BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

GUIDANCE FOR YACHTS

http://biot.gov.io/

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INTRODUCTION

You and your accompanying crew have applied for a permit to moor in specified locations in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). You must read and understand this document, as it contains important information about what is expected from you during your time in and as you transit through the Territory. You are subject to BIOT law when inside its territorial waters. If you break any of the laws, you will become subject, as in any country, to a range of censures and punishments, including fines, imprisonment, removal from the Territory, or the impounding of your vessel. This document details what is not permitted in the Territory.

This guidance has been created both to explain the restrictions in BIOT but also to impart to you why many of them exist: i.e. because of the security and environmental value of the Territory.

The wildlife and environment of BIOT are exceptional. The Territory has the greatest marine biodiversity in the UK and its Overseas Territories, as well as some of the cleanest seas and healthiest reef systems in the world. To ensure the future protection of this unique environment the BIOT Commissioner declared a 640,000 km^2 'no-take' Marine Protected Area in 2010 (where all commercial fishing and extractive activities are prohibited). Protecting the incredible biodiversity and ensuring the ecological integrity of BIOT continues to be of the utmost importance to the BIOT Administration, which it does alongside scientists and conservationists. We ask that you, whilst in the Territory, respect the environment and help us to preserve this wonderful place. This would include not doing anything to damage the flora/fauna but also to be vigilant against what you may be bringing into the Territory, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

The isolated waters and islands of BIOT are populated by species that have adapted to island life. Seabirds, for example, nest freely on or near the ground, in the absence of predators such as mammals. This, however, makes native island species extremely vulnerable if humans introduce new species, or 'non-natives', which can compete for food, occupy others' homes or predate the natural wildlife. These 'invasive non-natives' can be plants, animals, fish or other marine life and even a host of micro-organisms that may bring disease to local wildlife.

Historically, ships have already provided the transportation of such invaders to BIOT. Rats, introduced in the 1700s, have devastated island bird populations and also impacted natural vegetation by eating native hardwood seeds and fruits. In other islands around the world ship-borne invaders have included snakes, spiders and insects. For the islands which have been damaged by invasive species, work is being undertaken to restore them, for example, a successful rat eradication on Ile Vache Marine was declared in 2017. However, restoration work is costly, time-consuming and challenging. Even when successful, recovery of native populations takes years, so prevention and vigilance is key to success.

BIOT has the advantage of being geographically isolated as well as benefits afforded by its no-take Marine Protected Area: the Administration wants to ensure that BIOT continues to retain its status as a reference site for global conservation efforts and as an observatory for undisturbed ecosystems. **We ask you to help us do this by being careful throughout your stay in the Territory and adhering to this document.**

Here are some facts about the environment in BIOT:

- Created in 2010, the BIOT MPA is one of the largest MPAs in the world and protects over 1% of all the world's coral reefs.
- Commercial fishing is forbidden in an area comprising of 640,000 km^2 of the Indian Ocean: the MPA provides a safe haven for some 310 coral species, 821 fish species, and 355 species of molluscs.
- It is a home for species found nowhere else in the world, such as the Chagos brain coral and the Chagos anemone fish.
- BIOT safeguards endangered species, including important populations of green and hawksbill turtles, sharks, rays and rare reef fish.
- It protects critical seabird populations, including the only increasing populations of red-footed and brown booby in the Indian Ocean.
- Reef fish here are on average six times more abundant than at any other location in the Indian Ocean.
- Offshore waters are home to the only unfished populations of tuna, oceanic sharks and billfish in the Indian Ocean.

PERMITS

The visiting vessel mooring permit system is only in place to allow vessels to rest at pre-approved mooring locations. In keeping with this, mooring permits will have a maximum validity of 28 days and are valid for specific sites in the Outer Islands. You can apply for one, two, three or four weeks, but permits cannot be extended once your initial application has been approved (neither before your arrival nor in the Territory) so please think carefully about how much time you will need to stop in BIOT, bearing in mind weather conditions and other factors. There is no right to receive a permit and they are granted solely at the discretion of the Administration.

If you encounter exceptional circumstances (e.g. severe vessel malfunctions, medical emergencies or dangerous weather conditions) and cannot enter BIOT during the period outlined in your permit please contact the BIOT Administration as soon as possible. Any changes to the terms of your permit are solely at the discretion of the Administration.

Changes will not be considered for those arriving within the window of their permit. Permit dates cannot be extended once issued, so you should ensure that you have applied for sufficient time to rest. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct dates on your permit. Please also note that changes to crew members will also not be considered after the permit has been issued.

You should be aware that any person who enters BIOT without a valid permit, or remains in BIOT after a valid permit has expired, is liable to imprisonment for 3 years and/or a fine of £10,000.

PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Please apply for a permit at least eight weeks prior to your intended arrival date, as the application process can take several weeks.

Details of how to apply and the relevant forms can be found on the BIOT Administration website at https://biot.gov.io/visiting/permits

You will need to provide:

- A completed and signed visitor and visiting vessel permit application form.
- A copy of your insurance documents covering medical evacuation (minimum US$100,000 per person) and wreck recovery, clean up and removal in BIOT. Please highlight the sections in your documentation that cover this. These documents must be in English, and it is your responsibility to request translations from your insurance company in advance of your application.
- Copies of passports for all crew members. Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of entry into the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Failure to provide a full application or necessary documentation will lead to your application being rejected. If you are unsure please submit queries in advance of submitting your application, and take care to read all documentation carefully and in full.

ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE REPORTING

All vessels are requested to report the following to the Visiting Vessels Control Officer (VVCO) / BIOT Patrol Vessel (BPV):

- Entry into the BIOT Maritime Zone (MZ) (the 200nm Economic Exclusion Zone);
- Arrival at one of the authorised anchorages;
- Departure from the anchorages;
- Departure from the BIOT MZ.

Vessels can use email or satellite enabled phones for text or voice messages to send the position reports (contact details are found below).

The reporting format to use is as follows:

Serial	Detailed Requirement	Example
Alpha	Yacht Name	*Hans Hanson*
Bravo	Call Sign if applicable	*CAGH1A*
Charlie	BIOT Permit Number	*43/2017*
Delta	Activity: Enter BIOT MZ Enter Anchorage Exit Anchorage Exit BIOT MZ	*Entering BIOT MZ*
Echo	Date Time Group	*12 / 07 /2017*
Foxtrot	Position Log / Lat	*02’ 19 S 70’ 08 E*
Golf	Intension	*Heading for Salomon anchorage*
Hotel	Any other information	*Stay in Salomon for 10 days*

You must moor your vessel at the approved sites only, as indicated in Annex B, to help conserve BIOT’s fragile coral environment.

“to moor” is defined in BIOT law as “to anchor or to remain stationary by the use of engines or any line or device in the territorial sea or internal waters of the Territory or to be tied up or beached or hauled ashore at any place in the Territory". As you will appreciate this

means you may not stop your vessel (except in an emergency) anywhere in the inland or territorial waters of BIOT other than at the approved sites.

BIOT Customs and Immigration officials patrol the Territory to check permits and passports. The passports of all passengers/crew will be checked against the details provided on the visitor and visiting vessel permit application form. You will be asked to explain any discrepancies.

CONTACTS

Contact	Location	Details
BIOT Administration	London and in Territory	Email: BIOTadmin@fcdo.gov.uk
Senior Fisheries Protection Officer	In Territory	Email: sfpo@mrag.co.uk
Visiting Vessels Control Officer	In Territory	Email: sfpo@mrag.co.uk
BIOT Patrol Vessel (Grampian Endurance)	In Territory	Tel: +44 1224 539325 Satellite phone number: 00 881 677 126 348 Email: Grampian.endurance@northstarshipping.co.uk Emergency only Radio: VH16 or MF 2182 KHz (24hr listening watch)
BIOT Police Station	Diego Garcia	Tel: +246 3702938

EMERGENCIES

If you have an emergency that you consider life threatening, you should declare it as a maritime emergency (SOLAS) in accordance with International Maritime Regulations. In such a situation, BIOT authorities in Diego Garcia can be contacted on **2.182MHz HF SSB** or VHF if within range or +246 3702938 (BIOT Police Station 24/7). All reasonable assistance will be considered but resources are extremely limited and do not include any air lift (helicopter) or long-range fast patrol boat capability.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

There are no medical facilities or air ambulances (helicopter or SAR) in BIOT. **You will need to organise a medevac out of the Territory if emergency medical care is required.** This is why you are required to have comprehensive insurance before you enter the Territory.

SELF SUFFICIENCY

BIOT is extremely remote. “Marina” services are not provided. There is no mail or refuse collection service – **all refuse must be taken away on departure** and disposed of responsibly, outside BIOT’s waters. Yachts must be completely self-sufficient whilst in the Territory. You must have enough food, medical supplies as well as fuel to get from the Outer Islands of BIOT to your next intended port, or at least the nearest port (Gan – 350 miles), where repairs or other emergency work can be undertaken should it become necessary.

DIEGO GARCIA

Unauthorised vessels or persons are not permitted to access this island and **no unauthorised vessel is permitted to approach within 3 nautical miles.** Vessels in transit, on "innocent passage" as defined under Maritime Law, should maintain their course away from Diego Garcia.

FISHING

The only fishing you can do is with a rod/hand line and you must not catch more fish than is sufficient for your own consumption, i.e. you are not permitted to hold more than three days' worth of fish (this includes not sharing, giving or selling it to other yachts).

BIOT Fisheries Officers monitor fish stocks and so you must record numbers of fish taken, the species and size. A fishing log sheet will be sent to you with your permit and must be returned to the Senior Fisheries Protection Officer (sfpo@mrag.co.uk) within 10 days of leaving the Territory (this is a requirement, including nil returns). Fisheries Officers have the right to inspect your fishing log and catch at any time.

SCUBA DIVING / PROHIBITED ITEMS

The following are prohibited in the Territory by law:

- Unauthorised use of scuba diving equipment or underwater-swimming equipment (including hookah systems);
- Possession and use of spearguns;
- Possession and use of drones.

DRUGS

It is illegal to import, export, supply/offer, produce or use a controlled drug in the Territory. It is also illegal to cultivate any plant of the genus *Cannabis*. Any person found in possession of a controlled drug is liable to be imprisoned and/or ordered to pay a fine of unlimited amount (see Annex A).

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS AND STRICT NATURE RESERVES

All of the islands in the Chagos Archipelago are nature reserves. BIOT also has 10 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), identified due to the presence of globally significant breeding concentrations of seabirds. The IBAs cover approximately 15% of the land area of the Chagos Archipelago and are also designated as Strict Nature Reserves to prevent any human disturbance.

The Strict Nature Reserve Regulations 1998 provide the IBAs with legal protection. Under these Regulations, it is an offence for anyone to enter any of the Reserves, or to carry out particular activities there, without the written permission of the BIOT Administration.

The following islands are Strict Nature Reserves. **It is an offence to approach within 3 nautical miles, land on or anchor at:**

Great Chagos Bank:

a. The Three Brothers and Resurgent Islands (6º09'-4S 71º31'-4E).

b. Eagle Island (6º12'-0S 71º19'-0E) and Cow Island (6º14'-1S 71º17'-7E).

c. Danger Island (6º23'-3S 71º14'-4E) and the drying coral reef (6º27'-3S 71º14'-5E).

d. Nelson's Island (5º40'-9S 72º19'-0E).

Or to enter the following area within the Peros Banhos Atoll:

All territorial sea, internal water, land and inter-tidal of Peros Banhos (5º20'-5S 71º51'-0E) to the east of a line between the eastern extremities of Moresby Island and Fouquet Island and extended on the same azimuth to the territorial sea limit.

If there is any doubt as to the extent of these boundaries, charts issued by the UK Hydrographic Office should be consulted.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

Please assist the conservation of BIOT environment by adhering to the following and by ensuring that others visiting the Territory also respect it.

- You are not permitted to remain ashore overnight (between sunset and sunrise) nor set up an encampment nor erect any structure or installation. Any such infringement will be dismantled and disposed of without compensation. Other property left ashore unattended is similarly liable.

- **The old plantation buildings and other structures on the islands are protected in BIOT law and any damage or vandalism is a criminal offence carrying a potential fine of up to £5000.**

- Examinations of the old buildings at Ile du Coin and Ile Boddam have shown structural defects. These buildings are out of bounds.

- All fauna and flora are protected by law: The following are, for example, prohibited:

  - The collection of shells, molluscs and any specified dead coral, whether taken alive or not;
  - The intentional or reckless killing or injuring of any crustacea (including crabs and lobsters) and mollusca (including octopuses), or the possession of these creatures either alive or dead;
  - The intentional or reckless killing of animals (or the possession of animals, alive or dead);
  - Intentionally or recklessly destroying, damaging or taking a wild bird's nest, wild bird's egg or turtle's egg;
  - Intentionally or recklessly disturbing dependent young of a wild bird;
  - Wilfully or recklessly taking or being in possession of any specified flora;
  - Taking any alive or dead wild animal (other than permitted rod or line caught fish) out of the Territory.

- Vegetation must not be cut; it protects the shore from erosion and provides habitat for the islands' natural inhabitants.

- Fauna and flora from outside the Chagos Archipelago must not be introduced into the Territory. Alien species of vegetation and animals can have a devastating effect on the natural ecology of the Archipelago. In particular, pets are not to be landed. See section on biosecurity below for further information.

- **All rubbish/garbage is to be removed** (no waste, including non-native organic, or material for recycling, may be left on the islands). There is no refuse collection service. Organic waste may be dumped at sea but only beyond 3 nautical miles from any island or shallow bank.

BIOSECURITY

Visitors to BIOT must be extremely careful to prevent the introduction of invasive non-native species. Please respect the following rules:

- ***Prior to arrival***

  - Scrub your hulls to remove the many hitchhikers which are found on weedy hulls;
  - Inspect all containers and wash all fruit and vegetables when provisioning. No living organisms should come with you;
  - Store all food in rodent-proof containers;
  - Have a supply of pest control on-board including rodent traps (particularly in food storage and preparation areas) and sticky insect traps;
  - Empty any bilge or ballast water in the open sea before entering BIOT waters.

- ***In BIOT***

  - Don't keep live plants on your vessel – these are likely to house insects and micro-organisms on the plant and in the soil;
  - Don't take fresh food ashore – this prevents any accidental transport of seeds or other organisms;
  - Before going ashore, check everything! All clothes, kit, small inflatables – seeds, insects, spiders, rats and reptiles may be well hidden, so please examine everything carefully.
  - All pets must remain on the vessel at all times, without exception.
  - Please supply the Senior Fisheries Protection Officer with any environmental sightings e.g INNS, garbage, anything out of the ordinary
  - Please also send photos of any species / occurrences that you have noticed with a description of location and size if possible.

Undertake **'Check, clean (with hot water if possible), dry'** measures especially when moving between islands and also when arriving and departing from the territory to ensure that you are not unknowingly moving invasive non-native species (INNS) either across BIOT or further afield. We don't want species being brought into the territory and any species that you accidentally transport across to your next destination, could potentially cause problems in the new location.

WASTE WATER

Waste water has a harmful effect on coral and marine life. It can be poisonous, cause disease and encourage algae. If your vessel is fitted with waste water tanks we would strongly encourage you to use them during your stay in BIOT, but those tanks must only be discharged out in open water, at least 3 nautical miles from any island.

FIRES

Fires are permitted (although not encouraged) and strict guidelines in order to protect the environment must be adhered to:

- Fires may only be lit by a responsible adult over the age of 18;
- Fires are permitted in the demarcated areas on Boddam and Ile de Coin only;
- Fires must only be lit in open areas, cleared of all natural and flammable material for a 3m circumference around the fire, and with no overhanging branches less than 10m from the fire;
- Fires must not be lit in the proximity of turtle tracks;
- Fires must not be left unattended;
- They must be no larger than 1m diameter and built no more than 60cm high;
- You may only burn natural plant materials (no treated wood, plastic, or other man-made materials);
- It must be ensured that fires are fully extinguished (can be touched by hand) prior to departure.

Fire Pit 1

Island:	Ile Boddam
Coordinates:	5° 21.4’ S, 72° 12.4’E
Description:	20m west of small pier and sited behind beach near old plantation building.

Fire Pit 2

Island:	Ile de Coin
Coordinates:	5° 26.911' S, 71° 45.562' E
Description:	Within the square concrete structure adjacent to the beach, in front of the former plantation factory, a short distance from the old jetty to the north side of the island.

Over the years many visitors have liked to do their bit to help the environment by initiating their own beach clean-ups of the ocean-borne rubbish that lands on the islands they are permitted to visit. We ask, however, that you do not burn any man-made materials (in line with BIOT’s fire regulations): given that the vast majority of ocean-borne rubbish is plastics, the burning of this rubbish would leave plastic particles which would make their way back into the ocean. If you would still like to help, we ask that you take the rubbish you collect with you when you leave (though appreciate for many visitors space on board would be a factor preventing this).

For further information on the British Indian Ocean Territory, please see our website: http://biot.gov.io/

BIOT ADMINISTRATION
OCTOBER 2026

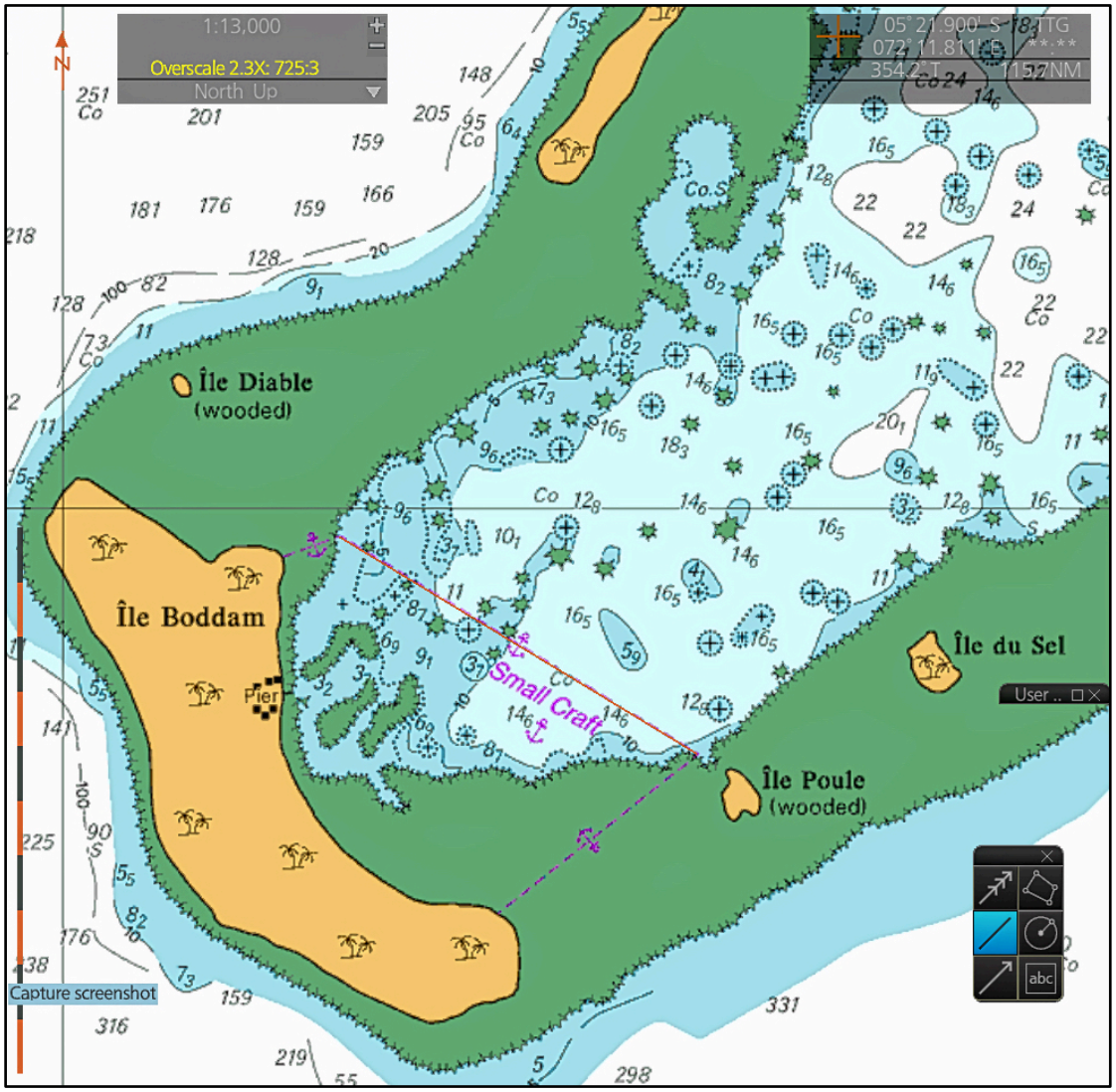
ANNEX A: PERMITTED MOORING SITES: LATITUDE/LONGITUDE REFERENCES

All co-ordinates are in ddd mm.mm and all are deg S, deg E. Co-ordinates mark the ends of lines drawn along or roughly parallel to islands, and the zones permitted for anchoring lie between each line and its adjacent Island. Where possible, please anchor on sandy seabed areas within these sites in order to preserve the reefs. The moorings located at Ile Boddam have not been placed by the Administration, and therefore the security of these moorings and thus the safety of the yachts cannot be guaranteed.

Italics give the approximate description of each anchoring location.

Site	Latitude/Longitude (ddd mm.mm)
Salomon, Ile Boddam *Southwest of a line between Iles Diable & Poule* W (Diable) E (Poule)	 5°S 21.05 / 72°E 12.51 5°S 21.45 / 72°E 13.17
Salomon, Ile Fouquet/Takamaka *Southeast of a line from mid Takamaka to the SE tip of Fouquet* N (Takamaka) S (Fouquet)	 5°S 19.73 / 72°E 15.94 5°S 20.64 / 72°E 15.40
Peros Banhos, Ile Diamante *Northwest of a line stretching roughly the full length of Diamante* N (Diamante) S (Diamante)	 5°S 15.17 / 71°E 46.63 5°S 15.94 / 71°E 45.56
Peros Banhos, Ile du Coin *Southwest of a line from mid Anglais to two-thirds down Ile du Coin* N (Anglais) Mid (Ile Coin) S (Ile Coin)	 5°S 26.30 / 71°E 45.52 5°S 26.67 / 71°E 45.76 5°S 26.87 / 71°E 46.46
Peros Banhos, Fouquet *South of a line from mid Mapou du Coin to East end of Fouquet* Outer W Outer E	 5°S 27.60 / 71°E 47.79 5°S 27.40 / 71°E 48.75

Plots of the mooring sites are on the following pages.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North Up
05° 21.900' S
072° 11.811' E
354.2° T
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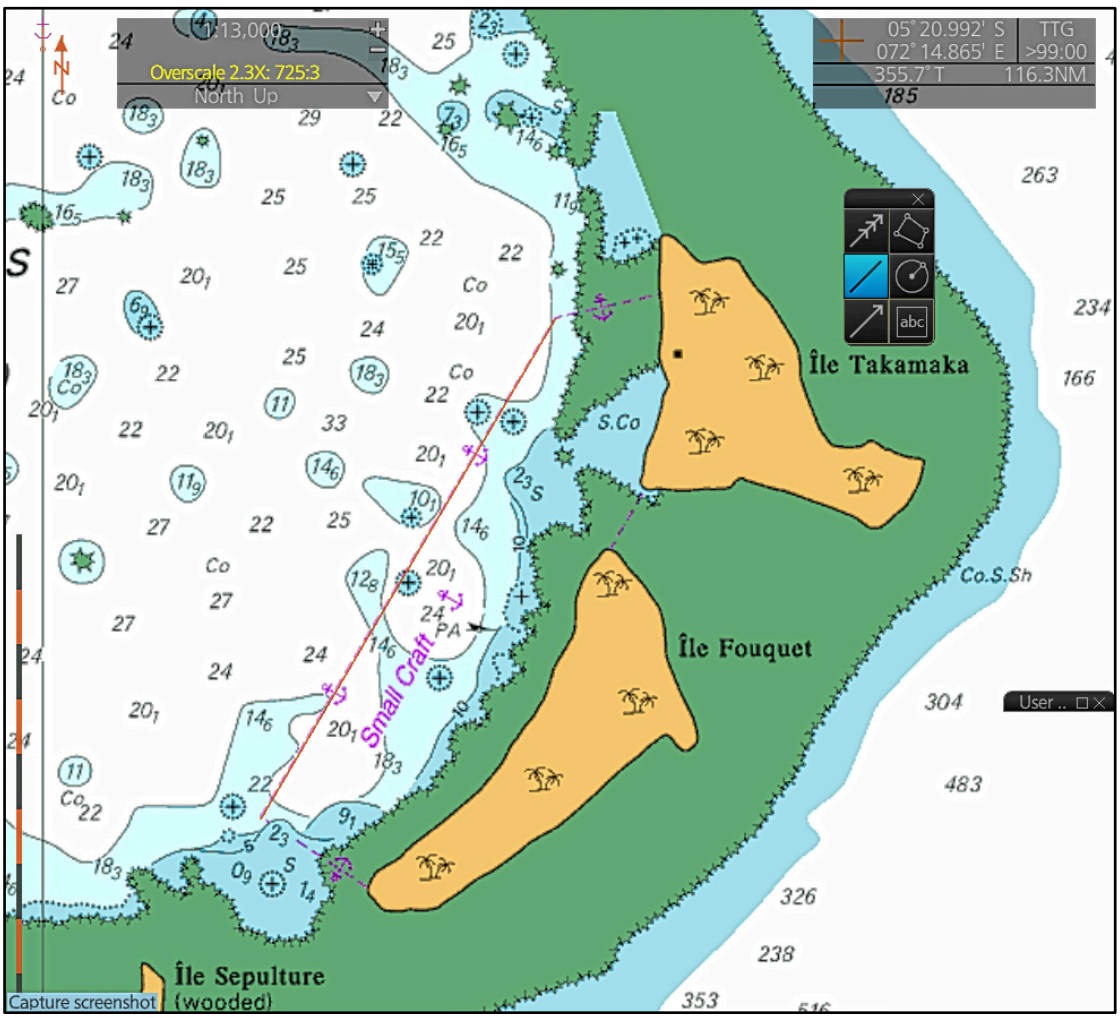
(wooded)
Île Boddam
Pier
Small Craft
Île du Sel
Île Poule
(wooded)
User ..
Capture screenshot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North Up
05° 20.992' S
072° 14.865' E
355.7° T
TTG
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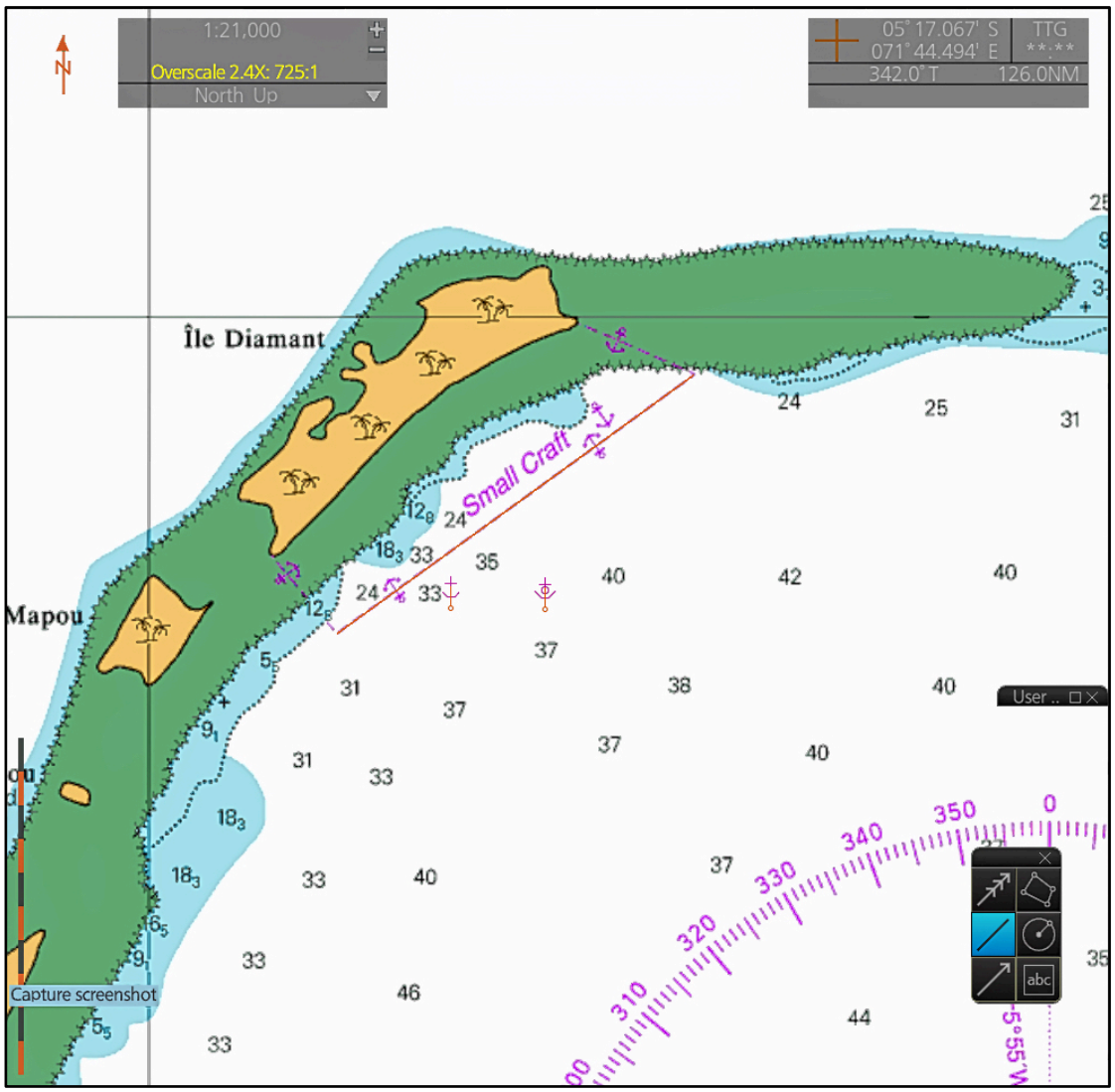
Île Fouquet
Small Craft
Île Sepulture
(wooded)
User ..
Capture screenshot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North Up
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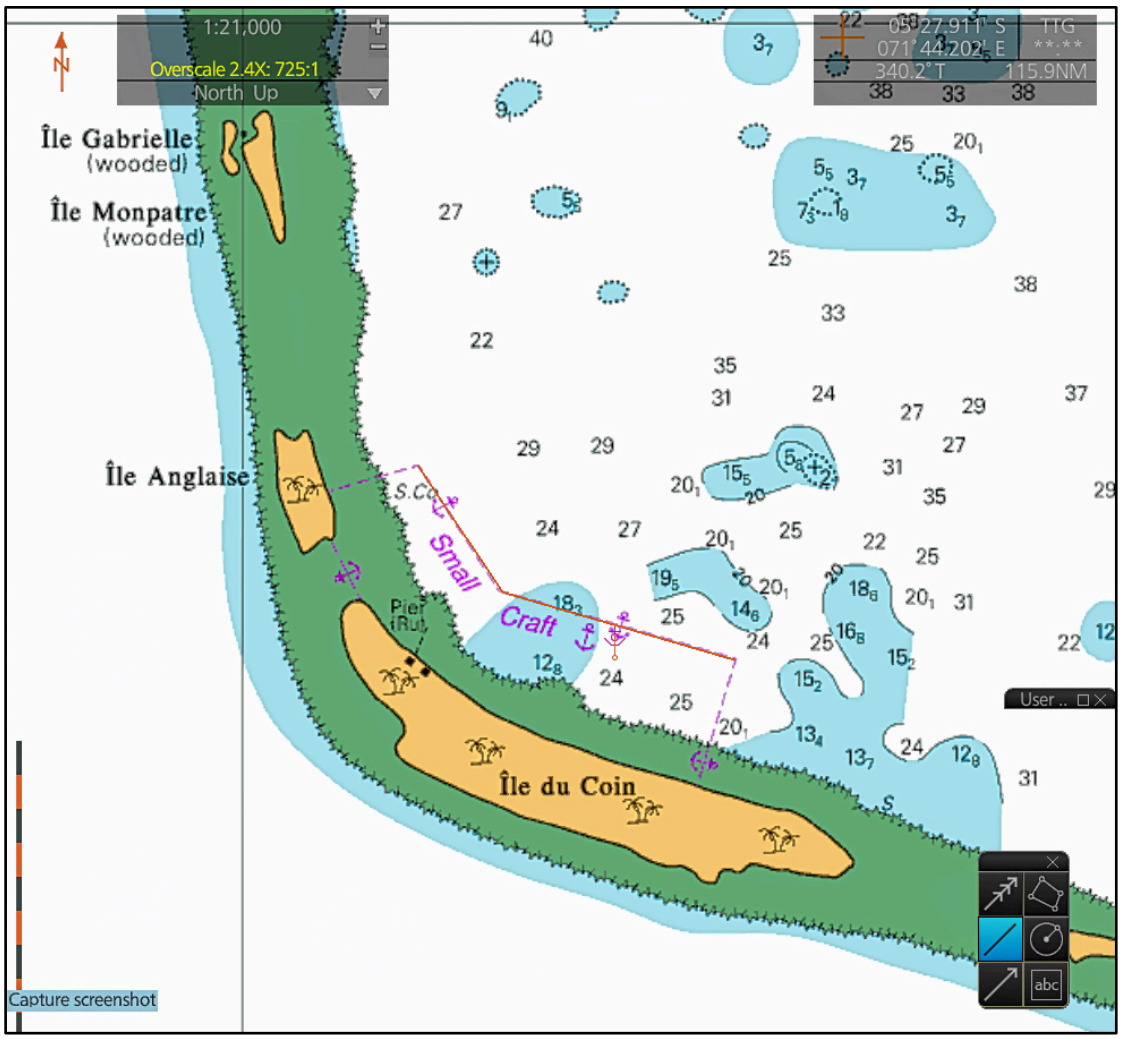
071° 44.494' E
342.0° T
TTG
:
126.0NM
Île Diamant
Mapou
Small Craft
User ..
Capture screenshot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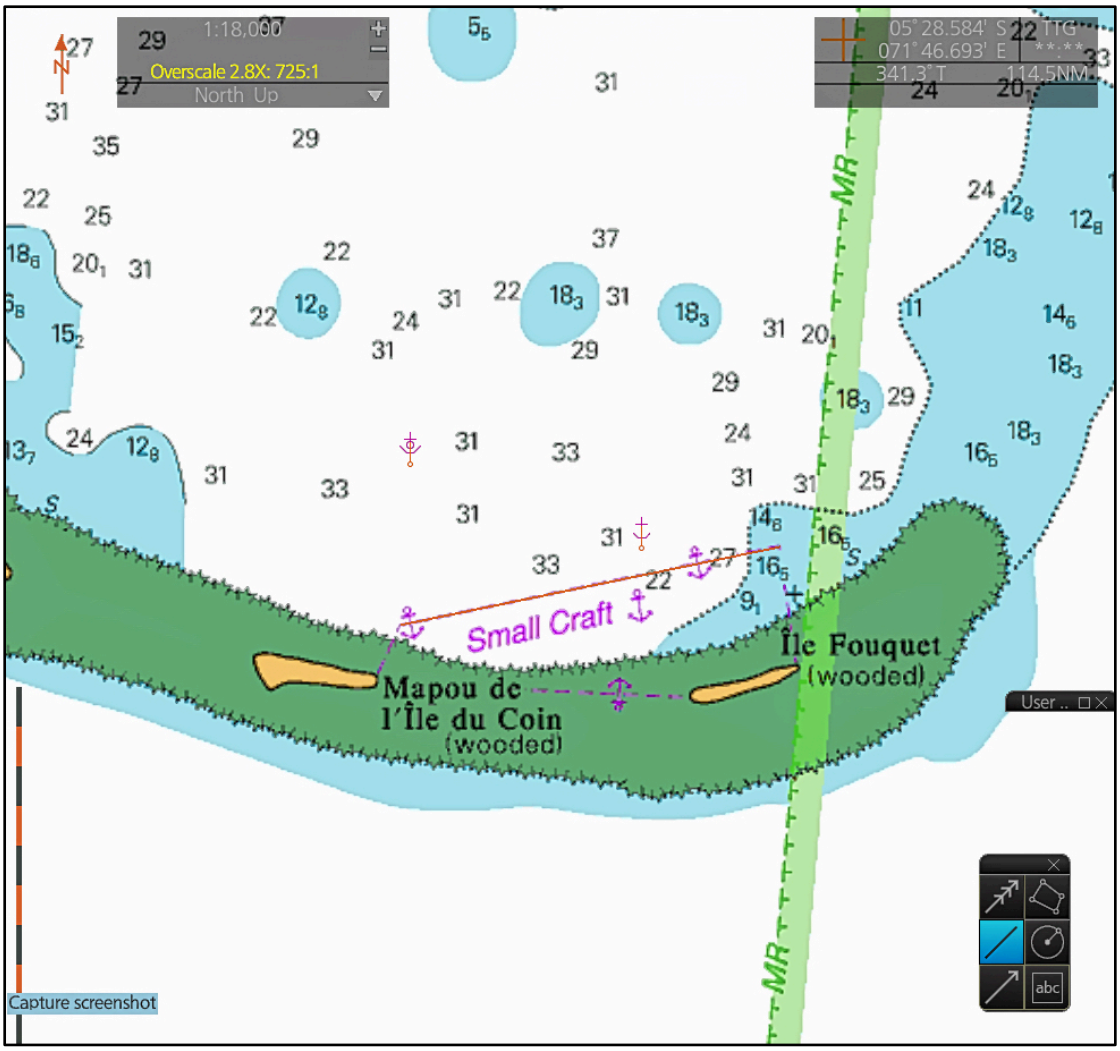
North Up
05° 27.911' S
071° 44.202' E
340.2° T
TTG
:
115.9NM
Île Gabrielle
(wooded)
Île Monpatre
(wooded)
Île Anglaise
Small Craft
Pier (Ruin)
Île du Coin
User ..
Capture screenshot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North Up
05° 28.584' S
071° 46.693' E
341.3°T
114.5NM
TTG
Small Craft
Mapou de
l'Île du Coin
(wooded)
Île Fouquet
(wooded)
MR
User ..
Capture screenshot