



# BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

## GUIDANCE FOR YACHTS

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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: the legal penalties for breaking the laws are detailed in Annex A.

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 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<sup>2</sup> '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 decimated 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.

In the autumn of 2018, the BIOT Administration will be publishing its new Conservation Management Plan for 2018 – 2023, which aims to identify the major existing and potential environmental threats to the Territory and establish a strategic approach to combat these pressures. 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 call on 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<sup>2</sup> 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 permit system is only in place to allow vessels to rest at specific anchorages in order to provide safe passage through the Indian Ocean. In keeping with this, mooring permits will have a maximum validity of 28 days and are valid for the Outer Islands only. You can apply for one, two, three or four weeks, but permits now 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.

**You should be aware that any person who enters BIOT without a valid permit is liable to imprisonment for 3 years and/or a fine of £5,000.**

You must moor your vessel at the approved sites only, as indicated on the last page of this document (page 10), to help conserve BIOT's fragile coral environment.

"Mooring your vessel" 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 Outer Islands Permit Request form. You will be asked to explain any discrepancies.

If your date of arrival is affected by the weather or other unavoidable factors and you wish to amend the dates on your permit, you should contact the BIOT Administration. You will need to do this either before you arrive in the Territory or before the start date of your permit, whichever is first. Permits cannot be amended after they have become active. 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. You should not moor in the Territory outside of the dates on your permit; doing so can leave you liable to an on-the-spot fine or criminal prosecution.

## 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 on page 8).

The reporting format to use is as follows:

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

## 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 emergent work can be undertaken should it become necessary.

## MEDICAL FACILITIES

There are NO medical facilities or air ambulances (helicopter or SAR) in BIOT and search and rescue facilities are extremely limited. 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.

## **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 (6°09'-4S 71°31'-4E).
- b. Eagle Island (6°12'-0S 71°19'-0E) and Cow Island (6°14'-1S 71°17'-7E).
- c. Danger Island (6°23'-3S 71°14'-4E) and the drying coral reef (6°27'-3S 71°14'-5E).
- d. Nelson's Island (5°40'-9S 72°19'-0E).

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

All territorial sea, internal water, land and inter-tidal of Peros Banhos (5°20'-5S 71°51'-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.

## **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.

## **ENVIRONMENT / FISHING**

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.

- ◆ You should respect the old plantation buildings or other structures on the islands. Examinations of the old buildings at Ile du Coin and Ile Boddam have shown structural defects. These buildings are out of bounds. Do not damage them e.g. with graffiti or climb on them.
- ◆ All fauna and flora are protected by law: The following are, for example, prohibited:
  - The collection of shells, molluscs or coral (dead or alive);
  - The 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 killing of animals (or the possession of animals, alive or dead);
  - Intentionally destroying, damaging or taking a wild bird's nest, wild bird's egg or turtle's egg;
  - Intentionally disturbing dependent young of a wild bird;
  - 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.
- ◆ The only fishing you can do is with a rod/hand line and you should 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](mailto:sfpo@mrag.co.uk)) within 28 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.**

- ◆ 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 these guidelines:

- ◆ ***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;
- 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.

## **FIRES**

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

- ◆ Fires are permitted in the demarcated areas on Boddam, Ile de Coin and Diamante 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 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);
- ◆ You must ensure they 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 (Chagos Yacht Club).

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 onboard would be a factor preventing this).

## **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).

## SCUBA DIVING

The unauthorised use of scuba diving equipment or underwater-swimming equipment (including hookah systems) is prohibited.

## 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.

## CONTACTS

Contact	Location	Details
BIOT Administration	London	Email: <a href="mailto:BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk">BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk</a>
Senior Fisheries Protection Officer	In Territory	Email: <a href="mailto:sfpo@mraq.co.uk">sfpo@mraq.co.uk</a>
Visiting Vessels Control Officer	In Territory	Email: <a href="mailto:sfpo@mraq.co.uk">sfpo@mraq.co.uk</a>
BIOT Patrol Vessel (Grampian Frontier)	In Territory	Tel: +44 1224 539348 Satellite phone number: 00 88 167 772 69 31 Email: <a href="mailto:grampian.frontier@craig-group.com">grampian.frontier@craig-group.com</a> Emergency only Radio HF: 2182 KHz (24hr listening watch)
BIOT Police Station	Diego Garcia	Tel: +246 3702938

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

BIOT ADMINISTRATION  
MAY 2018

## ANNEX A: OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

Offence	Fixed Penalty	Penalty Upon Conviction (Not exceeding)
Mooring without a permit	£1,000	3 years' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Mooring where not permitted	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Failing or refusing to produce documents	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Obstructing a Visiting Vessels Control Officer (VVCO)	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Refusing or failing to comply with a VVCO's direction	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Giving false or misleading answers to a VVCO	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Preventing or attempting to prevent another from complying with a direction or question of a VVCO	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Unauthorised entry to the territorial sea of Diego Garcia	N/A	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Failing to observe a visitor or visiting vessel condition	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Overnight camping/erection of structures	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Collection of shells etc, killing or taking of wildlife etc	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Cutting vegetation (not in a strict nature reserve)	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Introducing fauna and flora (not in a strict nature reserve)	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Leaving garbage/litter etc	£500	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Causing criminal damage (incl. graffiti)	£200	10 years' imprisonment and/or and unlimited fine
Entering a strict nature reserve	£1,000	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Cutting vegetation (strict nature reserve)	£1,000	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Introducing fauna and flora (strict nature reserve)	£1,000	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Unlicensed fishing (except for personal use)	N/A	£100,000 fine and possible forfeiture of equipment and boat
Use of diving equipment	£200	6 months' imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine
Possessing a Class A drug	N/A	7 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine
Possessing a Class B drug	N/A	5 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine
Possessing a Class C drug	£500	2 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine

## ANNEX B: 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)
<b>Salomon, Ile Boddam</b> <i>Southwest of a line between Iles Diable &amp; Poule</i> W (Diable) E (Poule)	5°S 21.05 / 72°E 12.51 5°S 21.45 / 72°E 13.17
<b>Salomon, Ile Fouquet/Takamaka</b> <i>Southeast of a line from mid Takamaka to the SE tip of Fouquet</i> N (Takamaka) S (Fouquet)	5°S 19.73 / 72°E 15.94 5°S 20.64 / 72°E 15.40
<b>Peros Banhos, Ile Diamante</b> <i>Northwest of a line stretching roughly the full length of Diamante</i> N (Diamante) S (Diamante)	5°S 15.17 / 71°E 46.63 5°S 15.94 / 71°E 45.56
<b>Peros Banhos, Ile du Coin</b> <i>Southwest of a line from mid Anglais to two-thirds down Ile du Coin</i> 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
<b>Peros Banhos, Fouquet</b> <i>South of a line from mid Mapou du Coin to East end of Fouquet</i> 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.





