

DEMOGRAPHIA



GIBRALTAR: TWINNED WITH CEUTA?

FAST FACTS	
Urbanized Area* Population	30,000
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	2.5
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	6.4
Population per Square Mile	12,000
Population per Square Kilometer	4,800

17 June 2004

The road to Gibraltar from Seville is not nearly so good as the maps say. There is a world class free autoroute from Seville to Jerez de la Frontera (and on to Puerto Real, near Cadiz), but the A-381, which turns south at Jerez del la Fontera is as much winding two-lane road as freeway. Current maps indicate only a single short two-lane segment. But it will soon be as the maps say. Construction is underway to complete the freeway link to the E-15 just east of Algeciras. The E-15 itself takes on the appearances of a tired old US 1950s freeway that should have been expanded to six lanes in the 1970s (rather like Interstate 4 between Tampa and Orlando that should have been expanded to 6 lanes in the 1970s and 8 in the 1990s, and is still 4 in many places).

But, to be fair, it should be noted that the road from Jerez del la Frontera to Algeciras is the only low-quality road I encountered in thousands of miles (even more thousands of kilometers) in Spain. There are, of course, many miles of substandard roads in Spain, but Canada, Australia and New Zealand have a long way to go to equal Spain for the extensiveness of its high quality Autopista/Autovia freeway system.



On the A-381 approaching the E-15: "Rock" in the distance

Before the freeway begins again, Gibraltar is evident in the distance. It is an impressive sight from inland, even miles away. It is similar in height to the Empire State Building, but obviously not so slim.

Gibraltar covers only 2.5 square miles. That's about the size of downtown Seattle if you throw in the Lake Union District. The Rock of Gibraltar occupies much of the area. Americans of my age know the Rock like a brother, having been hectored about it by Prudential Insurance Company television commercials some decades ago. But Prudential did not overstate the case. It is impressive. It is home to approximately 30,000 people, a number that may be equaled by the resurgent downtown of Seattle as defined above. This places the population density at 12,000 per square mile. But it is actually higher, because the Rock, which is much more than what Prudential told us about, covers a large percentage of the peninsula.

There is no need to rent a car in Gibraltar. In fact if you have driven to Gibraltar with a car, it is probably better to park it along the street in La Linea, the Spanish city directly to the north, and the only land access to the colony. It is relatively simple to park, free, within walking distance of the border crossing. The problem is the traffic lines, for God knows what reason. Perhaps it is residents returning. But surely there seems to be no reason to take a car into Gibraltar, unless one happens to live there.

But cars line up for perhaps for one-half mile or more waiting to crowd into this little space. Perhaps the line up at the border moves so slowly because each car going in has to wait for the space freed by one coming out.

Gibraltar may be the only place in the European Union where there is serious border checking and customs between two member nations. Of course this is the result of the fact that Spain, which thinks it owns Gibraltar wants it back, and Britain, which has the ownership advantage of occupation, has no intention of giving it back. But for all the bitterness of Spain over the matter, local officials have provided a very attractive entrance to Gibraltar, along the west side of the approach peninsula. The main street is landscaped and attractively and consistently decorated for the last couple of miles to the border. But feelings are so bad on the Spanish side that some maps simply show an unlabeled extension of the peninsula to the south, without any indication of its name (Gibraltar)

2004 signals 300 years of British rule in Gibraltar. Of course it is a year of commemoration,



Rock from La Linea approach road

though the nature of the observances differs depending on either side of the border. Less than 10 years ago, there was a referendum in which local voters were asked whether they would like to be incorporated into Spain. The "no's" prevailed by a score of more than 12,000 to 44 --- numbers like these haven't been seen since all six jurisdictions of the forcibly amalgamated city of Toronto voted against the plan in 1997.

Perhaps the most disappointing thing about the Rock is that it points away toward the Atlantic, and not toward

Africa across the Straits of Gibraltar. Prudential did not reveal that. The image of the Rock pointing the wrong way would certainly have detracted from its attractiveness.

There's only one place to get a good view of the Rock, and that's from a boat out on the Mediterranean to the east. To the north, along the beach in La Linea, it is possible to get a decent perspective on the side of the Rock, but not a direct frontal view. But any venturing to the African coast to see Gibraltar will view only its side, and that obscured by the less impressive southward extension.

Again, Spanish officials have gone out of their way to make the east side of the approach peninsula attractive. On the opposite side of the peninsula from the main road leading to the border station, they have built a wide street and an attractive promenade along the beach. For any interested in the Rock alone, it really isn't necessary to cross the border. But for Anglophiles like me, there is much more attraction to Gibraltar than the Rock.

It is a short walk from the border station to the Main Street (yes, "Main Street"). This is probably the only Main Street on the Iberian Peninsula (sorry UK, but it is on the Iberian peninsula), not that there are that many in the UK.

Shops line Main Street for a few blocks, and there is even a parallel street of shops for part of the way. It is a pedestrianized street, which forces all of the traffic to the limited roadways to the east and west. The community is very narrow, with residences up the side of the hill, and high-rise residential buildings on the ocean side to the west. Here is a piece of olde England, where meat pies, Scottish Ale and Cinder can be had. In a pub, one could easily believe it was Manchester or Liverpool.

But venturing outside to where the cars live, it is clear that something is wrong. People are driving on the wrong side of the road --- the right. This is to Great Britain as the US Virgin Islands is to the United States, the possession where they drive on the left. This is a holdover from the previous owners, the Danes, who drove on the left when Secretary Seward's successor made the deal. Of course, the Danes have long since converted to the right, but not the US Virgin

Islands (to complicate the story, there is also a British Virgin Islands, and they drive on the left). But, it's probably better for Gibraltar. The flyover ramps that would be necessary for the conversion from right to left would take up much space, and space just over the border has a very special use that would make such structures rather complicating.

Within not too many feet (or even meters) of the border station one comes upon the aviation equivalent of light rail --- an airport runway that is not



Rock from Spanish side of neutral zone

separated from cross-traffic. Here, commercial and military flights operate, crossing the road at grade, and probably increasing the local Travel Time Index. Most of the world's airports separate vehicular traffic from airplanes, just as places serious about public transport have separated it from automobile and pedestrian traffic, using metros that are elevated or underground.

But there are parallels. An example is the Dalton Highway from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay, which my brother Warren and I traversed roundtrip starting on a Saturday morning and finishing late Sunday. North of the Yukon River Bridge and before reaching the Arctic Circle there is a runway, and barriers. Here the road is the airport. It would appear that, both in Gibraltar and Alaska, airplanes have the right of way. Presumably, officials in both jurisdictions have been more successful in keeping the airplanes from hitting unwary pedestrians or cars than have light rail officials in Los Angeles, where something like 60 people have been killed.

But Gibraltar, for all its compactness only borders on walkability. If, for example, one wants to visit the lighthouse at Europa Point (where the Rock of Gibraltar was supposed to be), it is indeed a long and not too convenient walk. I hired a cab, and it was worth it. There is a primitive one-lane tunnel that is as dangerous as a Los Angeles light rail line.



Rock from non-grade separated airport

At the point, one can gaze across the Straits of Gibraltar. Across the way is the continent of Africa, perhaps 13 miles away. The coast is clear. There is Morocco. There is also a peninsula called Ceuta --- read the Gibraltar of Morocco. It is 28 square kilometers and occupied by Spain. Morocco, which thinks it owns Ceuta wants it back, and Spain, which has the ownership advantage of occupation, has no intention of giving it back.

Hmmm....



Walking entry to the city



Fortress entry



Main Street



Morocco & Ceuta across the Staits of Gibraltar



Rock from La Linea beach

By Wendell Cox

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