

# Risks, Rights & Safety at Sea 02

## Western Mediterranean

This information is for people who consider crossing the sea from the north of Morocco to Spain. Our intention is neither to deter people from attempting to cross, nor to encourage them, but rather to provide objective information and to share experiences about risks, rights, and vital safety measures to take at sea.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

**Salvamento Marítimo** (Spanish coastguard; they speak English and Spanish)

→ 0034 917 559 133 (Central office)

→ 0034 956 684 740 (Tarifa)

→ 0034 950 270 715 (Almeria)

→ 0034 928 467 757 (Las Palmas)

**Moroccan coastguard Rabat** (Marine Royale)

(they speak Arabic, French and English):

→ (+ 212) 537 625 877

Alarm Phone Nr.



00334 86 51 71 61

# **WHEN YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE, READ THIS**

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**Many people who try to cross the sea find themselves in difficult situations during the crossing. This can be because the boat starts taking in water or is losing air, because the engine stops working, because they lose orientation, because the weather gets bad, because people on the boat panic, because they don't have enough food and water for the trip, or because people get wet and cold or too hot from being in the sun. The following information cannot make your travel safe, but it can give you an idea about some of the difficulties you might face and how you can prepare for them, prevent them or react to them.**

## **THE BOAT AND OTHER EQUIPMENT**

### **The boat**

It is important for your safety that the boat you leave on is in an alright condition. If it is a rubber boat, check before you set off that it doesn't have any holes where air comes out when you pump it up. If you carry it to shore, be careful with thorns and other sharp objects that could puncture the boat. Protect the rubber with a blanket. It is also important not to be more people on the boat than it is designed to carry, as this makes the risk of sinking higher.

If your boat has an engine, make sure to bring enough fuel for the trip, calculate to bring fuel for twice the length of the trip (quantity depending on your engine).

### **Life vests**

Make sure that everybody on board has a life vest (150 newton). The life vest should be worn from the beginning of the journey and all the way through. If you fall in the water, this will keep your head above water.

## **Food and water**

Even if you are not planning for your journey to last long, there is always a risk that your engine fails, that you lose orientation or that rescue takes longer than expected to arrive. It is therefore important to bring enough water, and light food containing a lot of energy (energy bars, nuts, dried fruit, biscuits...). Do NOT consume alcohol / hashish or any other drugs before or during the journey.

## **Clothes**

When you are at sea, temperatures can change a lot. Make sure to bring clothes fit for the season. If it is a hot, sunny day, you need loose clothes that can shelter you from the sun. At night or on colder days, you need warm, waterproof clothes. It is a good idea to bring layers that you can put on and take off. You can put extra clothes in a plastic bag in your backpack so it stays dry. It is a good idea to wear a hat to avoid dehydration. You can put a plastic bag around your socks, so that they stay dry in your shoes.

## **Telephone**

It is important that you are able to communicate while you are at sea! For this, your mobile phone is essential. Make sure the battery is fully charged before you set off, and bring a fully charged power bank (or several if possible). Remember that you may end up spending longer time at sea than you plan, possibly days, and that it is important that your phone is working the whole time. In order to save battery, you can put your mobile phone on Airplane Mode until you need to use it. You can still use it to navigate with when it is in Airplane Mode as the GPS is still working. Carry your phone in a sealed plastic bag or in a condom to avoid that it gets wet. If the person organising the journey doesn't want you to bring a phone, try to negotiate that you can bring it with the battery taken out.

## **Compass**

It is a good idea to bring a compass to help you navigate when you are at sea. The compass will not tell you where you are, but can tell you which direction you are going. A small boat can easily be spun around by waves, and it can be hard to remember which way to go. Even on the short route between Tangier and Tarifa weather conditions can make it impossible to see land, and therefore you might also need a compass here. Make yourself familiar with the compass before departure so you can easily use it in a more stressful situation.

## Other useful items

Think about bringing something to attract attention of rescue boats. This could be a colourful scarf (red or orange stands out against the blue water), a torch, bike reflectors, whistles, a mirror.

Bring as well something to scoop water out of the boat with, in case the boat is taking in water. This could be half a plastic bottle, a big cup or something similar.

## How to check weather conditions for the journey

- You can check the current weather and the forecast on the website: **[www.windy.com](http://www.windy.com)**
- You should check the weather as close to the time you leave as possible, as the risk of the forecast being incorrect is higher the further into the future you look. More than three days into the future it is only 50% chance that it is correct. Before you depart, make sure to check the weather for the coming days as well and make sure that there is not a storm coming in case you spend longer at sea than you plan.
- On **windy** you can chose to show wind, waves and rain.
- It is best to leave when there is no rain, as rain makes it harder to see where you are going so you can easily lose orientation. Grey on the rain / thunder map means no rain.
- It is best to leave when you have the wind in your back, so that it blows towards your destination. Avoid leaving if there is headwind, pushing you back towards where you try to depart from. In case you start drifting, the wind will slowly push you the direction it is going.
- A small rubber boat should not be in wind stronger than 2 beaufort.
- A wooden boat or a solid fiber boat may be okay with wind up to 3-4 beaufort.
- It is not advised to leave when wind is stronger than 4 beaufort, as wind can always increase without warning!
- It is best to leave when there are only small waves and when they are coming from behind you. Light blue colour on the wave map indicates waves up to 0.5 meters. It is not advised to leave when the waves are taller than this. Waves change slower than the wind, so if it was storming earlier the waves can still be high after the wind calmed down. Therefore it is important to check waves separately.
- Avoid leaving when the wind and the waves are coming from opposite directions as this gives steeper waves that increase the risk of capsizing.

## AT SEA

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- Always wear a hat, protect yourself from the cold, and try to keep your clothes as dry as possible.
- Do not eat too much, just enough not to be hungry. Drink little water, regularly. Don't ever drink sea water!
- In case of bad weather, hold on to ropes or any other fixed parts of the boat.
- Do everything to keep the balance! Everyone should stay seated the whole time. Keep a positive and calm attitude. Avoid conflicts at any cost. Any abrupt reaction or any gesture of panic can put you at risk: people can fall off the boat, and the boat can capsize.
- Look out for ships around you and be careful not to be hit by big ships.

### **When being rescued**

**When being rescued by another boat, remain seated and do not make any sudden movement in the boat or jump in the water as this could make the boat capsize. Wait for instructions by the rescuing crew. If you wish to ask for asylum, say it clearly. The captain rescuing you must make sure that you have access to request asylum if you ask for it, and to take you to a harbour in a safe country where you will not be threatened. Insist on this.**

## WHAT TO DO IN CASES OF EMERGENCY

### **If someone falls overboard**

- If somebody falls into the water, stop the boat immediately. Do not lose sight of this person until they have been rescued! Throw a life vest or any other floating object to this person as soon as possible. Do what you can without risking your own life.
- If the person is wearing a life vest they should float on their back. If there are several people in the water with life vests, they should all hold on to each other to keep each other warmer and to avoid that anyone gets lost.
- When the person is back on board, take their clothes off, dry them and wrap them in a blanket. If there is no sign of breathing, blow in their mouth (while keeping their nose closed) and apply cardiac massage (see below about medical complications).
- If the entire boat has capsized, try to hang on to it, or to any floating parts.

### **If the engine doesn't work**

- Check the top of the outboard motor with your hand to see if the engine is hot. If it is not hot, find the tank: it should not be covered with anything, especially not the little screw on the top. It needs to be open so that oxygen can come in. Look also for the pipe that goes from the tank to the engine: nothing should press against the pipe.
- If the top of the outboard motor is hot (meaning that your hand cannot stay there for longer than a moment), check if the part of the outboard motor that is leading to the propeller is hot, too. Normally, this part should be cold.
- If only the top is hot, wait for 5 minutes. Then restart the engine by pulling it with a long stroke. If it is not running through the first stroke, pull the choke. Sometimes it is a knot that you have to pull out, sometimes it is a switch you need to activate. If the engine restarts, push back the choke after a few seconds.
- If the engine is running again, put one hand on the back of the outboard motor, right above the engine. There has to be some water that is coming out of a little hole. Check the temperature of the water. It should be warm, but not really hot. And it should run. If it is hot and/or not running that means that the cooling system of the engine is not working well. Then you have to drive very slowly.

## **If the weather gets bad**

If the weather unexpectedly gets bad, it can be good to call for help, even if your boat is not yet in immediate distress. In stormy and rainy weather, it will be harder for a rescue boat to spot you, so rescue can take longer from you call until someone arrives. Try to stay calm and keep the boat as steady as possible. Consider turning around, if that means that you can go over the waves from their back side where they are less steep. Be aware of each other, and put small children in the middle of the boat where the risk of being taken by a wave is smaller.

## **MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS**

**While you are at sea, different medical complications can arise. There are still things you can do, even when you are far away from a hospital. If someone has a reaction you don't understand, ask the person if they normally take any medicine as it can be due to a preexisting condition. Help them take their medicine if needed. If there are any medical emergencies on your boat it is important to give this information when calling for rescue so that the rescue team can prepare for this. It is also always a good idea to tell if there are pregnant women onboard.**

### **Someone faints**

If someone becomes unconscious, first check that the person is breathing normally. If the person is having problems breathing, help opening their airways by tilting their head slightly back, pulling their chin up. If they still don't breath, check in their mouth that there is nothing obstructing their airways like sea water, vomit or their tongue (remove anything obstructing the airway). When you have made sure that the person is breathing, place them lying on their left side with their right hand supporting the head under their cheek and one leg slightly bent. This way, if they vomit it should come out of their mouth. Keep checking on their breathing.

If the person doesn't breathe after you have checked that there is nothing

obstructing the airways, begin cardiac massage. Place the person on their back and remove their shirt. Push down with two hands, one on top of the other, at the middle of the chest between the breasts, around 100–120 times per minute (two compressions per second). Continue this until the person has sufficient breathing or is no longer unconscious. This is hard work, so take turns with other people onboard. You cannot do anything wrong!

### **Hypothermia (someone is too cold)**

If you experience that someone is too cold, often with slowed down heart rate and maybe problems breathing, it is important to get the person warm (and dry). If they don't breathe at all, see the point above. To heat the person up, remove wet clothes. One easy way to give heat is placing the person skin to skin with another person. This means for example to remove the shirt of the cold person and of a helper and place the cold person against the body of the helper and wrapping a dry blanket around both of them. Focus on heating the body, arms and legs are not important to heat.

### **Heat stroke**

The most important thing is to cool the person down. Pour cool water over the person (you can use sea water). If possible, create shadow or cover the person with loose cloth so that the person is not exposed to direct sunlight. Give the person plenty of water to drink over time. If it is very hot, all the above can be done as preventative measures to avoid anyone onboard getting a heat stroke.

### **Petrol burn**

First, remove any contaminated clothes. Then rinse off the petrol from the skin for 20 minutes by pouring water on it. Then bandage the skin with clean cloth. Make sure the damaged skin is not exposed to the sun.

If a person is suffering a medical emergency and you don't know how to respond to it, you can call Alarm Phone and explain the symptoms and they will try to guide you.



## HOW TO CALL FOR HELP

It is always good to have a friend or family member on land who knows where and when you left, where you are going and how many people you are. This person can then alert authorities if they can't reach you for a long time and think you might have problems and are not able to make a call yourselves.

Before you leave, make sure that you → recharge international credit on your phone (this is done with different codes for different providers). Recharge enough credit, as international numbers will not be able to call you if you run out of credit and communication is essential during your journey.

If you find yourselves in a situation of distress, → call the coastguard! You will then be rescued to the country that your boat is in. That means, if you are in Moroccan waters, you will be rescued to Morocco, if you are in Spanish waters, you will be rescued to Spain. The Spanish coastguard will not rescue you in Moroccan waters. Depending on where you are, it can take hours for the coastguard to come to you, so if you can see that your situation is getting more and more dangerous, it is better to call than to wait until the boat almost sinks.

After calling the coastguard, you can → also call the Alarm Phone. Alarm Phone doesn't have a boat to come and rescue, but will inform the coastguard about your situation and put pressure on the coastguard until they rescue you. Alarm Phone will stay in contact with you while you are at sea to follow your situation and can also give you advice on how to react to different emergencies.

In some places, for example the Alboran Sea, you might lose your reception from time to time. Keep checking your phone to see if the normal reception or internet comes back and make the call for help as soon as you have some reception. The closer you are to the coast, the bigger the chance that you will have reception.

## **Sending your position to Alarm Phone:**

First, → call the Alarm Phone number **(00334 86517161)** on normal line (this number does not have WhatsApp). The people who answer the phone can then → give you the WhatsApp number you can communicate with. This number changes often, so if you have been in contact with Alarm Phone before via WhatsApp, it is not the same WhatsApp number you need to contact next time! On WhatsApp you can → send your position as a file to the Alarm Phone WhatsApp number. Make sure to → click “Send your current location” and NOT “Share live location”. t

If you don't have internet, you can still → activate your GPS and find your location when you open your map. Click on your location, and it will show you either a set of numbers, or a code. If you don't have internet but can make a normal call, you can → call Alarm Phone and tell them these numbers / code on the phone.

It is a good idea to practice sending your position via WhatsApp to a friend and finding your location without internet before departing!

If you have a → Thuraya satellite phone, you can use that to find your GPS position. Click → “Menu” then → “Navigation” (the compass symbol), then select → “Current Position” and wait while the phone is getting your position. You will then → see your position which will appear in this format: <Longitude: N33° 09' 34.8"> <Latitude: E05 ° 05' 46.4"> or <Latitude: W05 ° 05' 46.4">

# ONCE ON LAND - ASKING FOR ASYLUM

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**The 1951 Geneva Convention states that you have the right to asylum when you are persecuted for your race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Anyone can claim asylum and when you have done this, the authorities have to investigate your case and are not allowed to deport you straight away.**

To apply for asylum („asilo“) in Spain you have to go to any → police-station or to the → immigration office (oficina de extranjería), and insist on your right to asylum. If you want to claim asylum, state this as soon as possible after being rescued.

You can get in touch with relevant organisations to seek help and advice:

## **CEAR (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado)**

supports asylum-seekers in the procedure:

(+34) 91 598 05 35 (Madrid) / (+34) 952 601 321 (Málaga/Andalucía)

## **UNHCR Spain**

(+34) 91 556 35 03

Never sign anything that you don't understand. The authorities might tell you that you have to sign or lie to you about the content of document. Always demand a written translation into a language that you speak before signing anything.

**For a detailed list of helpful organisations in Europe and information about asylum procedures in different countries, visit the following web page:**

[www.w2eu.info](http://www.w2eu.info)

# ALARM PHONE HOTLINE

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**Alarm Phone Nr.: + 334 86 51 71 61**

**THIS NUMBER IS NOT A RESCUE NUMBER!**

**But an ALARM NUMBER to support rescue operations!**

## **What to do if you are in distress at sea or getting pushed back:**

- 1.** Call first the coast guards and tell them about your situation of distress
- 2.** Then call the Alarm Phone
- 3.** Note that we cannot rescue, we do not have boats or helicopters
- 4.** We will make sure that your distress call is noted and acted upon
- 5.** If you are not promptly rescued by the coast guards we will inform the public media to put pressure on the rescue services.

We know coastguards act quite differently. There are areas where they do their job well and rescue promptly. But refugees also report that they get pushed back by coast guards or are treated violently. When a distress call is received, we will call the coast guards ourselves, and follow up on their response, making known to them that we are informed and 'watching' them. We want to support you in protecting your lives and your right of freedom of movement.

