



INDIAN OCEAN TO THE MEDITERRANEAN — THE FLEET'S COMPLETE RECORD

RED SEA & SUEZ

PASSAGE GUIDE — 2025/26 SEASON

Phuket · Andamans · Sri Lanka · Maldives · Socotra · Gulf of Aden · Djibouti · Eritrea · Sudan · Saudi Arabia ·
Egypt · Suez Canal · The Med

COMPILED FROM

Roughly 5,000 messages in the “Red Sea and Suez Bound” WhatsApp group (Dec 2025 – Jul 2026), plus the fleet's shared port-agent list and reef waypoints. First-hand passage reports, weather logs, verified agent quotes, security incidents and the collective lessons of ~40 boats that ran the route — through a season that included the Feb/Mar 2026 Iran–Israel escalation.

A peer-compiled field guide, not an official pilot. Verify everything before you sail.

01 How to use this guide

This is a route-ordered field guide running north from the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal and out into the Med. It records who moved when, what the weather actually did on each leg, and the practical detail for every stop — agents and verified pricing, fuel, water, provisioning, anchorages and waypoints, GPS jamming, security incidents, and the strategy debates the fleet ran in real time.

△ READ THIS FIRST

- **Peer intelligence from one season** — not a surveyed pilot. Charts through the Red Sea marsas and reef passes are frequently wrong; the fleet's standing rule was satellite imagery (Navionics sat photos, OpenCPN mbtiles, SasPlanet) over charted depths, daylight entries only, slow speed, bow lookout.
- **Prices and rules moved DURING the season** (Socotra's free short-stop was abolished mid-season; agent quotes for Egypt ranged 4x between agents). Anything with a dollar sign is a data point, not a promise.
- **The security picture changed abruptly in late Feb 2026** (Israel–Iran strikes; Houthi threats to resume Red Sea attacks; a pirate-boarding attempt off Somalia; an armed-skiff stop attempt near Bab-el-Mandeb). Read the Security section and check the current picture before committing.
- **Cross-check:** svsgogypaws.com Red Sea & Indian Ocean Compendiums (free PDFs, incl. permitted-anchorage lists, mbtiles and tracks with known drafts); the Imray Red Sea Pilot (3rd ed. 2024); MSCIO/UKMTO advisories (mscio.eu); the “Red Sea Passage” Facebook group (apply: wade@joana.ca); NoForeignLand.

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- › Agent & contact directory
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02 The route & the strategy

The corridor: stage in Phuket (or Langkawi/Port Dickson), cross the Bay of Bengal via the Sombrero (Nicobar) Channel — optionally via the Andamans — to Galle (Sri Lanka) or direct to the Maldives (Uligamu for a short stop, Malé to cruise the atolls). Then commit: Socotra and/or Djibouti, through Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden HRA into the Red Sea, up to Suakin (Sudan) — the mid-point “halfway house” — then coastal-hop the Egyptian marsas (without checking in) to the Suez Canal and out at Port Said. Detour options: Massawa (Eritrea) and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia).

The veteran's frame (six seasons on this route)

- Suakin is the ideal halfway house north- or south-bound. Northbound, the north winds ease around the latitude of Sudan and turn southerly, building toward Bab-el-Mandeb.
- Yemen and (most of) Eritrea are coasts where you cannot casually stop — carry enough fuel to reach Djibouti. Northbound from Djibouti, thread between the southbound TSS and Eritrea.
- Suakin → Suez is the toughest stretch. Carry extra fuel to avoid checking in to Egypt (expensive). Marsa Alam anchoring needs local help; El Tor in the Gulf of Suez is easy. Fuel is cheap; Saudi is an option but very expensive.

The strategic calls, as the season actually resolved them

- **Socotra:** universally rated a highlight (dragon-blood forests, agent Ghanem) — but the rules hardened mid-season. The free 48-hr “short stay” was abolished after Saudi/UAE political changes on the island: from Feb 2026 it's agent fee US\$275 + short-stop visa ~US\$75/person (full visa US\$165/person), no shore access on a short stop, dinghy \$15/trip, tours ~\$100/day, diesel \$1.50/L when available (fuel shortages reported). Anchorage is very rolly. Several boats skipped it purely on the new cost.
- **Djibouti vs push through:** with a window, boats blew straight through to Suakin. Those who stopped got fuel, provisions and crew logistics — and mixed agent experiences (see Djibouti section). DIY clearance IS possible (~\$30/pp visa + ~\$81 port fees).
- **Egypt check-in:** most boats never cleared in until Ismailia. Egypt permits “innocent passage” stops at listed anchorages — stay aboard, no swimming, no dinghy. Full check-in quotes ranged from ~US\$700 (Hurghada via Nemo) to ~US\$1,300–3,000 (Port Ghalib / via Heebi) — agent-dependent and worth shopping.
- **Saudi (Jeddah):** now genuinely open via Jeddah Yacht Club, but expensive: ~US\$2,024 check-in (15 m mono via JLS) + US\$70/night marina. Book via berthing@jeddahyc.com and the EBHAR portal BEFORE entering Saudi waters. No coastal cruising: on checkout you must leave Saudi waters (12+ nm) immediately.
- **Oman (Salalah):** comfortable, safe, inexpensive marina — but agents ~US\$1,500. Most skipped it.
- **Andamans:** contrary to the old advice, an agent is NOT mandatory at Port Blair and DIY clearance is cheap (a step-by-step guide was shared in the group 20 Feb). Bureaucracy is heavy — come with every paper printed. The Nicobars remain a hard no.
- **Convoy:** buddy-boat pairs and loose flotillas were the norm. VHF company through the HRA proved its worth in every incident. One Chinese boat even arranged Chinese Navy escort through the IRTC and invited others along.

03 Season timeline — when the fleet moved

Rolling weather windows, not fixed dates. Phuket departures early Jan–late Feb; Maldives staging Jan–Feb; Gulf of Aden and Red Sea transits Feb–Mar; Suez transits late Mar–May. The group founder's rule: 99% of boats cross between January and May.

DATE (2025/26)	MILESTONE
22–31 Dec	Planning phase; Nai Harn gatherings; agent intel shared
31 Dec	First boat departs Kochin for Djibouti
2–7 Jan	First Phuket wave departs (Sombrero Channel)
11–19 Jan	Galle & Uligamu arrivals (8–11.5 days)
16–19 Jan	Pathfinder: Djibouti in, out, into Bab-el-Mandeb
20–23 Jan	First Socotra visit since flight shutdown
28–30 Jan	First transit Suez → Med (Cyprus) — season's pathfinder
2–14 Feb	Maldives → Socotra/Djibouti wave; 20+ boats underway
18 Feb – 20 Mar	Ramadan — plan Sudan/Egypt conduct accordingly
Mid–late Feb	Bab-el-Mandeb crossings; Suakin & Massawa arrivals build
28 Feb	Israel strikes Iran; Houthis threaten to resume attacks
1–15 Mar	Fleet decision point: push, wait, or divert; most pushed
Mid Mar – Apr	Egyptian coast hops; Suez transits; the canal grounding incident
Apr–May	Med arrivals: Greece, Cyprus, Turkey

PASSAGE-TIME & CONSUMPTION RULES OF THUMB

- Phuket → Uligamu: ~1,572 nm, 11–11.5 days (26 engine hrs, ECMWF spot on). Phuket → Galle: 7–9 days.
- Galle → Uligamu: fast — a 2–3 kt favourable current lane 100–200 nm long sits on/just above the rhumb line (200 nm days recorded).
- Malé/Uligamu → Socotra: 8–10 days. Socotra → Djibouti: ~651 nm; budget 3 weeks of food if solo/slow — the Gulf of Aden can go glassy (one solo boat averaged 3 kt for days).
- Cash: carry US\$4,000–10,000 in clean small-denomination notes (Mamy exchange, Phuket). Everything from Socotra to Suez is cash USD.

04 Weather & sea state, leg by leg

Forecast models — the season's verdict

ECMWF was the standout — “spookily accurate” for wind AND gusts, “spot on since the Nicobars”. Windy currents predicted speed and location within a few nm. PredictWind's new AIFS model praised as a smoothed reality-check; PW Pro's live currents + routing rated worth the money; Windy basic is 1/10 the cost if budget matters.

The caveat: beyond 1–2 days, windows drift badly — a forecast “dream run” delivered 2–3 good days of a promised 10–12. After a low passes, model reliability drops further. PW's model-comparison graphs (tables view) are a useful confidence gauge: aligned curves = trustworthy.

Andaman Sea → Sombrero Channel

- Confused 1–2 m seas, multiple wave trains; NE trades 12–20 kt with brief 34 kt in small lows. Squall lines near the Nicobars: 37 kt gusts, lightning to the water — reef early (one boat took 3 reefs + staysail).
- Bands of turbulent water crossing the swell 2–4×/day = internal solitary waves off the Andaman ridges; sudden current shifts, confused seas, harmless but jarring.
- Transit the channel mid-deep on the flood; night passage fine (avoids curious fishermen). Alternative: south of Great Nicobar. Sat imagery of the channel is blurred beyond ~20 ft — conservative Navionics use is fine. Check Indian Notices to Mariners for live-firing exercises.
- Watch for large FADs (white cube floats) the whole way. Depth sounders throw terrifying false shallows (60→1 m) over the undersea mounds — known phenomenon, log it and carry on.

Bay of Bengal → Sri Lanka

- Usually champagne downwind: NE 12–20 kt, west-setting current to 1.5 kt, minimal squalls. Some of “the best ocean sailing in 8 years” (on the Port Blair leg).
- Approach warning: a wind-acceleration zone off SE Sri Lanka bends the NE wind to N/NNW at 18–25 kt with a 3-kt south-setting current — set your waypoint NORTH (off Pottuvil or higher) so the final approach is downhill, or expect an upwind slog.
- Shipping concentrates off the southern tip; all AIS-equipped and cooperative. Indian Navy very active on VHF 16/69.

Sri Lanka → Maldives (Laccadive Sea)

- Wind shadow behind Sri Lanka (motoring), then acceleration winds: sustained 25–30 kt true, short steep 3.5 m / 6 s seas punching harder than the numbers suggest. The leg to respect.
- The rhumb-line current lane Galle→Uligamu gives 8–9 kt SOG when it's on (the season's first 200+ nm day).

Maldives → Socotra / Gulf of Aden

- First 500 nm from Uligamu: heavy fishing activity — vessels AND nets carry AIS (net markers pop up short-range); floating nets to 8 nm long, lit only at the ends (several were fouled). MarineTraffic useful for situational awareness. Known fleet concentration ~11°43'N 56°18'E.
- Then it goes quiet and often light: motoring days are normal; solo boats slowed to 3 kt for days. Provision for 3 weeks.
- Routing: a wide easterly arc toward the IRTC start rides better current than the rhumb line but crosses more fishing fleets; the rhumb line fights south-setting current and may force a dip to Socotra's latitude. Pick your poison early.

Bab-el-Mandeb & the Red Sea south

- The strait: often calm at the gate at night, then SE 25–30 kt gusting 38, seas 2–3 m at 5–6 s within hours — rough but fast, surfing conditions.
- Land-heated thermal winds dominate the whole Red Sea: dying early morning, building mid-afternoon, often with a westerly slant at night; the sea is always short and disorganised.
- Currents: a south-setting counter-current hugs the west coast in Feb/Mar (up to ~1 kt against, near Suakin); the north-setting flow sits on the axis. Pure sailors reported better slants and current on the WEST side.

Suakin → Suez — the hard part

- N/NW on the nose: routinely 25 kt, 2.3 m short seas. The play is windows at BOTH ends + coastal-creeping the marsas (some boats waited weeks in Djibouti/Suakin for the right pairing). Sandstorms occur (one boat logged 33 kt + sand into Soma Bay; another hit one 100 nm south of Suez).
- Gulf of Suez: “the worst standing waves I’ve seen from Langkawi to the Med” in a northerly — sit in Soma Bay until it dies, then run non-stop to the canal. Offshore oil platforms cluster ~5 nm either side of Ras Shukheir — unlit hazards to respect. April can be genuinely pleasant: wait for calms, motor north.
- Uncharted reef, Sudan north coast: 21°35.01'N 037°06.12'E — visible on ArcGIS only at z12, shows as a “+” on Navionics, badly mislocated (east) on C-Map. Waypoint circulated 20 Mar (GPX in the group archive).

RAMADAN (≈18 FEB – 20 MAR 2026)

Overlapped peak transit. Sudan/Egypt: no public eating/drinking in daylight; modest dress (men long trousers; women long trousers, shoulders/hair covered). Towns come alive at night. Pilots and officials may be fasting — hospitality accordingly.

05 Security — the season as it actually happened

The season began quiet (post-Gaza-ceasefire) and turned volatile at the end of February. What follows is the incident record and the fleet's working doctrine — the single most valuable thing this group produced.

Escalation timeline

DATE	EVENT	FLEET IMPACT
Early Jan	Saudi strikes on Yemeni ports; Socotra flights suspended, state of emergency	Socotra still visitable by sea (cleared with Deputy Governor)
26 Feb	MSCIO Alert 02/26: pirate skiffs attempt boarding of Iranian vessel off Garmaal, Somalia (~08°27'N 050°34'E) — likely mothership hunt	Avoid area; heightened vigilance
28 Feb	Israel launches “preemptive strike” on Iran; Israeli state of emergency	Fleet decision point — most already past Bab-el-Mandeb pushed on
1 Mar	AP: Houthi officials say attacks on Red Sea shipping will resume	Capt. Heebi to boats inside: “Go, go, go — more dangerous to turn back”
Mar	US carrier group transits (no AIS, no lights, 15–16 kt); warship GPS interference near Suakin	Radar-only contacts; expect jamming near warships
12 Apr	Armed skiff (10–12 men, 4–5 AK-47s) orders a 40 ft yacht to stop at 13°57'N 42°50'E (W side of the lane); skipper refuses, fires parachute flare, skiff withdraws	Full UKMTO report filed; no shots, no boarding

The fleet's working doctrine

- **Reporting:** register with UKMTO before the HRA; daily report at 0800 UTC in their format; after an incident they may ask for 2-hourly reports for 12 hrs; final report on arrival at declared destination. During the March spike UKMTO asked some flotillas for reports every 2–3 hours through the Gulf of Aden. MSCIO advisories (mscio.eu) updated daily during the escalation.
- **AIS:** UKMTO recommendation is ON, and most kept it on — but turned OFF the MarineTraffic upload (via PredictWind DataHub settings) and their NoForeignLand auto-position. UKMTO explicitly warns pirates use NFL and social media. Note: passing cargo ships can still relay your AIS to coastal stations. A minority went dark near Socotra and re-lit in the IRTC.
- **The IRTC:** mostly flat water, favourable 1–2 kt current (be ready to gybe — it can hit you at 90°), warships (Japanese, EU, Greek, Chinese) on the radio each morning and flying surveillance. A recurring “suspicious” contact was a mother-hen fishing boat towing skiffs perpendicular to the lanes — the Japanese Navy checked it twice; just fishermen. Stay near the southern edge of the westbound lane for comfort.
- **Fishing-boat encounters — the pattern:** dozens of approaches all season; every single one resolved without boarding. Most want to trade (fish for cigarettes/drinks) or are protecting their nets — a “chase” is often a net warning; watch AHEAD of you, not the boat. Playbook that worked: don't let them get boarding-close, speed up, alter at the right moment (the fighter-pilot break), throw a floating bag of cigarettes/goodies so they must stop for it, buddy-boat on VHF, spotlight at night, call UKMTO if it escalates (one boat circled back to escort another — it worked). Contrarian note: gifting teaches expectation; decide your own policy.
- **Perspective:** in 10 years no yacht in these waters has been boarded and harmed; the statistics compare with parts of the Caribbean. But the 12 April armed stop attempt is the reminder that the tail risk is real. If genuinely boarded, resistance is what causes injuries.
- **Coastal alternative:** One southbound run hugged the Eritrean/Djibouti shore ~5 nm off — dark, no AIS — and rated it safer than the corridor. A minority view, but from the most experienced hand in the group.

06 GPS jamming & spoofing — the playbook

Jamming (signal denial) and spoofing (false positions) affected ALL GNSS constellations — GPS, Galileo, GLONASS, BeiDou — on every device type: chartplotters, VHF-GPS, AIS, phones. Ghost AIS fleets, 56-kt anchor drags, inReach tracks violating Saudi airspace. This is the season's defining technical challenge.

Where and when

- **Suakin: the reliable one** — roughly 30 nm S to 30 nm N, typically ~5 pm to 9 am (war-related, per agent Mohamed), intermittent by day. One chartplotter showed 56 kt SE on anchor. Big ships were equally lost (“Right now I'm in China” — VHF, Port Sudan).
- Also logged: near Jeddah/Saudi reef line (incl. VHF unable to transmit position); N of 21°14'N off Sudan; near warships anywhere; Gulf of Suez anchorages; even once in the Med off Port Said (154 kt on Navionics).
- The marsas north of Port Sudan are OUTSIDE the Suakin jam zone. Solar storms added interference in late Jan (NOAA warnings).

Countermeasures that worked

- **Starlink position:** the gold standard all season — Starlink's own fix stayed correct through every spoofing event. Read it in the app (Advanced → Debug Data → GPS/Location) or pipe it to your nav: a community script / the maddox-zephyr starlink_position project fed OpenCPN and, via NMEA0183 out, B&G plotters (one boat ran its plotter off it in Suakin). PredictWind built DataHub firmware to query the dish directly.
- **⚠ CRITICAL UPDATE:** Starlink announced it would remove location access in all forms on 20 May 2026 — even for existing setups (22 Apr). Verify current status before relying on this; lobby Starlink support if you care. Caveats even before the cut-off: “exclusive/Starlink-only positioning” mode stalled V2, V3 and HP flat dishes while moving (only the Mini coped) — leave exclusive mode OFF; the dish position can jitter wildly at low speed.
- **Autopilot:** steer to HEADING (compass), never to Nav/GPS, through risk zones — a spoofed waypoint causes violent turns. Set speed source to Manual or Log (water speed), not GPS/SOG: a spoofed 99-kt SOG skews gyro corrections 2–3°.
- **Old school:** radar parallel indexing off the Hanish Islands / Perim light; depth sounder + eyeball; a sextant with the Navastro app got one boat through 3 weeks of jamming; stay offshore at night, enter nothing after dark.
- **Odd allies:** cheap Chinese tablets kept a valid fix when everything else lied (nobody knows why); phone-GPS-to-OpenCPN broadcast over the boat network works as a relay; gpsjam.org shows yesterday's interference map (aircraft-derived — blank where nothing flies).

07 Location guide (north-bound)

Same shape per stop: role, agent & verified costs, fuel/water/provisions, anchorage & navigation, hazards. Coordinates are as posted; verify before use.

07.1 Phuket / Thailand — staging

Refit, provision, USD cash; stage at Nai Harn or Koh Racha Yai for the window.

RIGGING — Jai (Boat Lagoon, Precision/East Asia Marine chandlery) — found a cracked forestay on one boat; go DIRECT (East Marine adds ~20% + Thai tax). Full re-rig quotes ~double Langkawi; a Hallberg-Rassy re-rigged tax-free in Langkawi for ~US\$5,000.

CASH — Mamy exchange (near Boat Lagoon): good rates, clean small USD notes (note ~250 THB fee per 30,000 THB ATM draw). Carry US\$4–10k for the route.

FUEL QUALITY — Galle-sourced and Phuket fuel tested clean; Uligamu fuel had water/contaminants (see Maldives). Filter EVERYTHING into the tank (Mr Funnel + biocide) — one boat lost days to gunked injectors from 540 L of dirty fuel, traced to a plastic drum gasket dropped into a tank unfiltered.

CLEAR OUT — Chalong; after-hours/holiday surcharge ~1,600 THB reported. Sails: Zoom Sails (NZ-run, Sri Lanka-made) delivered to Langkawi in a week — two boats very happy self-measuring.

07.2 Andaman Islands (India) — optional stop; Nicobars — never

Port Blair is a viable, cheap DIY stop since 2026. The Nicobars remain a bureaucratic trap.

CLEARANCE — An agent is NOT mandatory at Port Blair and DIY is “incredibly cheap” — but customs prefers agents, so arrive over-prepared. Finn published a 15-page step-by-step Andaman Clearance Guide in the group (20 Feb 2026).

NICOBARS — Do not stop — “go for one day, be kept for weeks extracting baksheesh”. Fishing within 12 nm of Indian waters is prohibited for foreign boats.

COMMS — Starlink blocked in Indian waters (~12–50 nm; ~7–12 hr outage crossing the Nicobars). Sat phones/Iridium must be locked and unused — boats have been boarded and threatened with imprisonment over one call (Yaniska, post-2008 rules).

PASSAGE NOTE — Similans → Port Blair ~350 nm / 2.5 days; superb NE-season sailing.

07.3 Galle, Sri Lanka

Main clearance port; Med-moor to the pontoon inside a surgey harbour.

AGENT — Achintha Hewagamage (Magnate Shipping), +94 76 985 0115, achintha@magnateship.com — many positive reports; on the dock to meet arrivals; ~US\$270 with discount; takes Wise. Counterpoint: when the harbour filled (8 arrivals/day, boats rafted), some found him stretched thin post-clearance. Avoid Tango Shipping (negative reports — fleet agent list).

BERTHING — Med-moor, ~2.8 m dock; surge comes and goes — 6 stern lines + tyres/planks against chafe. 3 m draft boats squeezed in at HT; “not for the faint-hearted”. Rodents possible on the dock. Watch for mixed water/harbour swirl.

FUEL — DIY saves money: fuel station 500 m from the harbour gate (turn right); tuk-tuk carries 6 jerry cans, cards accepted; three diesel grades (270/307/360 LKR) — supervise the filling. Paul the tuk-tuk driver at the gate is the fixer.

ASHORE — Asiri private hospital: consult + bloods + X-ray + meds ≈ AU\$85, English spoken. Tours: Chinta Tours (bespoke, trustworthy); GKA Roshan for day/multi-day. The compendium's inland notes are online. Country verdict: clean, friendly, safe; Mad Max driving.

07.4 Cochin / Kochi, India — alternative

Geared to yachts but slow; worth it only with time (Biennale season).

AGENT — Walter Cuminns (Reegesh Ramakrishnan, ceo@waltercuminns.com, +91 79985 00700) — competent, ~US\$903 for 3 pax, ~6 hrs to clear; agent mandatory. Local fixers: Nizar (tuk-tuk) +91 89213 07504; Nisam (Lazy Jack) +91 97464 62686.

MARINA — Bolgatty (KTDC): run-down, broken cleats, ~2.7 m unreliable — enter at HT; water/power, showers, resort access; re-piling underway; reasonable rates (a 2.5 m draft boat made it in). marinabolgatty@ktdc.com.

COMMS — No Starlink in Indian waters; local SIMs fine near land.

07.5 Maldives — Uligamu & Malé

Refit, dive, provision; the last easy stop. Agent Asad dominates — with caveats.

AGENT — Asadhulla “Asad” Mohamed, WhatsApp +960 793 4946, assad@realseahawksmaldives.com. The full-service standard: SIMs on arrival, cash advances, duty-free parts pre-cleared through customs (inverter from Australia in 5 days via FedEx; note 26% import duty + GST on locally-sourced parts), consolidated end-of-stay CC bill (“impeccable”). Caveats: fee quoting was confusing (\$50 vs \$250-with-cruising-permit vs \$200 tracking deposit); repair referrals patchy; alternative agent Hussain quoted \$80 flat. Pets fine as “in transit.”

FEES (AGENT QUOTE) — Entry \$13.33 + port state \$13.33 + light dues \$6.66 + customs \$33.33 + sanitation cert \$65 (valid 6 months, needed at exit) + transport \$20; daily anchor \$4.33 + tracking \$6.66; agency ~\$250; tax 17%. Longer stays with crew changes ran ~\$1,000.

CRUISING PERMIT — Takes ~7 days — paperwork routes through 3 islands. Send documents EARLY or you sit in Uligamu waiting. Crew changes: joiners need a seaman's book or immediate-family proof; otherwise a US\$1,000 charter permit; VOA technically wants a return flight; passports can be held for days for “boat check-in”.

ULIGAMU — Anchor ~20 m; clearance quick (after Friday prayers); dolphins on departure. **FUEL WARNING:** water and sediment confirmed in Uligamu diesel (one crew polished 60 L and photographed the residue) — filter everything, or fuel elsewhere. Fuel supply is agent-controlled; a boat that bought direct at an island (15 SLR/L) was blocked the next day.

MALÉ & ATOLLS — Anchor off airport west side (noisy). Good chandleries/mechanics: Junaid, Marine Equipment +960 995-4777. Diving among the best anywhere — compendium waypoints online. Island harbours can be off-limits to visitors — coordinate every stop with the agent (one boat got in trouble); local guide Alba at Goidhoo for mantas/produce. Only one ATM dispenses USD in Malé.

07.6 Socotra (Yemen)

The route's wonder — dragon's blood forests — under new, stricter, costlier rules.

AGENT — Ghanem Ali, +967 770 272 222, kubrhi@gmail.com (socotra.info / IG @socotris). Still universally liked as a host and guide. Wise payments via his family member's UAE account (confirm details first); otherwise USD cash. Alt tour contact: Nicola Vitali +39 340 261 4761; Arabic-speaking contact Aziz (responds fast in Arabic).

2026 RULES (CHANGED MID-SEASON) — The free 48-hr stop is GONE (Saudi/UAE political control changes). Now: agent fee US\$275 (seen drifting to \$340) + short-stop visa ~US\$75/pp (no shore) or full visa US\$165/pp + dinghy \$15/trip + tours ~\$100/day per car. Ghanem's terms shifted between conversations — get it in writing. Context: land tourists pay \$1,500+/week packages, so it's not pure gouging.

FUEL — Diesel \$1.50/L WHEN available — a genuine shortage hit mid-season; confirm with Ghanem before planning a fuel stop.

ANCHORAGE — Clearance anchorage ~12°40.80'N 054°04.67'E. VERY rolly — intense some mornings. Check in with the Deputy Governor on approach; “rustic taken to a different level.”

PASSPORT NOTE — You get a Yemen stamp. US ESTA/entry questions ask about Yemen/Sudan travel — answer truthfully; boats reported interrogation hassle but entry granted. You can request the stamp on a separate visa paper — arrange with the agent ahead.

07.7 Djibouti

Fuel, provisions, crew logistics, tours — and the season's agent-fee flashpoint.

AGENT (OPTIONAL!) — Mohamed Ahssan “Phoenix”, +253 7762 7015, ahssan2017@gmail.com / redseaupdown7@gmail.com. Fee US\$350 incl. check-in/out, fuel & water arrangement, water taxi, captain's SIM; visa \$30/pp on arrival; anchorage \$45 first week + \$10/3 days. Reviews split hard: “can't recommend enough — efficient, funny, all-service” vs “slippery, you don't need him”. His lackeys board-badger on arrival; a “dock official” demanded 5,000 DJF dinghy fees — One boat refused, citing Ahssan, and it evaporated. Parcels: DHL/FedEx arrivals go through airport customs — 9 officials, ~70% duties (charged on SHIPPING cost), 2–3 hrs; Ahssan's escort was near-essential.

DIY CLEARANCE — Confirmed possible (5 Mar): dinghy to the port head → immigration (\$30/pp visa) → port authority (~\$81, no receipt given). Cheap, simple, two days is enough.

WATER — Harbour water is NOT watermaker-safe, and you can't move out to make water without a ~\$250 cruising permit. Solution: the “chandlery man” right side of the dinghy dock supplies good 20 L bottles — ~8,000–9,500 DJF per 200 L (+1,000 transport); refuse the bottle deposit, return same day. Delivered drinking water ~500 DJF/20 L if you have time.

FUEL — Delivered ~US\$1.50/L via truck-to-dock, decent quality, high turnover (one boat took 400 L). Marina-dock alternative: Ahmed +253 77 33 46 37 collects/returns jerry cans, 250 DJF/L (pump price ~205–210).

ASHORE — Casino Mall = expat-grade groceries incl. alcohol; French restaurant (on NFL) and Longchamps recommended; French bottle shop for wine. Day tour to Lake Assal (lowest point in Africa) with Omar, TATA Tours, +253 77 07 01 13 — ~\$85/head for 4, better than the agent's version. Taxis 500–1,000 DJF. Crows will raid fruit hammocks and redecorate your cockpit. Yellow fever jab for Sudan-bound crews: Service d'Hygiène, mornings, ~\$15, certificate issued.

07.8 Bab-el-Mandeb & the Gulf of Aden (HRA)

A transit, not a stop — see the Security and GPS sections for the doctrine.

EMERGENCY STOP, YEMEN MAINLAND — Port Al Mukalla — Captain Salim Omer, +967 736 681 279; send passport photos the day before (fleet agent list).

REPORTING ANCHORS — UKMTO registration + daily 0800 UTC report; MSCIO advisories daily during tension. Coalition warships hail on 16 offering help; carrier groups pass dark — radar only.

07.9 Massawa, Eritrea

The season's surprise: a safe, welcoming, near-free weather stop — with strict edges.

ARRIVAL — Call “Massawa Port Control” VHF 16 ~1–2 nm out; a navy skiff may escort you in; night arrivals fine (visited by coast guard at 7 am). Cleanest commercial-harbour water the fleet saw; sheltered channels; Navionics accurate; NO GPS jamming in Eritrean waters.

COST — No agent, no customs paperwork. 48-hr shore pass FREE; beyond that US\$70/pp for a one-month visa (+\$4 Asmara travel permit; ~3 hrs of pleasant process). Free drinking water at the port. Money changes at any café.

SUPPLIES — NO diesel for visitors (government permit; severe shortage). Limited fruit/veg/eggs/bread; beer ~\$1.30/can near the port.

HARD EDGES — Anchoring overnight in Eritrean waters outside the port is officially NOT allowed (harbour manager Mr Dewitt); the North Massawa channel is closely watched — expect an armed navy launch to check passport stamps at speed and near-sunset (one crew was shaken; another smiled, confirmed stamps, waved off). Assab and the SE coast: red zone, a sailor was arrested there (French embassy report; one sailor arrested there 3 yrs prior). Avoid ALL military areas; the tourism office will list them. Dahlak: told not to stop, but Shumma Island (5 hrs out) worked. Kind, proud people throughout — “this is your home.”

07.10 Suakin, Sudan

The fleet's favourite stop and emotional centre of the route. Safe, protected, unforgettable.

AGENT (MANDATORY IN PRACTICE) — Mohamed Ahmed, WhatsApp +249 91 214 2678, mohamedabubaker945@gmail.com (office: Mayada Dirar +249 12 738 2365). Fixed US\$300 in/out — and the fleet's consensus was he earns it: full clearance (no passport stamps unless you ask), cruising permit for the marsas north (no going ashore), free bread delivered to your boat EVERY morning, market runs, drives, free wash-down water, USD exchange (~250,000 SDG per \$100), hull cleaning arranged <\$20 (insist on real divers), laundry, even US-propane refills. For a pure weather stop, ask for food-and-diesel-only at reduced cost. One caution: verify fuel quantities delivered vs charged (one boat was shorted) and agree the exchange rate first.

ANCHORAGE & ENTRY — 360° protected, in front of the old town; very easy inlet BUT do the last 50 nm from the east in daylight, and mind the 2–3 anchored freighters (Jeddah passenger trade) — don't cross their bows. GPS is jammed here (see GPS section) — enter on Starlink/sat imagery. Green bay water kills watermaker filters. Southern approach shelters: Khor Nawarat SE cove 18°11.48'N 038°21.53'E (10 ft, good bottom, local navy checks papers politely); last-before-Eritrea anchorage 18°17'N 038°19.4'E; Talla Talla Suakir / Fawn Cove (daylight only).

PROVISIONING — Excellent fruit/veg stalls + meat market ~1 mile from the anchorage; no supermarket; bargain hard at the market (they enjoy it), pay Mohamed his fixed fee without quibbling. The bread is “better than French” — freezes well. Diesel US\$1.50/L, clean. Adro's tuk-tuk tours: +249 11 920 2991.

PAPERWORK RIPPLE — Mohamed's customs paper doubles as port clearance and was accepted onward in Djibouti and Egypt. Standard practice: declare Suakin honestly as prior/next port (boats did, no issues) — though one late-season boat advised keeping it off documents; make your own call. Egypt technically requires yellow-fever vaccination after Sudan (loophole for sea-days in between); the jab is \$15 in Djibouti.

CONTEXT — Sudan is at war; 10M+ displaced; Suakin is ~1,000 km from the front and felt completely safe — but expect the sight of a country at war, dress modestly, respect Ramadan. A fleet tradition: two bottles of whisky for Mohamed (he doesn't drink; in a dry country it's currency). Multiple crews called it the best human experience of their circumnavigation. Do NOT go to Port Sudan — off-limits even by road.

07.11 Sudanese coast north — marsas & the inside-reef route

Sheltered creep-stops with a Suakin permit; navigate on sat imagery only.

THE MARSAS — North of Port Sudan: superbly sheltered in N/NW, easy daylight entries, no controls encountered, OUTSIDE the GPS-jam zone; you can walk the beach (nothing there). Named stops used: Marsa Sh'nab, Marsa Fija, Marsa Umbeila, “Marsa Salak Passage” (shared waypoint with soundings).

INSIDE-THE-REEF ROUTE — Suakin → Dunganab Bay behind the reef: in the Red Sea Pilot, has intermittent commercial buoyage and compendium tracks — but Navionics shows phantom blocking reefs, and a 2.6 m boat spent weeks verifying passes case-by-case. Reef markers and two crude-offtake moorings aligned well with Navionics on the inner passage — daylight only. When spoofing degraded fixes, one boat bailed offshore after Port Sudan rather than run uncharted passes at night — the right call.

THE UNCHARTED REEF — 21°35.01'N 037°06.12'E — see Weather section; GPX circulated in-group.

07.12 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia — the expensive detour

A real option since JYC opened — first-class facilities, first-class invoice.

BOOKING (BEFORE SAUDI WATERS) — Jeddah Yacht Club — Colin Ralph, Marina Director, c.ralph@jeddahyc.com, +966 55 128 0165; berthing@jeddahyc.com. All permits/visas via the EBHAR portal (ebhar.naql.sa) — create the account, register boat and crew, appoint the agent and apply for visas IN ADVANCE (the app was flaky on some devices). Call “JYC Control” on approach; they send a RIB to guide you in.

COST — US\$2,024 check-in (15 m mono, 8 pax, via JLS — who asked the fleet to spread the word they welcome sailboats) + US\$70/night marina (2025 data point: ~\$1,000 + \$50/night). Excellent facilities: unlimited ice, gym, 24/7 service. Agent fee at Jeddah historically ~US\$1–1.2k.

RULES — Third-party liability insurance only required. NO coastal cruising: you cannot sail the coast or anchor without checking out at another port (extra cost); on checkout, leave Saudi waters (12.5+ nm, forced by the reef) immediately. Stay outside territorial waters northbound from the Hanish Islands unless bound for Jeddah (compendium relays). Inland travel is open — train, car, flights; only Mecca is closed to non-Muslims; dress codes relaxed but modest. Fuel via the marina — “huge drama” but resolved (2023); do your own visa online and learn EBHAR while you still have internet.

STARLINK — Cuts off approaching Saudi (15–20 nm out) — arrange the agent days ahead.

07.13 Egyptian coast — permitted anchorages & fuel (no check-in)

Egypt's agents negotiated "innocent-passage" stops: shelter and resupply without clearing in. Stay aboard — no swimming, no dinghy, no visiting the neighbours.

THE SYSTEM — You do NOT need to check in to transit to Suez. Agents (Heebi/Felix) circulate the permitted-anchorage list with coordinates (also in the Red Sea Compendium, p.166 area); a yellow flag is expected. Officials may visit, photograph passports and papers, and leave. Abuse — snorkelling, going ashore — risks the arrangement for everyone. Enforcement is real: a boat sheltering at an UNLISTED spot near Safaga in 30 kt was forced out by the navy mid-blow, engine failing — "no safe harbor" claim rejected. If weather traps you, get your agent to seek one-time permission (Heebi has obtained it).

WADI GIMAL — The blow-proof one — calm in N/NE. Bommie approach, shared waypoints: WP1 24°36.207'N 035°11.731'E → WP4 24°39.213'N 035°09.073'E, then slow to 2 kt through bommies (3–12 m) to the anchorage ~24°39.6'N 035°09.5'E. Starlink dead inside (geofenced); works at the island anchorage 1.5 nm off.

MARSA ALAM — The resupply hub. Agent Abdul/Abdulla, +20 11 5153 4755 — diesel ~US\$1.60/L, excellent fruit/veg delivered, will guide you in through the entrance by motorboat ("safe inside, I will guide you"). One-night anchor, no check-in. A rival contact (Memo) overcharged a boat here — see Suez agents.

SOMA BAY — THE Gulf-of-Suez waiting room. Diesel deliverable — Ibrahim (via Capt. Heebi) — but Apr 2026 reports: dirtiest diesel of the route (filter twice) and disputes over charging for full tanks not delivered; he threatened to quit serving yachts. Contact Heebi before arrival. Starlink drops at anchor here — have the eSIM live.

ALSO USED — Sharm Luli (Starlink geofenced dead inside the line, instant), Al Quseir (contact Moustafa +20 109 817 6677), Hamata (dive fleet; "engine problem" bought a night), Ras Sudr (good last stop, 20 nm to C1: sand, 7 m, good holding, N-swell protection), Mersa Thelemet, El Tor (easy). "Near Port Ghalib" anchorage became contested late-season — the resort owners want yachts out; treat as unavailable (via Heebi).

EGYPT ESIM & STARLINK — Arrange an eSIM (Holafly / Maya Middle-East — auto-switches country to Turkey) BEFORE losing Starlink. Egypt's pattern: Starlink works while MOVING (even 25 nm out — resist Ocean-mode toggling), drops ~30 min after you stop, returns underway; always-on only in the canal, at Ismailia Marina and at C1/Port Said.

07.14 Checking in to Egypt (if you must)

Quotes ranged 4x between agents. Shop it, get it written, demand canal-authority receipts.

WHERE — Port Ghalib, Hurghada, El Gouna can clear you in; Marsa Alam generally cannot. Cheapest overall is usually Ismailia at the canal.

THE QUOTE SPREAD (ALL 2026) — Nemo, Hurghada: ~\$600–700 government + \$100 agent + \$25/pp visa. Port Ghalib quote: arrival invoice \$1,100–1,500 + departure \$500–700 + immigration \$80 + security \$80 + visa \$30/pp + port police \$60 + agency \$100 (~\$1,300 all-in quoted). Via Heebi: "\$3,000 in/out," steering boats to Ismailia (his turf — note the conflict of interest). Suez clearance Jan 2026: ~\$2,000 for a 12 m cat. Nobody asked about alcohol at check-in; keep it aboard, never ashore.

07.15 Suez Canal — C1, Ismailia, Port Said

80 nm, two days, two pilots, no locks. The season's biggest lessons: helm it yourself, and audit the tonnage.

AGENTS — Three players (fleet agent list): (1) Ehab Soukar “At Sea” / Prince of the Red Sea / Capt. Heebi — +20 100 552 2988, princeoftheredsea@gmail.com. Competent but grumpy; strict no-tips policy he enforces (rang a pilot mid-transit and nearly threw him off); controls taxi access at the marina (drivers must pre-register). (2) Felix Maritime — HQ Port Said, felix@felix-eg.com, +2 100 683 6831; Ismailia office (Mustafa Mahmoud +20 103 077 0489 and Reem) rated EXCELLENT and honest (sample invoice: agency \$50, visa \$30/pp, port clearance \$80, canal \$531 for a 47' cat, immigration \$39, security \$39). But: “Memo” (Felix Hurghada, +20 12 8151 4902) asked multiple boats for envelope cash “for the inspector” (~\$70) — reported to Felix's CEO, who confirmed no such fees exist; pay ONLY against the Ismailia office invoice. (3) NASCO Tours, headoffice@nasco-yachts.com. Independent cheap-fuel contact “Teodor” offered canal-delivered diesel ~\$1.00–1.15/L — reports positive but limited.

⚠ **TONNAGE AUDIT** — Canal dues ≈ \$6.65–8.00/SCT ton, on MEASURED volume (Suez Canal Tonnage: boxed volume ÷ 2.83 — nothing to do with displacement; multihulls get bridge-deck allowance). One boat (21 t rated) was billed as 60 t — \$478 vs a \$138 calculator figure — through Felix, with no receipt and no answer to complaints. Counter-data: the sample canal fee appeared verbatim on the marina invoice and matched. Rule: the SCA measures at C1; insist on seeing the SCA receipt before paying anyone.

MECHANICS — Arrive Port Ibrahim (C1) 07:00–09:00 for same-day pilot to Ismailia; after 11:00 = overnight anchor at 29°55.5'N 032°32.6'E. No Friday clearance (check out Thursday for a Friday transit, or Saturday for Sunday); arriving the afternoon before can trigger a ~\$180 two-calendar-day port fee — one agent advised arriving after 23:00 to dodge it. C1 anchorage hazard: a moving crane barge nearly ran over two anchored yachts at night INSIDE the designated anchorage — keep watch. Heebi's unwritten rules: fuel dock on arrival not departure; once cleared out you're confined to the marina; departure time is confirmed only ~19:00 the evening before; canal/port/immigration paid to the agent in cash USD; marina/fuel/laundry paid to the marina office by CARD (EGP not accepted).

PILOTS — HELM IT YOURSELF — The decisive lesson. One boat let the pilot helm; the boat was steered into shallows in the new channel, damaged, impounded, repairs done before the owners could inspect, and the SCA demanded 50% of costs — under SCA rules the captain remains solely responsible even with the pilot steering. The working script: “our insurance doesn't allow anyone else to helm” — pilots grumble and accept. They hug the banks and the channel markers unnecessarily; depths of 1.5 m were seen near the Great Bitter Lake channel edge. Feeding: tea/coffee, soft drinks, bread+cheese, nuts, dates (cooked meals declined). Tips: officially banned; one pilot pulled the translation-app “our little secret” routine and hinted at scratching the yacht when refused — photograph the screen and it becomes “a miscommunication”. The pilot BOAT crews also beg aggressively; dried mangoes were not appreciated. Pay what you judge, or nothing.

ISMAILIA MARINA — \$40/night ≤15 m; long-stay discounts 50% (2 mo) / 75% (3 mo). Ferocious fouling — prop barnacled in 2 weeks; diving yourself = \$500 fine, hire their diver (one boat bagged the prop in plastic). You can leave the marina with a visa + agent-arranged gate paperwork; Cairo/Luxor trips need a vetted driver or (in principle) a free police escort. Inland: Luxor by air cheap and superb; Nile cruises Aswan–Luxor recommended; Jordan side-trip (Aqaba/Petra/Wadi Rum) a highlight, cheap flights from Cairo. Easiest crew-change airport exit in Egypt is Ismailia→Cairo; leaving crew from Suakin proved near-impossible.

NORTHERN EXIT — Second pilot Ismailia→Port Said (~6 hrs at 6–7 kt). Favourable current northbound (up to 3 kt against, southbound). At Port Suez YC southbound they demanded \$200 mooring — two boats refused and anchored NW corner of the bay, sheltered, no problem.

07.16 Into the Med — first stops

The Red Sea prepares you well; the Med still bites in spring.

CYPRUS — Common first landfall. Watch the Schengen trap: Cyprus's Schengen status is partial — a valid multi-entry Schengen visa got entry to Cyprus but was refused for onward Schengen check-in. North Cyprus first = illegal entry in the Republic's eyes. Haul-out: Limassol; Larnaca max 5 m beam; Karpaz has space, pricier. VAT: some boats deliberately imported/paid VAT in Cyprus at 19% (lowest) — one boat's route for a never-VAT-paid boat; EU Returned-Goods Relief can also apply within (extendable) 3 years — get professional advice.

TURKEY (FINIKE / KAŞ) — Agent now mandatory, ~\$220–300 cash (Samet Gölgeci used, mixed review — helpful then threatening in a dispute; alternative Mustafa at Kaş old port clears you at anchor, old port free). Finike: anchor ONLY in the designated ship anchorage or risk a €275 fine (retracted after in-person appeal); confirm your spot with the harbourmaster on Ch 16. Marina ~€125/night for 44 ft; Kekova anchoring free and beautiful. Check in at Finike or Kaş; Kekova Roads is worth routing for.

GREECE — Kalamata, Crete, Kilada haul-out: Basimakopoulos Shipyard, info@bsg.com.gr — professional, interesting pricing. TEPAI tax payable online; no agent needed in the EU.

COURTESY FLAGS — Yemen, Sudan and Egypt share the pan-Arab tricolour base — hand-sewable from scraps with pinned-on centre elements if the flag pack didn't arrive.

08 Agent & contact directory

Consolidated from the group's shared PORT AGENTS list (v23) plus in-chat updates. Confirm before relying — numbers and fees moved during the season.

LOCATION	NAME / ROLE	CONTACT	NOTES
Maldives	Asadhulla “Asad” Mohamed — agent	+960 793 4946 · assad@realseahawksmaldives.com	Full-service; quote fees precisely
Maldives	Hussain — alt agent	via group	\$80 flat quoted
Sri Lanka (Galle)	Achintha Hewagamage — Magnate Shipping	+94 76 985 0115 · achintha@magnateship.com	Many positives; Wise OK
Cochin, India	Walter Cummins / Reegesh R.	+91 79985 00700 · ceo@waltercummins.com	Mandatory; slow
Cochin, India	Nizar (tuk-tuk) / Nisam (Lazy Jack)	+91 89213 07504 / +91 97464 62686	Fixers
Socotra	Ghanem Ali — agent & guide	+967 770 272 222 · kubrhi@gmail.com	\$275 + visa; terms in writing
Yemen (Al Mukalla)	Capt. Salim Omer — emergency port	+967 736 681 279	Passport pics day before
Djibouti	Mohamed Ahssan “Phoenix”	+253 7762 7015 · ahssan2017@gmail.com	\$350; optional — DIY possible
Djibouti	Ahmed — marina-dock diesel	+253 77 33 46 37	250 DJF/L delivered
Djibouti	Omar — TATA Tours (Lake Assal)	+253 77 07 01 13	~\$85/head day tour
Suakin / Port Sudan	Mohamed Ahmed — agent	+249 91 214 2678 · mohamedabubaker945@gmail.com	\$300 fixed; the good one
Suakin (office)	Mayada Dirar	+249 12 738 2365	Mohamed's office
Suakin	Adro — tuk-tuk tours	+249 11 920 2991	On NFL
Jeddah, Saudi	Colin Ralph — JYC Marina Director	+966 55 128 0165 · berthing@jeddahyc.com	Book BEFORE Saudi waters; EBHAR portal
Aqaba, Jordan	Adel Maani — Ayla Marina	+962 3 209 4000 · amaani@ayla.com.jo	Jordan option
Marsa Alam, Egypt	Abdul / Abdulla — supply agent	+20 11 5153 4755	Diesel \$1.60/L; guides entry
Al Quseir, Egypt	Moustafa — anchorage contact	+20 109 817 6677	—
Suez / canal	Ehab Soukar “Prince of RS” / Capt. Heebi	+20 100 552 2988 · princeoftheredsea@gmail.com	No-tips enforcer; grumpy-competent
Ismailia (Felix)	Mustafa Mahmoud + Reem — Felix office	+20 103 077 0489	Excellent; pay only vs invoice
Hurghada (Felix)	“Memo”	+20 12 8151 4902	⚠ envelope-cash requests — refuse
Felix Maritime HQ	Port Said · Bahi Naguib (MP)	+2 100 683 6831 / +20 120 000 1124 · felix@felix-eg.com	Audit tonnage
Port Ghalib (Felix)	Mohamed Gouda	+20 120 719 9314 · portghalib@felix-eg.com	—
Egypt (NASCO)	NASCO Tours	headoffice@nasco-yachts.com	3rd major agency
Kaş, Turkey	Samet Gölgeci / Mustafa (old port)	+90 535 846 36 78 / via police	~\$220–300; clear at anchor via Mustafa
Kilada, Greece	Basimakopoulos Shipyard	+30 27540 61409 · info@bsg.com.gr	Haul-out

09 Logistics quick-reference

Diesel along the route (USD/L, 2026 season)

LOCATION	PRICE	QUALITY / NOTE
Galle (self-collect)	~\$0.85–1.15 equiv (270–360 LKR)	3 grades; supervise filling; clean
Uligamu (agent)	agent-set	⚠ water + sediment confirmed — filter
Socotra	\$1.50	Shortages — confirm first
Djibouti (delivered)	\$1.50 (pump ~205–210 DJF)	Good, high turnover
Suakin	\$1.50	Clean; verify quantities
Marsa Alam	\$1.60	Via Abdul
Soma Bay	~\$1.60	⚠ dirtiest of the route — filter twice
Canal-delivered (pre-Ismailia)	\$1.00–1.15 + \$60 transfer	Cheapest; Teodor/agent-arranged
Ismailia Marina	\$1.60–1.70	—
Hurghada Marina	\$1.80	Highest

Comms map

- **Starlink dead zones:** Indian waters (whole EEZ approach, ~12–50 nm); approaching Saudi (15–20 nm out); geofenced inside some Egyptian bays (Sharm Luli, Wadi Gimal, Soma Bay at anchor). Egypt otherwise: works underway (even 25 nm out — don't toggle Ocean mode prematurely), drops ~30 min after stopping, always-on in the canal/Ismailia/C1/Port Said.
- **eSIMs:** Maya “Middle East” auto-switches Egypt→Turkey and covered nearly all anchorages; Holafly used 2025. Buy while you still have bandwidth. Agents can drop local SIMs with provisions (Marsa Alam).
- **Sat comms:** Iridium GO mail app discontinued Sep 2025 — a PredictWind DataHub is now the working path; Iridium/Zoleo also provide authenticated PNT as a spoofing cross-check. Sat phones locked and OFF in Indian waters.

Insurance — the season's reality

- **Pre-escalation:** EU-flag boats found cover via Förde Assekuranz / Brandon Samuel (AXA-led; direct Red Sea transit + Egyptian marina calls + Aden/Jeddah callable; no US flags) — though one member warned of a brutal AXA claims fight years prior. Nammert/Württembergische: €900/6 mo for a 33-footer, German flag. US flags: Norvos/ION/Keane wrote liability-only policies — but that paper was blacklisted by Australian marinas; treat with caution. Third-party-only + no hull cover 15°N→Port Said was the common posture.
- **Post-escalation (Jun 2026, survey of ~10 brokers):** most underwriters STOPPED writing the passage entirely (“since the war started, underwriters stopped — we can pick you up after the canal”). The three live options found: Transmer/MURIMAR via Shield Specialty (Luke Wilson, +33 6 72 64 73 08); ION via World Insurance/Offshore Risk (Michele Crumley, +1 305 743 7711 x2210 — war/piracy/terror excluded, doubled Red Sea hull deductible); a Southern Pacific structure via the same broker. Budget time and expect exclusions.

Money, papers, misc

- **Cash** USD everywhere Socotra→Suez; clean notes only (Suakin and Egypt agents inspect them). Ismailia: marina ATM dispenses EGP (3,000/withdrawal); Heebi accepted mixed USD+EGP quietly.
- **Passport stamps:** Yemen and Sudan stamps now trigger US ESTA questions (answer truthfully; delays but approvals reported). Ask agents for stamps on separate visa papers if it matters to you.
- **Wise:** accepted by Achintha (Galle) and Ghanem's UAE-account relative (Socotra); most others cash.
- **Fish:** pelagics (tuna, mahi, wahoo) safe; avoid large reef predators (barracuda, big snapper, grouper, Spanish mackerel in ciguatera zones). Great fishing near the Nicobars (outside 12 nm!), off Sri Lanka, and in the Hanish current. Devil crabs (dark, red eyes, Egyptian islands) are lethally poisonous — don't touch.
- **Wildlife:** Whales inside the IRTC (one surfaced under a yacht); Gulf of Aden phytoplankton blooms clog raw-water strainers — check intakes.

FAIR WINDS — AND A RENAME PROPOSAL

“I vote we rename the Red Sea ‘The Furious Sea’, for the winds, waves and political hostilities. Not that we didn't enjoy the passage — only that it deserves a name reflecting its characteristics.”

— from the fleet, in the Med, May 2026

