

Atlantic Spain and Portugal – Ninth Edition

By Henry Buchanan

Published by Imray

Does this pilot guide achieve its goal of providing the detailed information needed to navigate safely all 600 miles of the fascinating and challenging Atlantic coast of Spain and Portugal?

The undoubted answer is yes it does. It is an easy read, illustrated by detailed chartlets and annotated photographs. Providing local knowledge that is essential for the enjoyment of cruising this wonderful varied coast. It also highlights potential dangers that may not be obvious in reading standard charts.

I may be biased, as I love cruising this varied coastline – choose any part from the Rías in the north to the Río Guadiana in the south. The book gives detailed background and practical information. It's like having a local sailor as part of your crew.

Each area has its own special attraction: the rugged, rocky and wooded Rías of Galicia, dramatic cliffs and natural beauty of west Portugal, golden beaches, lively resorts and hidden lagoons of the Algarve, and the maritime history of Andalucía and Gibraltar. The book contains a wealth and depth of information, which makes for safe navigation and also makes you want to experience the history, and beauty captured by the many photographs and descriptions.

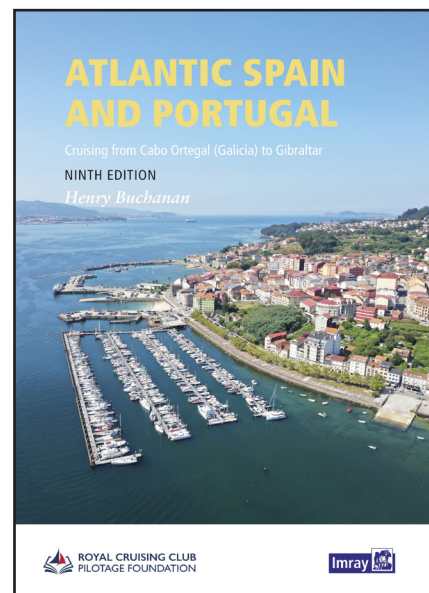
Valuable general information about the 600 miles of coast is provided, for example, the best sources of weather forecasts, links to information about Orca interactions and safety protocols, and the 'Flag' system on the status of harbour access along the Portuguese coast.

The detail in this pilot is to be highly commended and brings the book to life, for example, telling us that the inimitable harbour master in Muros is called Pedro and the useful tip that '*a bicycle would quickly prove its worth*' to reach the facilities at Portimão from some of the berths.

Crucially, there is wide ranging and detailed safety information – from the regular and concise 'warnings' where needed, to the many more detailed descriptions, for example, that any attempted western entrance to the Foz do Minho in north Portugal '*is fundamentally shallow, rock-strewn and not safely navigable by a stranger. It should not be attempted*'.

Pilot books have a long history, one of the earliest surviving is the Greek Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax which provided 4th century BC sailors with crucial information for safe passages before the invention of the magnetic compass. In our modern times of GPS, touch of a button weather forecasting, and world-wide available internet connections, this pilot book brings this coastline alive – it's a good read as well as an essential companion when sailing here.

Ron Houston, June 2025



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