

Degree of voyage planning may sensibly be less for a small pleasure yacht compared to a large commercial vessel. But you still need a plan prior to departure. So, what should you be taking into consideration?

Passage Planning & Pilotage Checklist

- General route planning on a passage paper chart(s)
- Distances and likely time of passage
- Expected weather (now and the next few days), and anticipated weather based on routeing charts
- Rhumb line (straight-line route) vs Great circle, and allowance for sailing to windward
- Tidal streams and tidal gates (bars) to negotiate
- Tidal height issues for departure and port of arrival
- Navigational hazards including shipping lanes, place with high volume of traffic and shallows
- Contingency plan with alternative harbours and/or anchorage of refuge (bolt holes)
- Waypoints plotting on the passage chart (optionally to be moved to a chartplotter)
- Pilotage planning for departure and entrance from a harbour including ports of refuge (using almanacs, pilot books, and detailed charts for approaches)
- Key navigational marks, transits, clearing bearings, parallel indexes, radar conspicuous objects and clearing ranges, and lights for monitoring position and cross-checking.
- Consumables: food, water, gas, fuel
- Crew suitability and competency including manning requirements
- Boat suitability, operational limitations and compliance with regulations
- Onboard communication including required GMDSS equipment: VHF/MF/HF, Satellite Comm
- Onboard safety equipment
- Boat maintenance equipment
- Required paperwork
- Shore contact

Source: [RYA Passage Planning - top tips](#)

Pilotage Plan Proforma



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Harbour name:

Date:

VHF channels:

Tidal Standard Port:

Tidal Secondary Port:

	Time	Height (m)	Direction / Set (°)	Rate (kt)
HW (High Water)				
LW (Low Water)				
HW				
LW				
HW				
LW				

Approach waypoint / Navigational aid:

Shelter:

Type of berth (e.g. pontoon, wall):

Minimum under keel clearance (at LW): Nature of seabed:

Key hazards

Name/ description	Avoidance strategy

Key lights and navigational marks

Mark name	Type of mark	Light sequence	To port or starboard	Notes

Pilotage plan for the port/anchorage:

Tips:

- Read the pilot books and almanacs in conjunction with studying the charts for approaches
- Focus on the hazards and 'no-go' areas
- Have an idea of the scale
- Maintain safe below-keel clearances
- Filter out irrelevant information
- Know how you will monitor the vessel's position at each stage
- Sketch the pilotage plan (tracing the chart or using the rolling road method):
http://www.sailtrain.co.uk/pilotage/pilotage_plans.htm

Coastal/Offshore Passage Plan Proforma



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Trip details

Departure date		Departure point	
Estimated speed (kt)		Arrival point	
Total distance (NM)		Estimated duration	
Departure date & time		Estimated arrival date & time	
Ports of refuge (emergency ports)			
Alternative ports (eg. if place not available)			

Weather

Weather Sources			
Sea area		Synoptic situation	
Wind direction, strength and gusts		Wave direction, height and period	
Thunderstorms / rain		Visibility (including fog)	

Major Hazards

Name & Description	Location	Avoidance strategy / Risk mitigation

Navigational aids

Name & Description	Location	Characteristics

Tidal gates

Name & Location	Window of opportunity

Ocean Passage Plan Proforma

Additional considerations for longer offshore passages



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Consumables

	Capacity	Consumption rate	Range (days / NM)	Extra supplies
Water				
Food				
Fuel				
Electricity				
Gas				

General weather conditions

	Start of passage	Middle of passage	End of passage
Weather sources			
Synoptic situation			
Wind direction, strength and gusts			
Gale frequency			
Swell direction, height and period			
Current direction and strength			
Sea temp			
Visibility			
Special precautions			

Communications

	Name/ Location	Reporting requirements	Contact details
MRCC departure country*			
MRCC arrival country			
Customs departure port**			
Customs arrival port			
Immigration departure port**			
Immigration arrival port			
Shore contact			

*<https://sarcontacts.info>

**<https://www.noonsite.com>