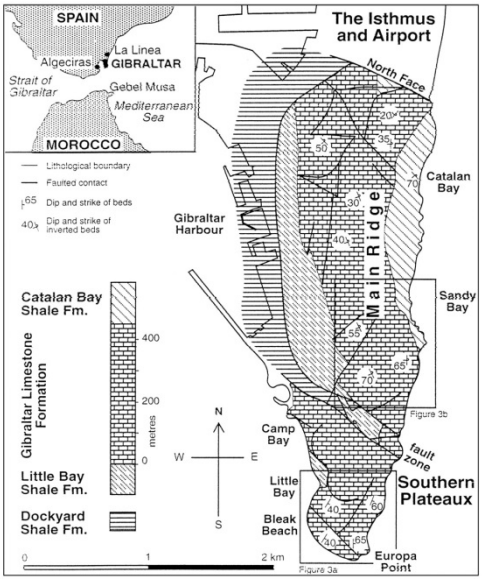
#SpeleoMedit

# pocket card Gibraltar




Gibraltar is a British overseas territory situated on the southerly most tip of the Iberian Peninsula. This small territory is dominated by the iconic 'Rock of Gibraltar' which rises precipitously from the Mediterranean Sea. The Peninsular was initially settled by the Moors from North Africa during the Middle Ages, then taken over by Spain and eventually ceded to the British in 1713 as part of the Treaty of Utrecht. The territory covers an area of just 6.8 square kilometres and has a population of 33,701 according to the 2019 census.

The 'Rock of Gibraltar' is a massive promontory of Jurassic dolomitic limestone rising to form a sharp crest which reaches a height of 426 metres above sea level. The promontory is the remnant of a severely eroded and highly deformed faulted limb of a recumbent fold where the oldest strata overlays the youngest. The youngest strata comprise the Catalan Bay Shale Formation and the Little Bay Formation, the oldest the 'Gibraltar Limestone' and the Dockyard Shale Formation. The shales are generally composed of sandstones with successions of limestones, cherts and marls which contain fossil fragments of early Jurassic age (Lias). The Gibraltar Limestone, which comprises the majority of the Rock of Gibraltar is, pale grey to white in appearance and is a finely crystalline, massively bedded, dolomitic limestone. The strata contain fossils which include Brachiopods, Corals, Gastropods and Stromatolites dating back to the Lias epoch 175 to 200 million years ago.

The karst that makes up the majority of the Rock of Gibraltar contains many caves. The Gibraltar limestone is extensively fractured by minor faults and joints and processes of chemical erosion accelerated by water infiltration, changing climates and sea level fluctuation has provided ideal conditions for speleogenisis to take place over hundreds and thousands of years. The caves are mostly of phreatic origin, with passages enlarged along fault lines. Today there are no surface streams on the promontory so the caves with higher entrances are no longer subject to allogenic recharge.

**Caves total :** 214 (included the marine cave)
**Artificial caves:** N.D.
**Number of speleologists:** N.D.
**Speleological groups and organizations:** 2

| Most important caves | |
|---|---|
| Name | **Length** |
| St. Michael's Cave | 2,3 km |


Vanguard's Cave
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Info card coordinator:
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