

Strait of Gibraltar

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Strait of Gibraltar Latest News

The nuclear-powered USS Gerald R. Ford lit up tracking systems while sailing hard toward the Strait of Gibraltar, a move that defense watchers say “doesn’t usually happen”.

About Strait of Gibraltar

- It is the body of water **separating Europe from Africa** and **connecting the Atlantic Ocean** to the west **with the Mediterranean Sea** in the east.
- It is located at the **southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula**.
- **Bordering Countries:** It is bordered by **Spain** and the **British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar** in the north and by the African country of **Morocco** and the **Spanish enclave of Ceuta** in the south.
- It is about 58 km long and has a width of about 13 km at its **narrowest point between Morocco’s Point Cires and Spain’s Point Marroquí**.
- The **western end** of the strait located **between Spain’s Cape Trafalgar and Morocco’s Cape Spartel** has a width of about 43 km.

- The strait's **eastern end**, located **between** the **Rock of Gibraltar in the north** and **Mount Hacho or Jebel Moussa in the south**, has a width of about 23 km.
 - These two land features in the strait's eastern extremity are known as the **Pillars of Heracles**.
- The Strait of Gibraltar's depth ranges from 300 to 900 m, and it forms a significant gap **between the high plateau of Spain** and the **Atlas Mountains of Northern Africa**.
- **Formation:** Geological studies have revealed that the Strait was formed due to the **northward movement of the African Plate towards the European Plate**.
- It is the **only natural link between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea** and is one of the **busiest waterways** in the world. Approximately 300 ships cross the Strait every day.
- **Until the opening of the Suez Canal** in 1869, the Strait of Gibraltar was the **only means of oceanic access to and from the Mediterranean Sea**.
- An important port located on the Strait of Gibraltar is the **Moroccan port of Tanger-Med, near Tangier**.
- **Water Flow and Currents:**
 - Water flows in and out of the Strait constantly.
 - The **Atlantic Ocean** has **cooler, less salty water**. The **Mediterranean Sea** has **warmer, saltier water**. This difference **creates strong currents**.
 - **Water from the Atlantic flows into** the **Mediterranean near the surface**.
 - **Deeper down, saltier water from the Mediterranean flows back** into the **Atlantic**.
 - This constant exchange helps **keep the Mediterranean Sea healthy**.

Source: **IDR**

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