

Special Pilotage Notes for the Rias Baixas

and south to the Portuguese border

2022

Compiled by Norman Kean and Geraldine Hennigan

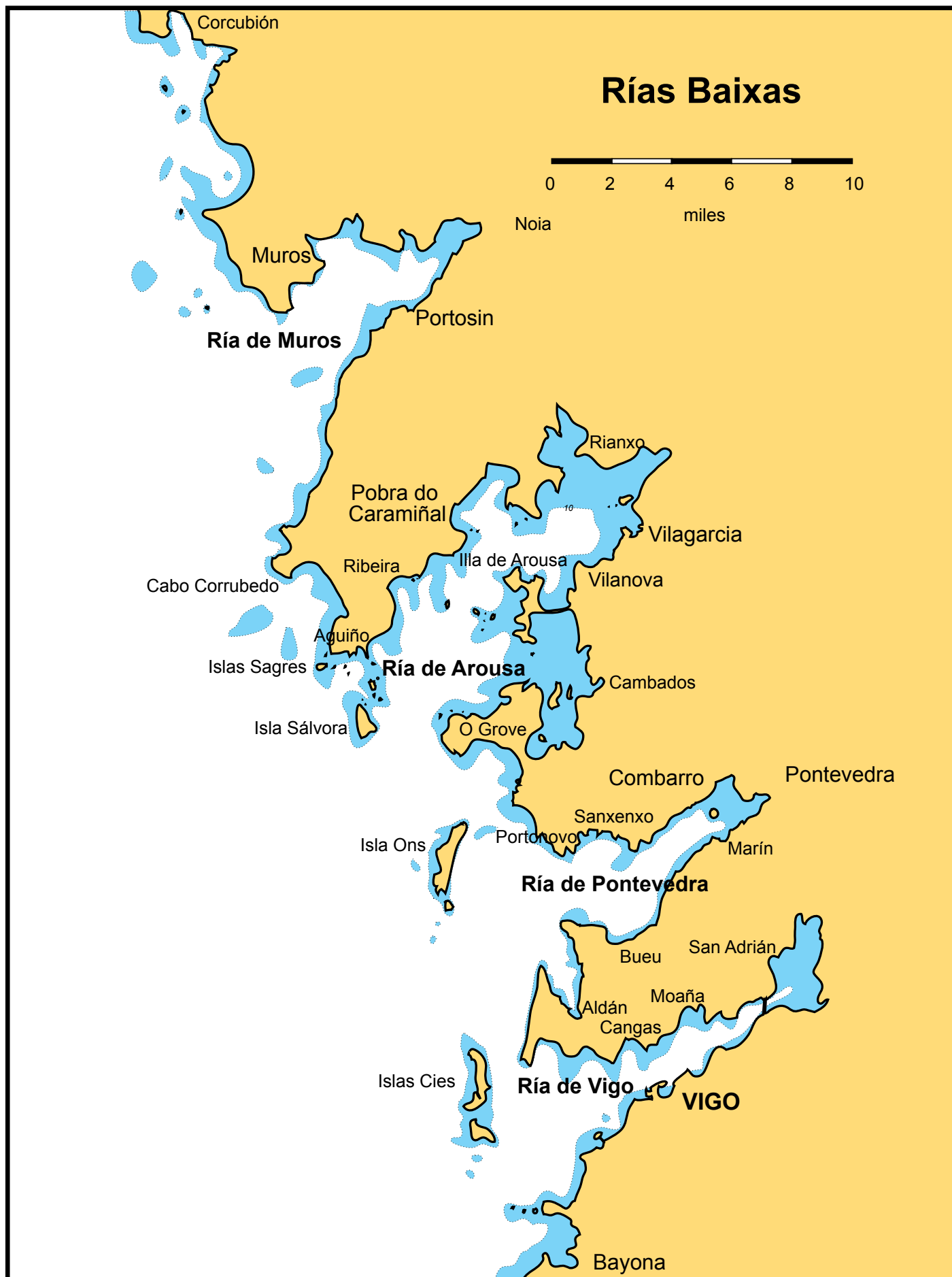
These Pilotage Notes had their origin in the Irish Cruising Club's Rally to the Rias Baixas in 2017, attended by 54 yachts. The notes were originally compiled to supplement the RCC Pilot for Atlantic Spain and Portugal, 7th edition 2015, and should now be read in conjunction with the 8th edition 2019 with its amendments to 2022. They are not intended to be comprehensive in any way. They are written from the point of view of English-speaking foreigners visiting Galicia, and are based on the local knowledge of ICC members and others and on observations made from the Warrior 40 *Coire Uisge* in 2016 -18 and in 2022. Her skipper Norman Kean is the Editor of the ICC Sailing Directions for the coasts of Ireland. Photographs are © Geraldine Hennigan. Thanks to all those who contributed, especially Paddy Barry, Manuel Capeans, Dan Cross, Peter Cudmore, Nito and Alex Diéguez, Bob Earlie, Maureen Gill, Peter Haden, Paddy McGlade, Donal Morrissy, John O'Dea, David Tucker, the late Joe Woodward, and four officers of the Portuguese Policia Maritima whose names we do not know.

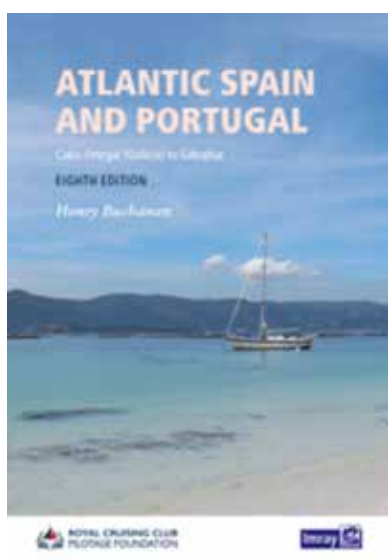
Disclaimer

Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy but nothing is guaranteed. These notes are intended as an aid to recreational sailing and cruising, in vessels of up to 18m in length with a draft of 2.4m or less, by skilled, competent and prudent sailors in conjunction with up-to-date hydrographic and textual information and mechanical and electronic navigational aids and equipment. The authors and the Irish Cruising Club do not accept any responsibility for any loss, damage or injury to property or persons arising or allegedly arising from any error, inaccuracy or mis-statement in these Notes.



At anchor off Playa Sualaxe, Punta Caballo, Isla de Arosa.





RCC Pilot

The RCC pilot, eighth edition 2019, referred to as *AS&P*, is the standard work in English on the pilotage, and is widely used by Spanish sailors (there does not appear to be a small-craft pilot book in Spanish). The 2017 edition of these notes attempted to fill some gaps and the information was used by the author Henry Buchanan in preparing his 2019 edition. Some of the original information has been reprinted here because it is more detailed. In 2022 the Foz do Miño/Minho was researched at his request, and a new chart and directions have been prepared and are included below. These do not yet appear in print. This update also includes drone photographs from 2022.

Weather forecasts

Forecasts are broadcast in Spanish and English every 4 hours from Vigo Traffic on VHF Channel 10, and every 3 hours in Spanish by Vigo Coastguard Radio on Channel 20. Passageweather.com doesn't have a sufficiently large-scale chart of the area, given the local microclimate, but it's useful to see the wider picture out in the ocean and predict the swell. Windguru is the site regarded locally as the most accurate. In settled weather the forecasts



The waterfront at Vigo is perhaps not what you might call picturesque, but the city is historic and magnificent...



and Vilagarcia has many attractions

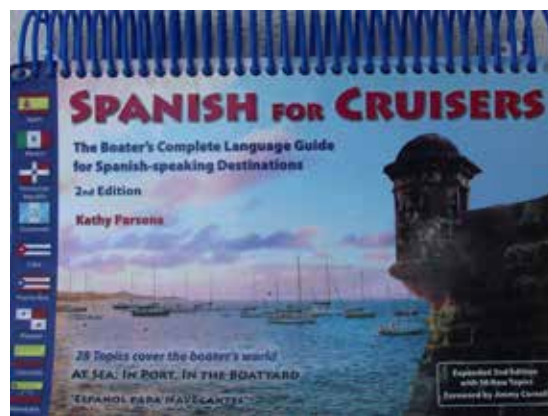
are reliable (and often indeed barely necessary) but in unsettled or thundery periods the winds can be much stronger and more variable in direction than forecast.

Language and Placenames

Galego, the Galician language, has a long and respectable history. It looks a bit like a cross between Spanish and Portuguese, and encountering it for the first time can be confusing. For example the definite articles are the Portuguese O and A rather than the Spanish El and La – hence A Coruña versus La Coruña and O Grove versus El Grove – and the language is seen in words like praia (playa), beach, porto (puerto), harbour, pobra (puebla), town, and rúa (calle), street. Galego is strongly promoted by the local authority, the

Xunta – rather than Junta – de Galicia (the letter X tends to feature a lot in galego. In such usage it is pronounced like sh in English), and it is widely used in place names, on signs and in official documents. It appears to be rapidly gaining ground, and many names in these Notes now appear in galego though it's a bit of a random mixture. The British charts use mostly Spanish names, but not always. The Ría de Arosa is Spanish, *Arousa* is galego. If you visit the Maritime Museum in Vigo you will find that the guidebook is written in galego, and information signs around the Rías are often only in galego, which can be a little frustrating if you are finding your way in Spanish. As far as verbal communication is concerned, the locals, whether or not they use galego at home, all speak Spanish anyway. If you're enthusiastic, or really stuck, the language appears in Google Translate as Galician.

Spanish for Cruisers, by Kathy Parsons, is an excellent maritime phrasebook, even though written mainly for Latin America. It will help you deal with all kinds of problems, and it has words for things like cleats and halyards, which you won't find in most dictionaries. Several copies have been spotted in use by Spanish marina offices, since it works both ways.



Time zone and longitude

It is worth mentioning that this part of Spain is on the same longitude as the west of Ireland but is an extra hour ahead on the clock. This means that in summer, noon by the sun is twenty to three in the afternoon local time. It explains why mornings often seem so slow to get going both weatherwise and commercially, and possibly also why the locals live late on the clock.

Tide times

If using Reed's Almanac note that it says: "Time differences [for Spanish ports referenced to Lisboa (i.e. all those south of Ría de Muros)] when applied to the printed times of HW and LW for Lisboa, give HW and LW times in Spanish Standard Time. DST is the only correction required."

In other words, although the tide table says "Standard Time (UT), for Summer Time add one hour", which is true for Portugal, in Spain it should be two hours. But that's already incorporated into the tidal constants for Spanish ports. Roughly speaking, HW on this coast, local time in July, is Lisbon (as printed in Reeds) plus two hours. In Easytide, set Daylight Saving to one hour for Spanish ports.

Gas

If you have a gas bottle locker at least



El fragil paraíso de Aroso.... it's not Spanish, but recognisably similar



300mm in diameter by 595mm deep, you can accommodate a standard Spanish 12.5 kg butane bottle and will be able to avoid being held to ransom for Camping Gaz. The Spanish bottle takes the same regulator as the usual Irish one, which is the push-on type, not the left-hand-thread British one. Bottles and regulators are not hard to buy and the 12.5 kg exchange refill is currently €18 (2022). It will last for many weeks.

Shellfish divers

Early in the morning in particular, you may encounter small open boats anchored in shallow bays, flying Code flag A. Sometimes there is nobody aboard. On some of them there is an air pump aboard the boat, and it is connected to the (shellfish) diver by a long hose. It is a very bad idea to get between the boat and the diver. Often the diver's position is indicated by a small float, and a stream of bubbles. If you were there first and they

set up around you with air lines, have patience. They will soon leave.

Bateas

The numerous mussel rafts, variously referred to as *bateas* and *viveros* (the latter meaning literally “nurseries”), are unlit, but steep-to. Their ropes and anchor chains go straight down and it is quite safe to give a batea a berth of a boat's length or less. They do at least indicate deep water; they are normally moored in not less than 10m. Another positive aspect seldom mentioned in pilot books is that in large numbers, bateas are in effect extensive floating breakwaters, and significantly reduce the wave heights in their lee. Annual production of mussels in the Rias exceeds 200,000 tonnes, and a single batea typically yields 80 tonnes of mussels when harvested after one to two years.

Fiestas

If intending to use a marina on a Saturday night it is worth checking whether there is a fiesta planned for that night. The racket can continue until eight in the morning. Look for a large black lorry that will convert into a stage with mega amplification. The noise usually ceases about 0200 but can go on much later especially in August in Vilagarcia where a night club overlooks the marina. Sanxenxo also has a loud disco going all night during the season.



Working the bateas



Early morning shellfish divers at Arenoso. The diver is under the little orange buoy.

Ear plugs (*tapones*) can be purchased at any *farmacia*.

Added excitement comes from firework displays, usually at midnight. These are spectacular, and worth watching, but beware of burnt out rockets landing on deck.

Most marinas, and especially yacht clubs, are quiet.

Waste disposal

You are never more than a couple of hundred yards from a recycling and waste disposal point (they don't have bins at each house in this part of Spain; it's a brilliant system as long as it's respected, which it is). The dome shaped green bin is



The town band at Moaña

for glass (*vidrio*), of all colours. The yellow one is for cans (*latas*), tetrapaks (*briks*), and plastic bottles and wrap (*plasticos*). The blue one is for paper and cardboard (*papeles y carton*). Bagged general and galley waste goes in the other green bin.



WiFi

Our experience has been that marina wifi is often poor, with little or no signal down on the pontoons and often not much better at the office. (Pobra do Caramiñal being one notable exception). It is worth looking for a phone contract that allows for the use of a mobile phone as a personal hot spot, with an ample data allowance at very modest cost.

National Park permits

It is not mentioned in the RCC pilot, but if you book a permit to anchor at one of the islands, and you change your plans, you should cancel the permit. If they are checking, and discover that you had a permit and didn't use it, they'll lock you out of the website for a fortnight. They say it's because you may be stopping someone else getting access but it's obviously designed to stop people making block bookings just in case they fancy a trip some time.

PILOTAGE

In many places the charts, both paper and electronic, have been found wanting. We have observed many rocks (and have hit two very gently and near-missed more than a few) that were not marked on the charts. Drying rocks may be marked as above-water and vice versa, or may not exist. Take care, don't get too fixated on the screen, and be conscious that when you zoom in a bit too much, what you are seeing is purely a service to your eyesight and not necessarily a representation of reality at that scale. Many undocumented anchorages can be picked off the charts, but be extra cautious with those, especially inside the 5m contour. The local rock is granite and the beautiful seascape is reminiscent of north Brittany, the Rosses of Donegal, or the Ross of Mull in Scotland, and very spectacular; but it also makes for very abrupt changes in depths.

Bearings are true from seaward, and positions are WGS84. Depths are LAT. The plans are not to be used for navigation, i.e. they do not necessarily show all the dangers, and bearings should not be taken from them unless quoted in figures. Plans are all north-up. Grey indicates rock and green sand or mud. Blue is shallow water which may be less than 10m, 5m or 2m depending on the plan. The contour line is marked with the depth.

Waypoints given in the text should always be plotted first on a chart.



Granite coast - Islas Sagres

Approaches to Ría de Arousa - channels around Isla Sálvora

Three narrow but deep channels around Isla Sálvora offer useful short cuts into the Ría de Arousa from the north. The RCC pilot is commendably cautious about these but they are not difficult to negotiate in daylight, moderate weather and reasonable visibility. Local boats use them continually. For the stranger on a first time visit, GPS is virtually essential and a good chartplotter is an asset; there are few good transits. BA1768 Ría de Arousa or its Spanish counterpart are essential for an overall view. The detail chart BA1734 or the Spanish 415B are useful but not essential. The charts, paper or electronic, appear to be quite accurate here. The Canal de Sagres has not been surveyed since 1905 but the Paso Interior was done in 2005.

The accent on the *á* places the stress on the first syllable – it is pronounced SALvora.

The key to the pilotage is to note that many of the rocks close to the channels are above-water and more or less steep-to, while in typical swell conditions many of the below-water and drying rocks betray their positions by breaking. There is at least 6m in all three channels at LAT. Navigational aids number only three: a beacon on the Islas Sagres, and two marking the Paso del Carreiro – a stone tower, white with green top, on the Piedras del Sargo on the south side, and

a slimmer perch, white with red top, on Pentones de Centolleira on the north. It is unfortunate that the charts do not identify the height of the above-water rocks and islets, as some are low and others high and distinctive. The photographs in this description are intended to address this to some extent.

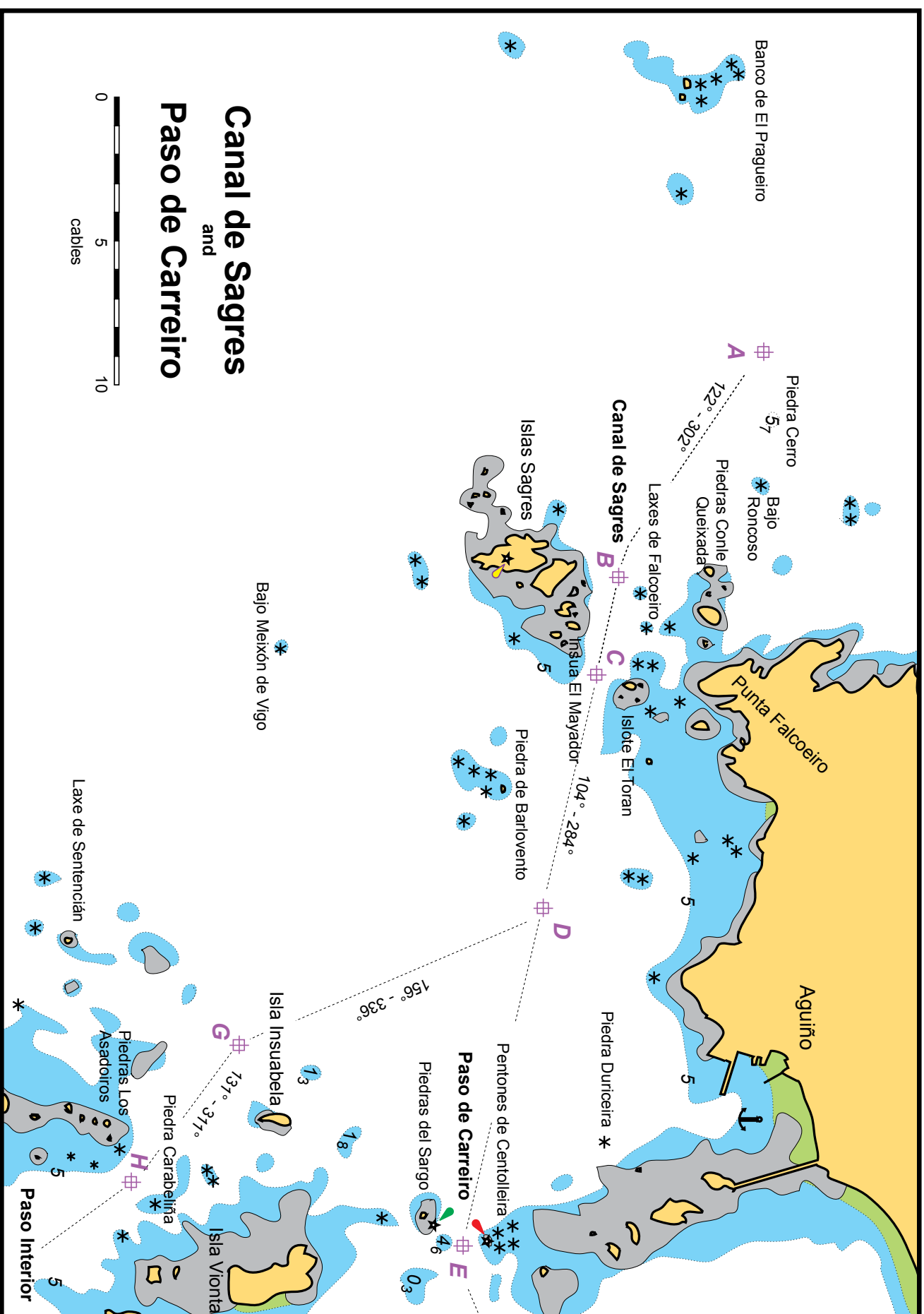
Reliable power is essential but a passage under sail is easy with a fair wind. Keep a sharp lookout for pots – there are some but not many. Their lines tend to go straight down, but stay downwind or down-tide of the buoys (the pots are usually intended to trap not shellfish, but *pulpo* – octopus). Swell conditions are important but a swell of up to 2 metres certainly does not present a hazard. The RCC pilot refers to strong and unpredictable currents but nothing out of the ordinary has been observed by ICC members. The following directions are based on eight transits of all the channels by *Coire Uisge* (Warrior 40) in August and September 2016 and May and June 2017, with the latest copy of the detail chart BA1734, and have been checked by others with local knowledge.

Canal de Sagres

In normal summer conditions, approaching from the NW and Cabo Corrubedo, it is safe to pass between the coast and all the offshore rocks – the Bajos de Corrubedo and the Banco del Pragueiro. The main danger to avoid when nearing the Islas Sagres is the

*Approaching
the Canal de
Sagres from the
N; Bajo Roncoso
(breaking) and
the Piedras Conle
Queixada islets,
from the WNW*





drying Bajo Roncoso, 6 cables WNW of Punta Falcoeiro. Piedra Cerro, 2·5 cables further W, with 5·7 metres, is not normally a hazard. Waypoint A, 42° 31'·2N 9° 03'·7 W is 2 cables W of Piedra Cerro.

From waypoint A, the largest of the Piedras Conle Queixada islets, on the mainland side close W of Punta Falcoeiro, is conical and conspicuous. This group is to be left to port. Identify these islets and the Islas Sagres to the SE, and steer 122° for the Insua El Mayador, the NE'most outlier of the Islas Sagres. The principal

hazards to be avoided are the drying Laxes de Falcoeiro, on the mainland side 1·5 and 2 cables N of the Sagres. These will also be left to port. Waypoint B, 42° 30'·8N 09° 02'·9W is in mid channel, and one cable SW of the outer of the two rocks. From this waypoint identify the low rock Islote El Toran 3 cables to the E, and steer 097° to pass one cable S of it at waypoint C, 42° 30'·77N, 09° 02'·50W. This course leads close N of the Sagres in a least depth of almost 7m, and into the area of open water N of Piedra de Barlovento, and the approaches to Aguiño.

*Islas Sagres
from the N*



Canal de Sagres, W to E; Insua El Mayador (centre), Islas Sagres (R), and Laxes de Falcoeiro (breaking), L centre. Isla Sálvora in the distance, R



Islote El Toran from the SW



Islote El Toran (centre) from waypoint C. Note the transit with the factory building on the mainland, behind





The conspicuous Piedra de Barlovento (L), from the N. There are drying outliers almost 2 cables SE of it

Paso de Carreiro

This short and well-marked channel is the most straightforward of the three passages. From the Canal de Sagres, identify the Piedras del Sargo tower, green and white, and steer 104° to pass a cable N of it, leaving the Pentones de Centolleira perch to port. Waypoint E, $42^{\circ} 30' 44'' \text{ N } 09^{\circ}$

$00' 40'' \text{ W}$ is in mid channel. From there, if heading up the Ría de Arosa, steer 070° to waypoint F, $42^{\circ} 30' 55'' \text{ N } 08^{\circ} 59' 90'' \text{ W}$. When the distinctive rock Con d'Agosto is abeam to port it is safe to turn for the port hand buoy on Bajo Touza del Sur, one mile distant.

If making for Aguiño, beware of Piedra Duriceiro, 4 cables NW of the Paso de Carreiro.



The Paso de Carreiro seen from the Canal de Sagres; Piedras del Sargo (R), Pentones de Centolliera (L).



Piedras del Sargo from the NW



Pentones de Centolliera from the S. Aguiño, beyond



Con d'Agosto. It never covers

Paso Interior de Sálvora

The channel between Sálvora and the islets to the E can in certain swell conditions be the most exciting of the three, and has been described in the RCC pilot as “suited to devoted rock hoppers”. This is certainly true, but it does not say “only to devoted rock hoppers” and it should not deter any competent navigator.

From the Canal de Sagres, steer 104° for the Paso de Carreiro until the above-water Piedra de Barlovento is well abaft

Paso Interior N to S: Isla Insuabela (L) and Isla Noro (R) from the NW



Paso Interior: Piedras Los Asadoiros and Isla Sálvora, from the N

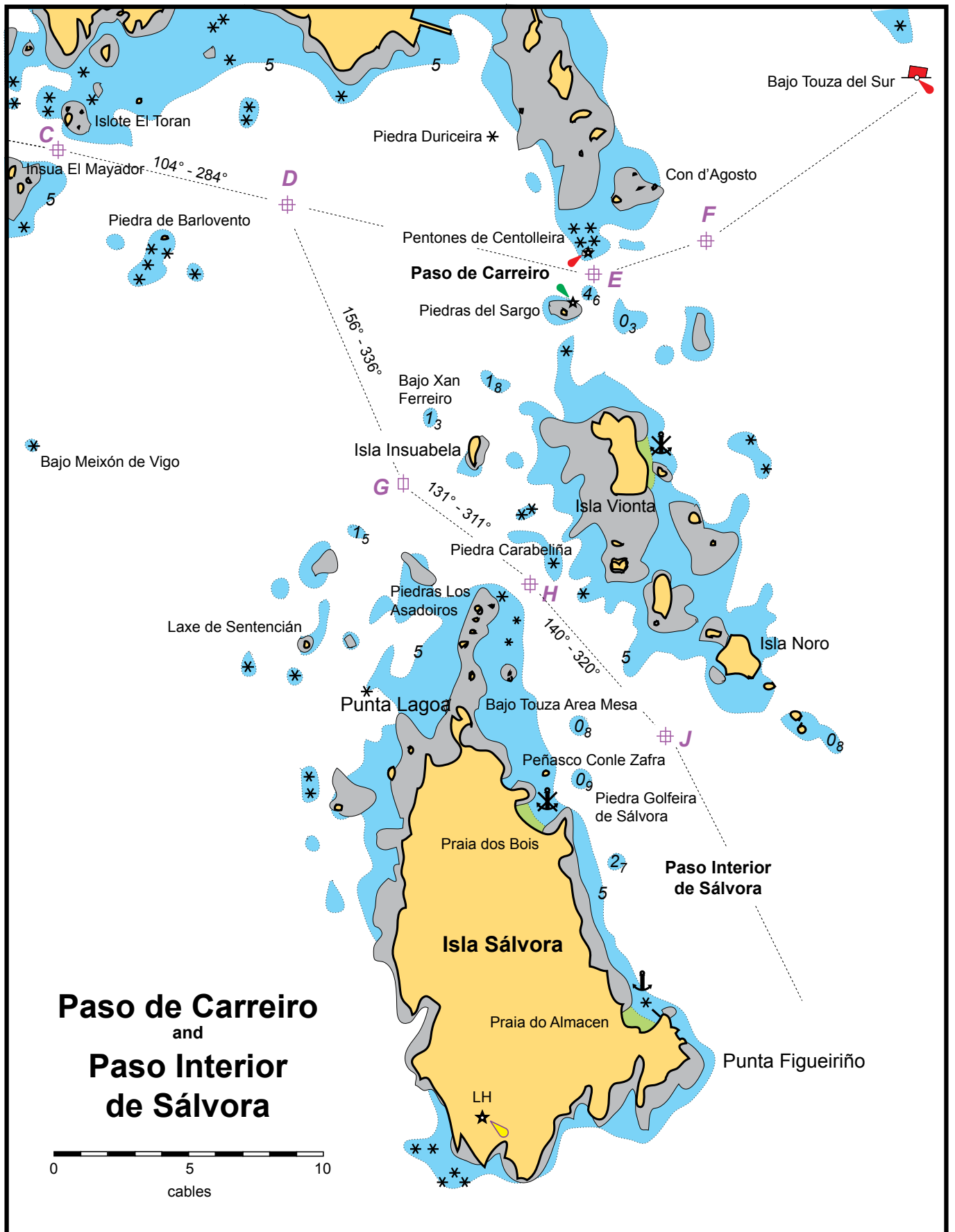


Paso Interior: Isla Insuabela from the SW



the beam at waypoint D, $42^\circ 30' \cdot 65N$ $09^\circ 01' \cdot 65W$. Identify the entrance to the Paso Interior, with the little humpback rock Isla Insuabela one mile, and the conspicuous pyramidal Isla Noro two miles, to the SE of your position. Steer 156° for waypoint G, $42^\circ 29' \cdot 80N$ $09^\circ 01' \cdot 20W$, 2.5 cables WSW of Isla Insuabela, leaving Insuabela to port. This course passes 2 cables SW of Bajo Xan Ferreiro, a 1.3m patch. From this waypoint the narrows of the Paso are 5 cables ahead, between the mainly above-water Piedras Los Asadoiros to the SW and the drying Piedra Carabeliña to the NE. Steer 131° for waypoint H, $42^\circ 29' \cdot 50N$ $09^\circ 00' \cdot 60W$, in mid-channel at the narrows, leaving the above-water heads of the Piedras Los Asadoiros 1.5 cables to starboard. Note that drying rocks extend more than a cable to the N and SE of these above-water heads.

On a course of SE from here the only significant hazards are Bajo Touza Area Mesa, 0.8m, and Piedra Golfeira de Sálvora, 0.9m, on the Sálvora side. From



*Paso Interior: Isla
Noro abeam*



*Paso Interior
from the SE: Isla
Sálvora, L, Isla
Noro, R*



*Paso Interior
from the SE: Isla
Insuabela, centre*



waypoint H steer 140° for waypoint J, $42^\circ 29' \cdot 1N$ $09^\circ 00' \cdot 2W$, which has Isla Noro abeam to port. A course of SE from here leads into open water.

If heading from the Paso de Carreiro to the Paso Interior near HW, do not be confused by the conspicuous above-water rock Laxe de Sentencián, W of Piedras Los Asadoiros.

From the S, identify the conspicuous pyramidal Isla Noro and steer to pass 3 to 4 cables off Punta Figueiriño, the E point of Sálvora. When Sálvora lighthouse is abeam, steer 330° for waypoint J, SW of Isla Noro. Identify Insuabela and Piedras Los Asadoiros, the N'most above-water heads of the reefs extending N from Sálvora, and keep Insuabela fine on the starboard bow to leave Los Asadoiros 1·5 cables to port. This avoids Bajo Touza Area Mesa and Piedra Carabeliña. Waypoint H, $42^\circ 29' \cdot 50N$ $09^\circ 00' \cdot 60W$ is in mid-channel

at the narrows. From this point steer 311° until Isla Insuabela is abeam to starboard at waypoint G $42^\circ 29' \cdot 80N$ $09^\circ 01' \cdot 20W$. From here the Islas Sagres may be left to starboard, giving the main island a berth of 3 cables and taking care to avoid the isolated drying Bajo Meixón de Vigo, 7 cables SSE of Sagres beacon.

From waypoint G to the Canal de Sagres, steer 336° until Piedra de Barlovento is identified, and when the rock is abeam at waypoint D, $42^\circ 30' \cdot 65N$ $09^\circ 01' \cdot 65W$, turn on to 288° and head for the mid channel between Insua El Mayador and Islote El Toran, at waypoint C, $42^\circ 30' \cdot 77N$, $09^\circ 02' \cdot 50W$. Then steer 279° , leaving El Mayador close to port and the drying Laxes de Falcoeiro to starboard at waypoint B, $42^\circ 30' \cdot 8N$ $09^\circ 02' \cdot 9W$. From there steer a course of about 300° , taking care to avoid Bajo Roncoso 4 cables NW.



*Paso Interior:
Piedras Los
Asadoiros from
the SE. The tip of
Sálvora, L*



*Paso Interior:
Piedras Los
Asadoiros from the
ESE. Islas Sagres,
R*

Isla Sálvora

The RCC pilot describes an anchorage at Praia dos Bois, opposite Isla Noro, but the plan in the book has the identifying number placed further north off Punta Lagoa. Praia dos Bois would certainly be a pleasant anchorage, taking care to avoid Piedra Golfeira de Sálvora (0.3m) and the above-water Peñasco Conle Zafra, on the way in. However the National Park website, in the English translation only,

identifies only two permitted anchorages in the whole Sálvora group: Praia do Castelo and Praia do Almacén, which are pretty much the same place - the bay with the island's pier, at the SE end. This restriction has been confirmed by one of the island's wardens.

In settled conditions there is room for one small yacht to anchor in the inner bay at Praia do Almacén, but otherwise anchor N of the pier in 5 to 10m. There are uncharted rocks in the bay behind the pier.



*Isla Sálvora;
Praia dos Bois,
L, Peñasco Conle
Zafra, R*



Sálvora pier

*View towards
Aguiño from
Isla Vionta
anchorage; keep
the blue roof well
to the R of the
beacon*



Ría de Arosa harbours and anchorages

Isla Vionta

An anchorage on the northeast side of Isla Vionta, S of the Paso del Carreiro, is mentioned in the Pilot, but is actually prohibited. See the preceding notes on Sálvora; Vionta is part of the Sálvora National Park zone. In any case, take care not to approach too closely as there are uncharted rocks in the bay, inside the 5m contour. The photograph shows the Piedras del Sargo tower against the buildings at Aguiño, from the anchorage. Do not go closer to shore than this transit. Landing is prohibited.

Illote Coroso

Briefly described in the RCC pilot, and badly charted on Navionics – a drying rock is shown as above-water. Lovely spot. Approach the anchorage on a course of 325° towards the wooded headland with the caravans. The shallows are generally obvious.

Escarabote/Playa de Barraña

The RCC pilot is a bit dismissive about Escarabote. A temporary alongside berth may be available on the long outer pontoon at the harbour. The continuous line of viveros offshore lend added shelter to the whole bay, from the S.

Opposite Vilagarcia

The RCC pilot mentions two anchorages E of Cabo de Cruz but round the corner are two more: Ladeiro do Chazo, the bay 2 to 5 cables N of Punta del Chazo, and Mañons, the bay between Las Hermanas and Punta Ostral. Very pleasant, quiet and sheltered spots.

Isla Cortegada

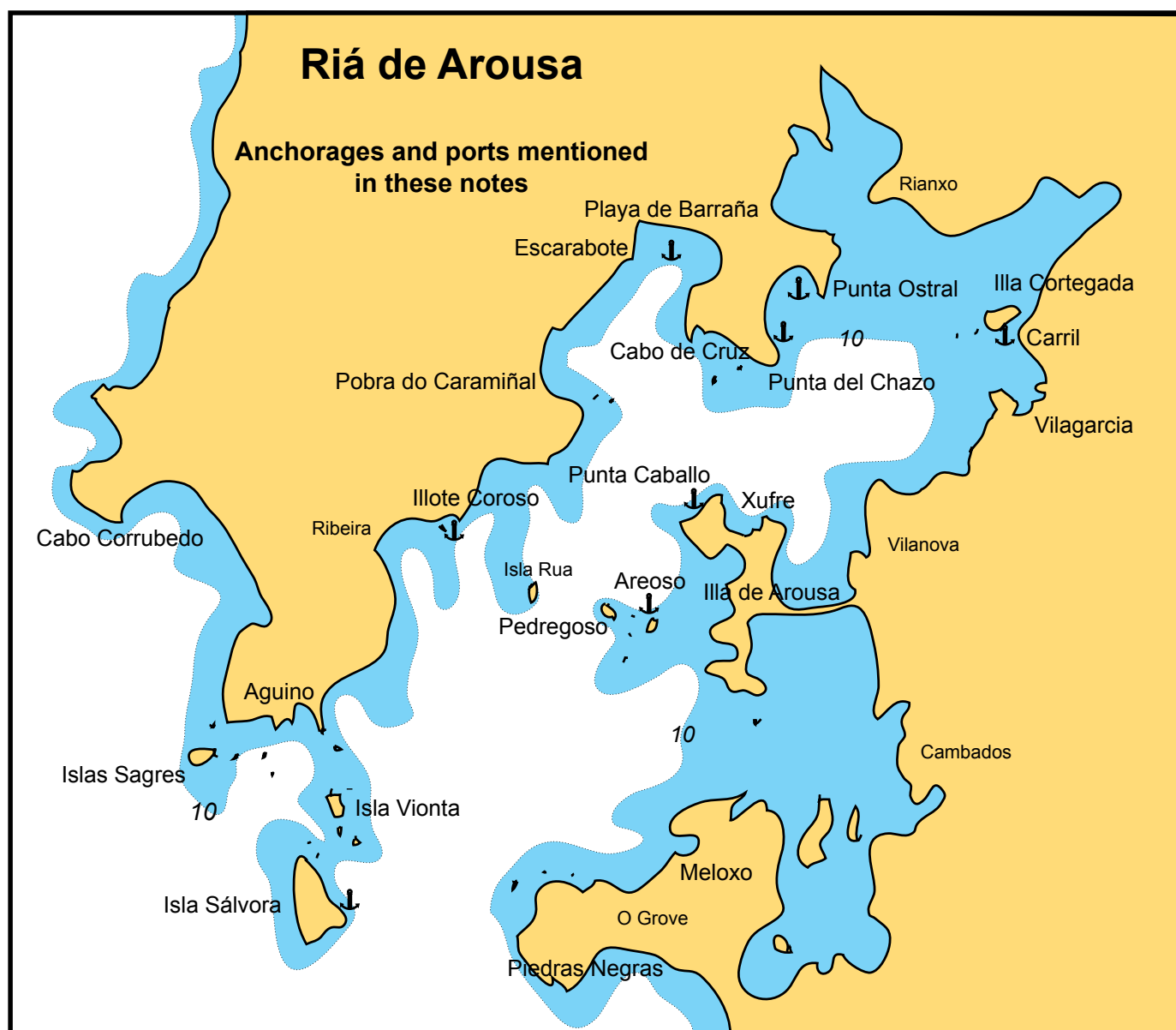
There is a nice anchorage S of Isla Cortegada, off Carril (NW of the harbour there). The island's 200 residents were evicted in the early 20th century so



Illote Coroso anchorage; approach this wooded headland on 325°



Escarabote outer pontoon



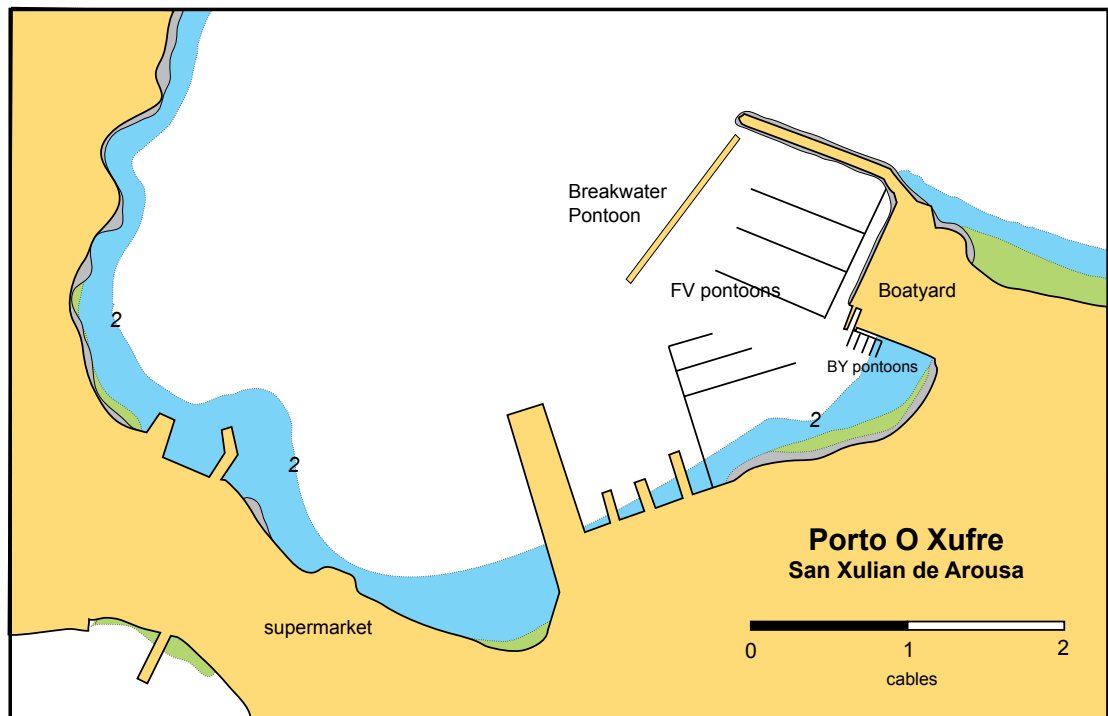
that the island could be offered to King Alfonso XIII to build a summer retreat. Nothing was built, and Alfonso visited Cortegada only once. It is now part of the National Park; the permit is required. There are very relaxing walks around and across the heavily-wooded island.

Porto O Xufre, Illa de Arousa

Further development has taken place at Xufre. All the fishing boats have been moved E of the pier and from the moorings in the bay, to new pontoon accommodation. A new and longer floating breakwater has been built. The boatyard now has five fingers



Landing pontoon at Cortegada. Keep the front face free.



(Right) The boatyard and pontoons at Xufre, Illa de Arousa. The shed has 22m overhead clearance inside.

attached to its pontoon with 2.5m at the west end and 1.5m at the E.

Bays S of Punta Caballo, Illa de Arousa

The main bay is described in the Pilot but there is a smaller and very attractive cove, called Playa Sualaxe, nearer the lighthouse. Anchor in 5m, sand. The old lighthouse cottage now houses an excellent little restaurant, open for lunch Tuesday to Sunday, and there is a seasonal beach bar.

Illote Xidoiro Areoso

This is a favourite and very pretty lunch stop anchorage SW of the Illa de Arousa. The Illotes Xidoiro are a group of islets and rocks, the biggest of which are Pedregoso ("rocky") to the W, and Areoso ("sandy"), to the E. Anchorage



Faro de Punta Caballo



Playa Sualaxe, Punta Caballo



Punta Laño, Illote Areoso



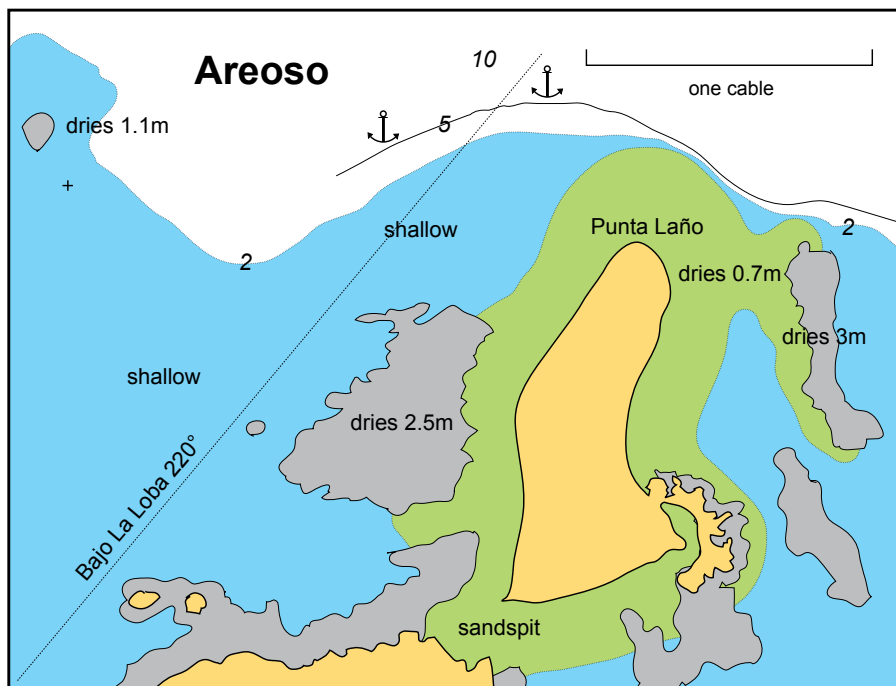
Bajo La Loba beacon over the rocks SE of Areoso 220°

is available in 8 to 10m, close N and NW of Punta Laño, the N point of Areoso, with its very conspicuous sandy beach. The area is quite badly charted, despite the survey dating only from the 1990s. A group of tiny above-water heads shown on the Admiralty charts close NW of the island clearly do not exist, while other charted rocks are not now visible. Punta Laño itself is not rocky as charted. There is however no difficulty in making the anchorage. An approach steering SW, with the beacon tower on Bajo La Loba bearing 220° over the rocks, and the island beach kept half a cable to port, leads to the anchorage; but do not venture past the N tip of the island as it shallows very suddenly. The edge is very obvious, and very steep - the bottom rises from 10m

to a metre in a matter of 30 to 50m or so horizontally, but at the anchorage and immediately to the S of it, is all sand. Approaching from Bajo Piedra Seca beacon NW of Pedregoso, stay close to, or between, the numerous *viveros* to avoid the drying rocks between the beacon and the anchorage.

Areoso doesn't offer much shelter, so unless the weather's very settled it doesn't make an overnight anchorage.

There is a 6000-year-old souterrain on the island, close SE of the sandspit dividing it in two. The island is also a nesting site for gulls, and the birds get quite annoyed if you venture up towards the high water mark in the nesting season in early summer. Don't cross the fence.





Compare the satellite picture with the extract from BA1764. New Navionics charts are more accurate.



Areoso anchorage. The dark spots, in this picture, are weed and not rocks.

Cambados

The Pilot says that the old harbour at Cambados claims 2.3m of water. It actually has less than a metre, but a yacht drawing 1.8m would be able to lie alongside a fishing boat just beyond the fuel berth, at neaps.

Approaches to Ría de Pontevedra

A fine example of an uncharted rock exists in the Ensenada de la Lanzada 3.5 cables ENE of the breakwater end at Pedras Negras (San Vicente). It is more or less on the low water mark of a beach charted as uniformly sandy, and could spoil your day

Those dark patches are probably weed - but not always.



Portonovo

if you came in too close at high tide for a lunch stop. Be very cautious of those dark patches of weed on the bottom. Some of them are made of granite.

The rather confusing marks NE of Isla Ons (including the nearby Bajo Fagilda port hand buoy, and the port-hand beacon on Los Camoucos, close to Ons) mark the two deep-water ship channels into the Ría de Pontevedra and the port of Marín, the buoyage direction being southward; the Paso de Fagilda to the east of the 5m Bajo Lomba de Besta shoal in mid-channel, and the Canal de los Comoucos to the west of it.

Yachts can of course disregard Bajo Lomba de Besta, which has more than 3m, and go straight down the middle.

Portonovo

There are two large concrete blocks (breakwater type) underwater, 5m away from the second T-head at the marina at Portonovo. They have 2.6m over them at LAT, but they can look quite scary.



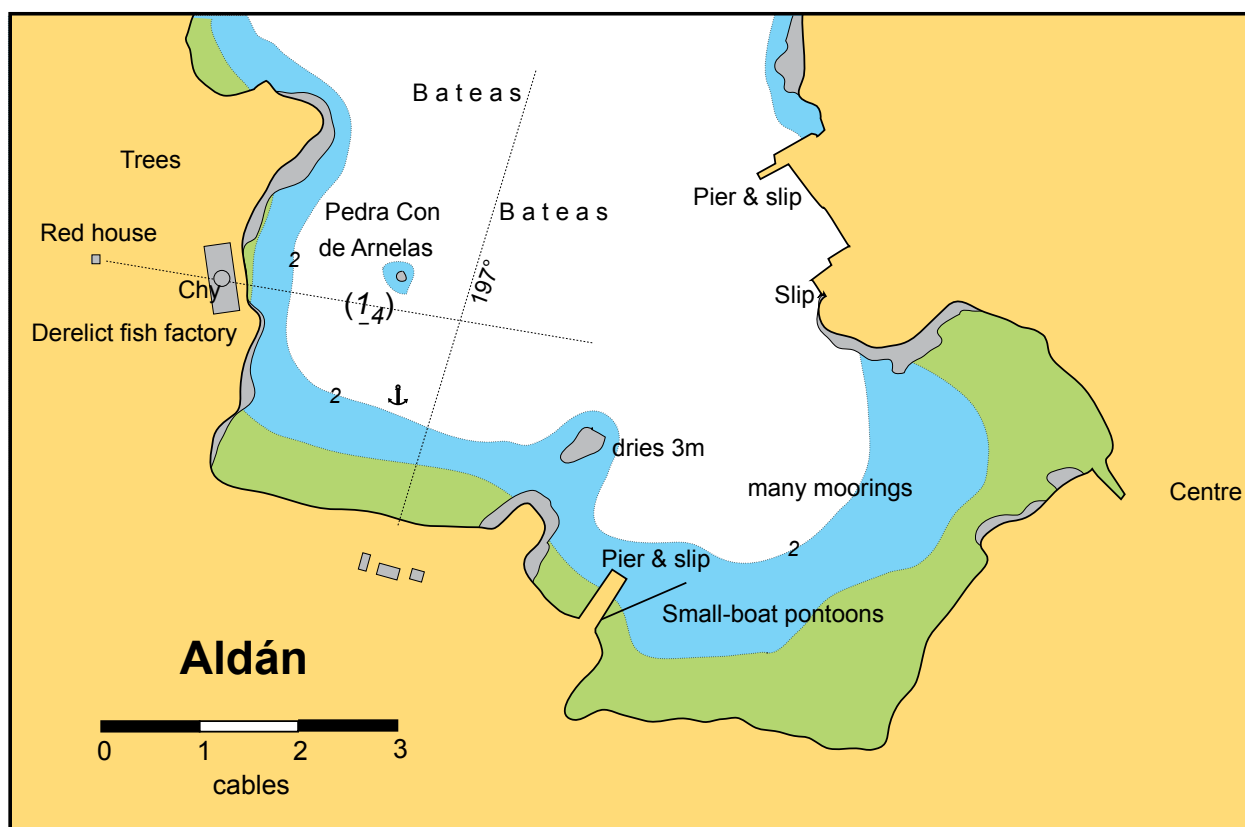
Praia de Agra, Ría de Pontevedra

Praia de Agra

This is a lovely bay a mile or so beyond Sanxenxo and tucked in behind a wooded headland labelled Punta Festiñanzo on the charts. It is well enough charted as long as care is taken close to shore.

Aldán

The bay in the SW corner of the Ría de Aldán is a lovely anchorage and has the warmest seawater in the Rías. It also has a notorious drying rock, Pedra Con de Arnelas, which – although accurately charted – is ideally placed to trap the





Approaching Aldán - the pale green building near the low point of the skyline, centre

unwary. Note that this is not the “large rock which tends to blend into the background” referred to in the RCC pilot – that is a much larger (uncharted) one dividing the SW bay from the SE one (which has a lot of moorings). The Pilot advised avoiding the Ría “if winds build from the N or NW”. Given that the bateas form a fine breakwater, it would now have to be a fairly severe gale before Aldán would be untenable. The bottom is quite weedy (sea lettuce) so make sure your anchor is well set.

Approaching up the Ría and between the bateas, head first for the large pale green apartment building near the lowest point of the skyline immediately behind Aldán. When within half a mile, identify three conspicuous houses together on the rise above the SW bay – from left to right a modern, square white boxy one, a red roofed one and a three-storey white one – and stay E of a line of bearing 197° on these. Identify the ruined fish-processing factory on the W shore. When a conspicuously red house comes in line with the factory chimney, you are clear south of the rock and it is safe to turn to starboard into the bay.

The rock is in position $42^\circ 16' 82''$ N $8^\circ 49' 77''$ W, dries about 1.4m, and is unmarked. It is, if anything, more of a hazard when leaving the anchorage, since it is then directly in the way of anyone heading out



Checking the position of Pedra Con de Arnelas with handheld GPS



The three conspicuous houses above the SW anchorage at Aldán



Clearing line for Pedra Con de Arnelas - the red house in line with the factory chimney



The safe line out of Aldán - head for the prominent house on the bluff (L centre)

to seaward. Head first for a prominent house on the E shore N of the village (see photograph).

Aldán village is a charming spot. The supermarket is no longer open but there are good small shops in the village and several excellent restaurants within easy walking distance.

There is a very obvious drying rock close to the beach in the centre of the bay, but a group of boulders, awash at LAT, lurk just offshore of it and must be guarded against. The highest head is in position $42^{\circ} 51'45N$ $008^{\circ} 48'75W$.

Facilities ashore are limited to two friendly little bars.

Ensenada de Limens, Ría de Vigo

This beautiful bay between Cangas and the Ensenada de Barra offers splendid shelter from winds with any north in them, and has a lovely beach. It is quite badly charted.

Ensenada de San Simón, Ría de Vigo

The RCC pilot describes four anchorages and the marina at San Adrian. Below are drone photographs of all five.



Ensenada de Limens. The kelp (R centre) is over the boulder shoal



Ensenada de San Simon; San Adrian marina with 20 visiting Irish yachts berthed on the occasion of their Encuentro Nautico 2022



The anchorage in the E corner of the Ensenada de San Simon

Anchorage at Isla de San Simon





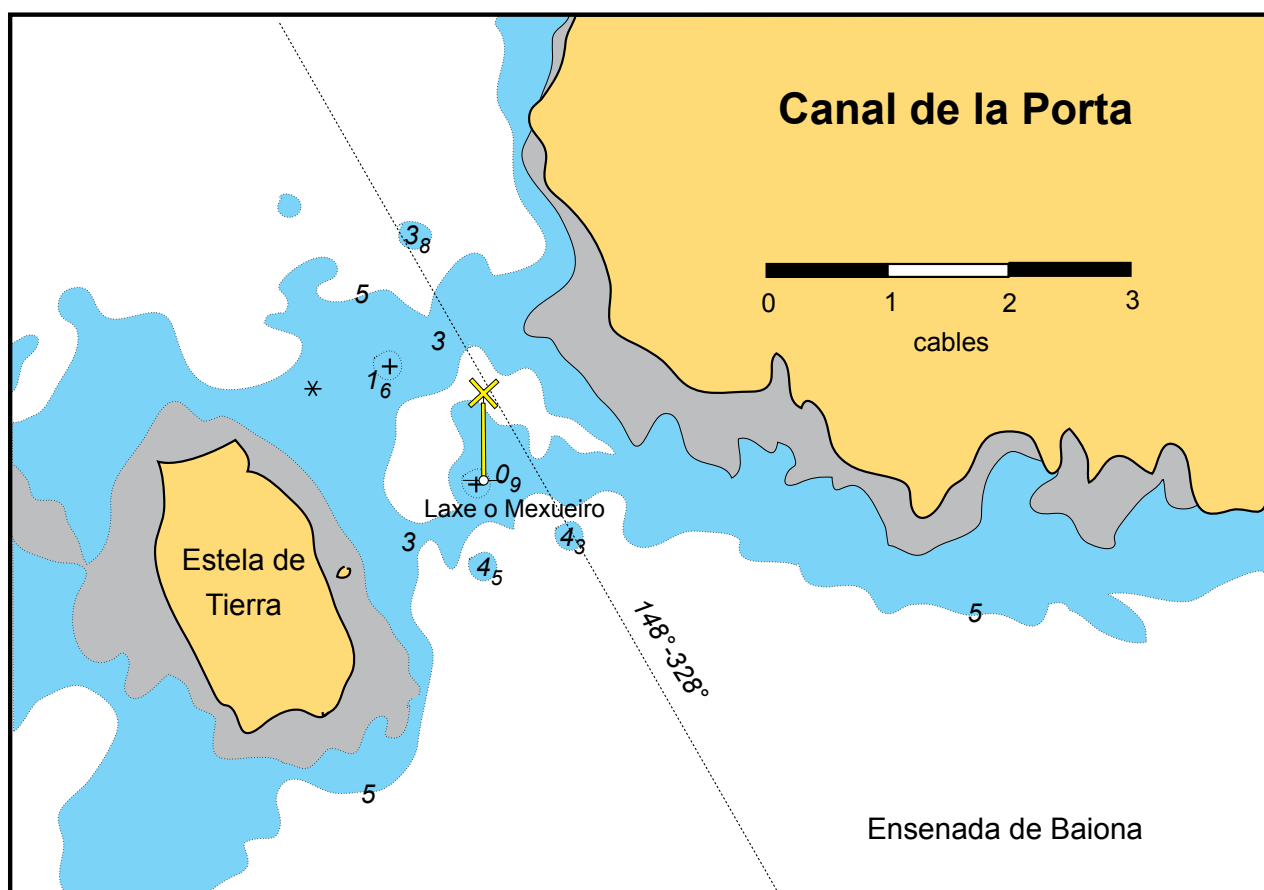
Ensenada de San Simon; anchorages N of San Adrian, and off the marina

Approaches to Baiona

The RCC pilot says that the Canal de la Porta (between the Islotes Las Estelas and the mainland) can be used “in settled weather and good visibility”. Despite Laxe o Meixuiero (0.9m) and another shallow patch with a drying rock W of it, its pilotage is quite straightforward in the absence of a heavy swell. The charts now

show yellow Special Mark beacons on both rocks, but only Laxe o Meixuiero has one.

From the N and Vigo, stay about a third of the channel’s width from the mainland side and give the Laxe o Mexuiero beacon a good berth on a course of approximately 148°. Least depth on this line is about 3.6 metres at LAT.



A Guarda

A Guarda is the southernmost Spanish port, only a few miles north of the Miño estuary. It appears to have room to anchor in its outer harbour, although subject to swell. A yacht should not find itself forced to attempt the Foz do Miño in unsuitable weather and A Guarda does offer a viable alternative stopover in these circumstances.

A Guarda from the SW



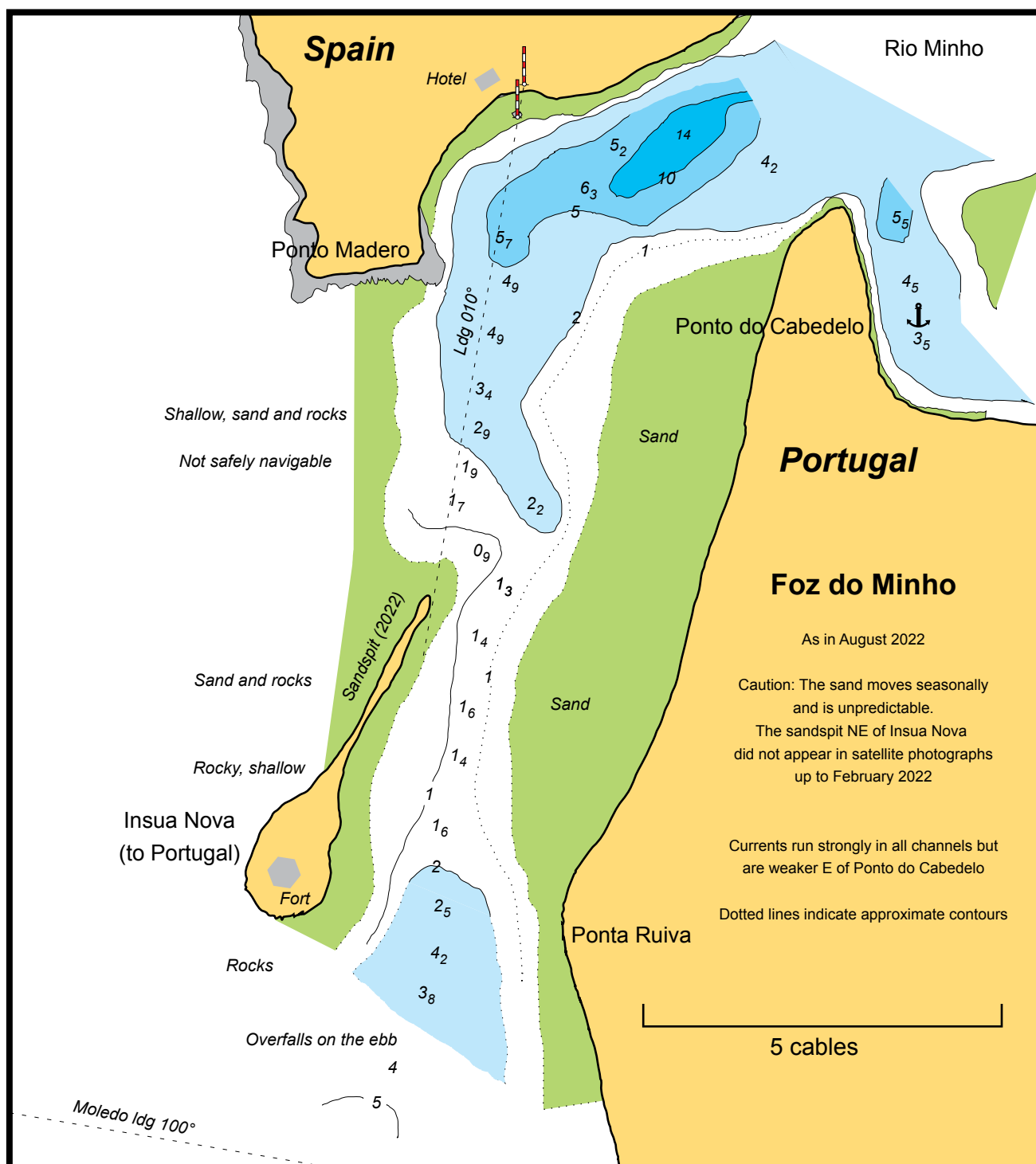
Foz do Miño/Minho

The mouth of the Miño (Minho in Portuguese) is a challenging and at times dangerous place. The river has the third largest discharge of any on the Atlantic coast of Iberia, after the Tagus and Douro. It meets the North Atlantic head-on, with all that that implies in terms of the effect of swell and currents on sea conditions. Enormous quantities of sand are moved seasonally - in winter the swell claws the sand out to sea, and in summer it comes back in, but always in a different place.

The south channel, S and E of Insua Nova, is navigable with care in suitable conditions of wind and tide, but the north channel is fundamentally shallow and rock-strewn, and is not navigable by a stranger. It should not be attempted. Streams routinely run at 3 knots in the S channel and can reach 6 knots or more if the dams up-river are opened. The tide pours in and out also through the N channel and W of Ponto do Cabedelo, and care must be taken not to be swept off-track by it. A set of leading beacons on the N shore beside the hotel NE of

Insua Nova and the S channel from the N in ideal conditions, near HW in settled weather. Ponta Ruiva, L. The long sand spit appeared in 2022 and will most likely be gone in 2023





Ponto Madero must be used with caution; in 2022 these were useful for a short distance, but to seaward of that they led across a long sand spit extending NE from Insua Nova. This sandspit did not exist prior to that summer and was expected to disappear in the subsequent winter. In conditions of fresh to strong onshore winds and moderate swell or higher,

especially on the ebb tide, the N channel is a mass of breakers and the S channel has overfalls right across.

The chart depicts the Foz do Minho as it was in August 2022. Half a mile to the west of Ponto Madero and Insua Nova, and further south, the published charts may be trusted.

Small fast open "taxi boats" carry



The leading marks for the Foz do Minho; the Moledo marks, L, and the pair near the hotel NE of Ponto Madero, above. Use the latter pair with care!

passengers across the river and out to the island in summer (this is on a Camino de Santiago route). Local advice is that if in any doubt, contact the operators of these in advance for advice. They are prepared to pilot a visiting vessel in. Contact numbers are (+351) 953 334 210, 931 636 360 and 913 254 110.

Approaching from the N, give Insua Nova a berth of a mile, and identify the Moledo leading line, two tall columns quite close together. Enter on this line and assess conditions when SE of Insua Nova. A mid channel course is then usually safe but proceed under power only and with caution, keeping an eye on the depth. The banks on the mainland side rise steeply from deeper water.

The channel had least depth 1m at LAT in 2022. It deepens N and NE of Ponta do Cabedelo and the point itself was steep-to on its N and E sides in 2022. The anchorage E of it is peaceful and the streams are relatively weak, perhaps a knot or less.



The Foz do Minho in SW F5 and spring ebb near LW; the N channel, above, and the overfalls in the S channel, L. Note the obvious signs of strong tidal streams. September 2022.

