charts, and two chart packs, new in 2020, including port plans and a free digital download. NV produces chart packs which are similar but slightly cheaper. SHOM (French) and Admiralty standard charts and the usual digital options are of course also available.

Weather

This is why so many people visit Spain; the weather is mostly very good, comfortably warm even in winter along the Mediterranean coast, though very hot in the summer. There is the usual diurnal pattern of wind increasing in the afternoons, more settled in the evening and early morning. Infrequent rain is usually welcome, though occasionally torrential! However, our experience has been that Easter weekend is often really poor; cold, overcast and wet. We have even seen snow inland!

The normal summer season of sailing is from May till September, often extending

into October if the weather stays fine. Cruising is possible in winter although not practised widely, as in the north days are very short and the weather unreliable and it can be surprisingly cold! A heater on board is very useful.

Useful equipment

You need the usual equipment for Med cruising including a cockpit bimini and good ventilation plus a fan for the cabin – 12 or 220V. Many people use a small microwave and/or an induction hob in marinas, to minimise overheating of the cabin with the gas cooker.

Marina moorings generally use lazy lines which can be very unpleasant to handle and covered in sharp barnacles. Thick gloves to handle the lines are essential, a boat hook is handy, and a “lazy line T-shirt” useful to absorb splashes. Depending on where you are moored, springs or rubber compensators may be useful to offset the effects of swell.

As elsewhere a selection of water tap/hose connectors may be useful.

Marinas and moorings

Marinas are generally spacious, with good facilities. They are often attended by *marineros*, who will direct you to a berth and help with the lazy lines;

Regulations & fees

Spain has 17 autonomous regions, each of which may interpret the law slightly differently. Tourism is important to the Spanish economy and to date the Spanish government has given positive signals towards British citizens resident in Spain. If you are a UK citizen and plan to stay in Spain for an extended period you can read about the post-Brexit regulations on residency and visas at www.theca.org.uk/rats/brexit_advice/spain. The rules on VAT are similar to those in the rest of the EU and you can read more at www.theca.org.uk/rats/brexit_advice/vat.

A harbour charge (T-5 or G-5) is payable in all marinas and for boats kept in State-run harbours must be paid separately, annually in advance; in private marinas it should be included in your annual charge. A maritime signals and lifesaving tax (T-0 or G-0) is payable by all vessels over 9m and again is levied by the marina. Visiting vessels pay an amount agreed by the marina and it should be shown separately on the invoice.



Favourite spots on yacht *Pipit*

Alcaidesa Marina, La Linea – new, good pontoons, excellent shoreside facilities (piped music & a view of ‘The Rock’ in the shower block!), easy walk across the runway to Gib, quieter than Gib marinas

Benalmádena Marina – a completely artificial marina complex, with islands and Venice-like bridges, but not without charm (and parakeets in the palm trees). We were surprised that we quite liked it, but we only stayed one night.

Punta del la Mona – nice but reportedly expensive marina, but the adjacent anchorage is sheltered and beautiful

Almerimar – not the most picturesque marina (numerous concrete basins), but sheltered, useful shoreside facilities (chandlers) and a good place to leave a boat unattended, car hire on site, useful for trips to the Alhambra, Sierra Nevadas etc.

Puerto Genovés – a picturesque bay anchorage in the lee of Cabo de Gata.

Mar Menor – sheltered inland sea approached via narrow, shallow channel & lifting bridge – very peaceful, sheltered anchorages. Beware thousands of jellyfish, but the Spanish don't seem deterred!

Costa del Sol, general – we were surprised how much we liked this bit of the coast. Many boats race straight past, but if you ignore the foreshores, the mountainous backdrops are spectacular and provide a pleasing vista when anchoring off resorts that you have no wish to visit.

Andy MacKellar

Above left, small bay next to Cabo de St Antonio, Costa Blanca; a typical cala, sheltered only from the north and west. Above, The opera house at Valencia City of the Arts and Sciences, Below, lounge of the parador in Oropesa

once you have got used to the system, securing is straightforward.

Costs vary, but may often be commensurate with English marinas. Most also have generous parking, should you need to leave a car or even camper-van. Those in larger centres have lifts, chandleries and engineers available. Most also have on-site bars and restaurants, with many more plus shops nearby, in almost every case. In smaller ports and marinas the availability of spares is limited.

Concrete development is universal in Spain and some marinas may initially seem unattractive, but many are useful and sheltered for leaving your boat, for crew changes or near airports.

Where to go

The coastal cities and popular towns all have suitable harbours; Malaga, Cartagena, Alicante, Valencia and Barcelona especially, and these all have interesting history, amazing buildings, wonderful food and wine. Even Benidorm is attractive around the harbour; it was known for fishing long before the Mayor realized the potential of its marvellous beaches, 60 years ago. There is no shortage of things to do.

In the larger cities, care needs to be taken since pickpockets are rife, though one will never be attacked; the police are very hard on any violence. Harbours and large marinas are attended 24 hours, often with CCTV as well, so boats are relatively secure; small towns have little crime.


Those smaller places have their own charms; a chance to see something of Spanish life. Local yachting facilities vary from a small harbour, like San José, South

of Cartagena, to Sant Carles de la Ràpita, on the Ebro Delta, with full service boat maintenance of every sort, swimming pool, restaurant and great shelter.

If you want to visit Madrid, go by train, to avoid parking there. All the interesting bits are within walking distance of the station, as are hotels of every grade. Don't miss some of the best art galleries in the world!

Food & drink

Nowhere in Spain lacks restaurants, or at least bars that serve enjoyable food. Restaurants are still obliged to offer a lunchtime “menu del dia”, of three courses, often less than €15 a head, including wine, water and bread. Evening meals are more, but not usually expensive.

Wine is the staple drink, of every quality (do avoid anything less than €1.50 a litre!), and regions vary in their nature, so this is a gustatory journey to be taken. Spain is the largest producer of wine in the world, which surprises many, until they travel past the vineyards found in every region. On the hottest days – and many cooler ones – local beers are very palatable. Bottled water is universally preferred, as plain or fizzy (*con gaz*). 



Below, first ever landfall – Cherbourg! Cathy exercises her navigation skills and shows Andy what direction to take. “That way”. Right, Andy meets a fellow passage maker in Sines, Portugal.

From zero to circumnavigation with the CA

Member Andy Todd describes himself as a complete sailing novice... but now he and Cathy are undertaking a slow global circumnavigation in their own Najad 400, *Ca Canny*

Just five years ago Cathy and I had no notion of sailing. We lived about as far from the sea as you can get in England. *Sailing Delos* [one of the most popular sailing video blogs, featuring an Amel 53, *SV Delos*] came up on YouTube, and after some research I hinted to Cathy that a skippered charter in Greece might make a good 60th birthday present. Three years later, in March 2019, we sailed our own boat out of Lymington to start our slow global circumnavigation. This would not have been possible without the support of the CA.

Initially we joined to use the Crewing Service. We'd done the RYA's Day Skipper course only to discover that it doesn't actually teach you to sail a boat. Maybe the Yachtmaster course would do it? Nope! Somehow you have got to do a lot of sailing before you could even apply for a Yachtmaster. The only real way learn was to sail with people who knew how to. We didn't know anyone.

The Crewing Service helped find the right skipper. Meeting Trevor Pratt and Joycie Moon and spending two weeks with them on Trevor's boat taught me a huge amount of practical stuff (including

how to drink pints of G&T). There are other online crewing services, but the group sessions Caroline Milmo organises provided us with an unparalleled opportunity to speak to skippers and get guidance from other serial crewers.

Now were we ready to go sailing by ourselves? Not at all. The only things we knew about where to go were

1. Where the charter companies sail and
2. Where *SV Delos* had been.

We didn't know anything about the world of passage making, bureaucratic hurdles to navigate, different types of boats and what technical boaty knowledge to acquire.

The CA came to the rescue. CA membership provided us newbies with a wealth of trusted knowledge to tap into. Yes, there is a lot of stuff online and many books, but websites and books didn't offer us the conversations necessary to work out what was relevant for our situation. Being able to attend events and connect with other members proved invaluable, giving us the confidence to move forward. We got to speak to the experts and professionals. Ordinary members were even more informative, being able to share their experiences, willing and keen to offer their advice and recommendations.

After a further fortnight of bare-boat chartering it became abundantly apparent that we needed to buy a boat, if we wanted to rock up somewhere other than the same marina we hired the boat from. If like me, you watch a lot of YouTube sailing channels, you might get the impression that buying a boat often ends up in a very expensive technical disaster, all brokers are lying SOB's and



previous owners only ever sell a boat after they've thrashed the life out of it. At the very least your engine fails every third trip out. After all, it makes great YouTube content. Being able to tap into the CA's knowledge base equipped us with the information needed to select the right boat and to steer through the many pitfalls facing an uninitiated first time buyer. In fact, we ended up buying *Ca Canny* from a long-time and very experienced CA member.

I'm told that your very first passage is generally considered to be quite challenging. This was Lymington to Cherbourg, passing the Needles in the early morning darkness. But our friends at the CA provided us with all the guidance we needed to make "the big S" across three tides and into the mouth of Cherbourg harbour. Since then, anytime we've been concerned about a particular route, such as through the Minkies to Saint-Malo or rounding the Pointe du Raz, a message posted on the forum quickly returned the required directions.

We are virtually liveboards now, and on the occasions when we returned to the UK, the CA finds us the best marinas to leave the boat in, and support from local HLRs to help us get the quality local services which are essential to reliably make critical repairs.

