



A SCHOOL SHIP SAILING **FOR PEACE** IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

MARCH - OCTOBER 2025



Building on the momentum of the Mediterranean Encounters in Marseille, the Bel Espoir will set sail on March 1st, 2025 for an eight-month long journey. The ship will visit some thirty ports of call around the Mediterranean. Each leg of the trip will host a new group of 25 youths representing diverse nationalities, cultures, and religions.





Le Bel Espoir prepares to sail the Mediterranean to promote peace.

MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir: **welcome aboard!**

“Continue your courageous good work! Be a sea of good, in order to confront the poverty of today in solidarity and cooperation; be a welcoming port, in order to embrace all those who seek a better future; be a lighthouse of peace, in order to pierce, through the culture of encounter, the dark abysses of violence and war.”

(Pope Francis, Speech at the Pharo, September 22nd 2023)



In response to Pope Francis’s call in his closing speech at the Rencontres Méditerranéennes in Marseille, 200 youths representing the diverse nationalities, cultures and religions from the five shores of the Mediterranean (North Africa, the Middle East, The Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, the Balkans, Europe) will set sail on board the three-masted ship Le Bel Espoir, from March to October 2025. In groups of twenty-five, they will sail to some thirty ports, take part in peace dialogue training sessions and enjoy a unique maritime and human experience. On returning home, they will make a firm commitment to peace.

Today, political-religious conflicts, economic disparities and climate upheavals threaten to transform countries bordering the Mediterranean into unliveable deserts, scorched by human greed and folly. These situations are pushing thousands of women, men and children onto migration routes, which are often roads of despair, fleeing war and oppression in search of a better life. They are often victims of trafficking, and sometimes drown trying to cross from one shore to the other.

We’re not prepared to allow the Mediterranean become a battlefield or a graveyard. We refuse to let political arguments and globalizing concepts take precedence over simple meetings between individuals, each of whom is special and unique. Our fears must not outweigh our hopes. We are convinced that the Mediterranean’s collective memory is built on optimism and promise. Its history of warmth, hospitality, and exchanges, its wealth of philosophical and spiritual traditions, hold the key to reconciliation between peoples, cultures and religions.

We know that, all around the Mediterranean, men and women of good will are already carrying out a multitude of initiatives in service of individual dignity and the unity of the human family.

We are committed to caring for our five shores, so that those who live there can look forward to a peaceful future. We choose the culture of face-to-face encounters to guard against the twin deadly dangers of indifference and radicalism. Through these shared moments, through our shared stories, fears can be overcome, bonds rewoven and the will to live in peace rekindled.

This peace will not only come from institutions but will germinate in every inhabitant of our shores as the feeling of belonging to the same human family and awareness that our unity is stronger than our differences grows.

We have a double dream: peace and justice. But it’s not just a dream, it’s a concrete process, to which more and more youths are committing with energy and talent: after the Mediterranean Meetings in Bari (2020), Florence (2022), Marseille (2023) and Tirana (2024), the MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir maritime expedition will sail with the the winds of hope. Welcome aboard!

P. Alexis Leproux,
Episcopal Vicar for Mediterranean Relations



Mediterranean youths, during the Mediterranean Encounters in Marseille.

MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir: a school ship sailing for peace in the Mediterranean

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Med 25 - Le Bel Espoir:



1 training ship, 3 masts,
29 meters long,
2.80 m draught



200 youths on board (8 groups
of 25) of all nationalities, cultures
and religions



Teams on land
and at sea



8 months of sailing, from March (departure
from Barcelona) to October (arrival in
Marseille) 2025



8 departure ports: Barcelona (departure), Palermo,
Valletta, Larnaca, Istanbul, Dürres, Ravenna, Naples
(arrival: Marseille)



Some thirty ports of call:
Tetouan, Bizerte, Heraklion, Jounié, Athens,
Trieste, Bari, Marseille, etc.



8 thematic symposia
and Mediterranean festivals

4 KEY OBJECTIVES

1. TRAINING

Each 15-day session will deliver a certificate.

2. EXPERTISE

The knowledge from eight thematic symposia on major Mediterranean challenges will be collected in a white paper.

3. FRATERNITY

The Mediterranean Encounters strives to create a network of mutual aid and friendship for youths.

4. INTERDISCIPLINARITY

The development of partnerships will lead to the creation of a Mediterranean think tank bringing together cross-disciplinary skills in the educational, economic, religious and societal spheres.

Check out the teaser
for the MED25- Bel
Espoir odyssey



MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir: Provisional navigation chart*

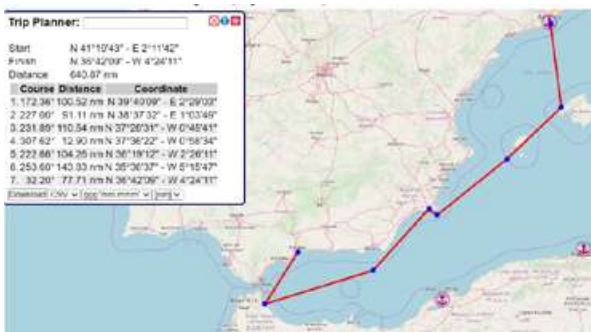


Leg 1 - March 2025

BARCELONA (SPAIN)

Festival: Tétouan (Morocco)

Theme: Multicultural dialogue



March 1st - March 3rd:

CONFERENCE in Barcelona (Spain)
« Multicultural dialogue »

March 4th - March 10th:

NAVIGATION

March 11th - March 12th:

FESTIVAL in Ceuta (Spain) and Tétouan

March 13th - March 15th:

NAVIGATION to Malaga (Spain)



Leg 2 - April 2025

PALERMO (SICILY)

Festival: Bizerte (Tunisia)

Theme: Education and society



March 29th - 31st:

CONFERENCE in Palermo (Sicily):
« Education and society »

April 1st - 8th:

NAVIGATION

April 9th - 10th:

FESTIVAL in Bizerte (Tunisia)

April 11th - 13th:

NAVIGATION to Palermo

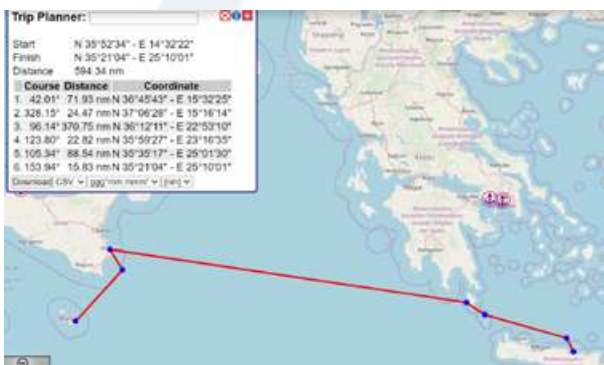


Leg 3 - May 2025

LA VALETTE (MALTA)

Festival: Heraklion (Greece)

Theme: Women in the Mediterranean



April 26th - 28th:

CONFERENCE in La Valette (Malta):
« Women in the Mediterranean »

April 29th - May 10th:

NAVIGATION

May 9th - 11th:

FESTIVAL in Heraklion (Crete)

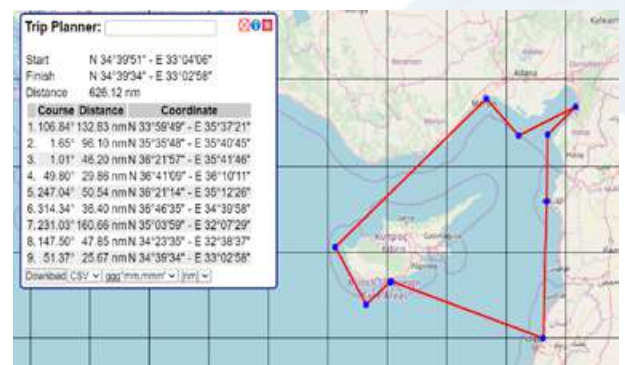


Leg 4 - June 2025

NICOSIA (CYPRUS)

Festival: Jounié (Lebanon)

Theme: Interreligious dialogue



June 7th - 9th:

CONFERENCE in Limassol (Cyprus):
« Interreligious dialogue »

June 10th - 20th:

NAVIGATION

June 16th - 17th:

FESTIVAL in Jounieh (Lebanon)

June 18th - 21st:

NAVIGATION to Limassol (Cyprus)

* The final list of ports depends on geopolitical and meteorological conditions.



Leg 5 - July 2025

ISTANBUL (TURKEY)

Festival: Athens (Greece)

Theme: Environment and development



- July 5th - 7th: **CONFERENCE** in Istanbul, Turkey: «Environment and development»
- July 8th - 17th: **NAVIGATION**
- July 18th - 20th: **FESTIVAL** in Athens - Piraeus (Greece)

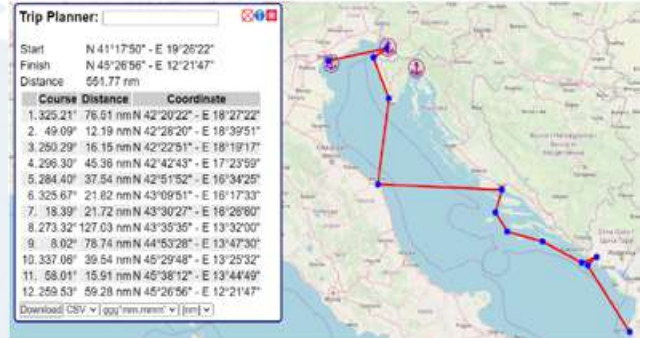


Leg 6 - Aug. 2025

DÜRRES (ALBANIA)

Festival: Trieste (Italy)

Theme: Migration challenges



- August 2nd - 4th: **CONFERENCE** in Dürres (Albania): «Migration challenges»
- August 5th - 14th: **NAVIGATION**
- August 15th - 17th: **FESTIVAL** in Trieste (Italy)

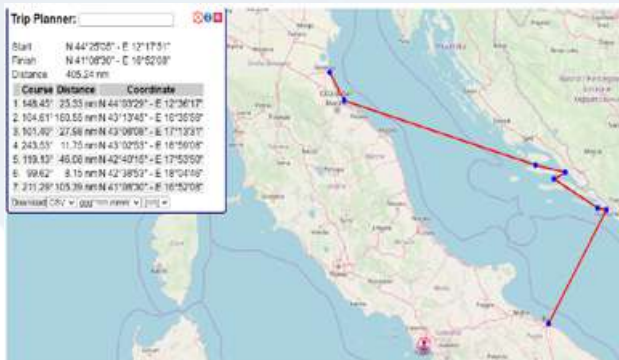


Leg 7 - Sept. 2025

RAVENNA (ITALY)

Festival: Bari (Italy)

Theme: Eastern and Western Christianity



- August 30th - Sept. 1st: **CONFERENCE** in Ravenna, Italy: «Western and Eastern Christianity»
- September 2nd - 11th: **NAVIGATION**
- September 12th - 14th: **FESTIVAL** in Bari (Italy)

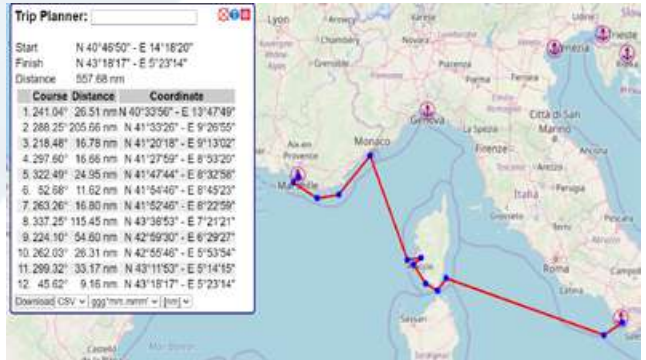


Leg 8 - Oct. 2025

NAPLES (ITALY)

Festival: Marseille (France)

Theme: Building peace



- October 11th - 13th: **CONFERENCE** in Naples (Italy): «Building Peace»
- October 14th - 23rd: **NAVIGATION**
- October 24th - 26th: **FESTIVAL** in Marseille

MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir: partners and crews

The MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir expedition is organized by the Bel Espoir - AJD association, which organizes actions at sea to encourage social mixing and integration of youths; the Mar Yam association, which offers training sessions promoting a culture of dialogue and encounters in the Mediterranean; and the Marseille diocesan association (ADM), which coordinated and hosted the Mediterranean Encounters in September 2023.

Our partners



Mar-Yam was present at the Mediterranean Encounters in Tirana in 2024.

The Mar Yam association

The Mar Yam association organizes “Rencontres Méditerranéennes”, meetings which can be best described as peace as peace training sessions bringing together people from around the Mediterranean.

Supported by a number of networks (faculties, schools, sanctuaries, dioceses, etc.), it helps to develop a culture of encounter and dialogue.

The first meetings were held in Marseille in 2023 and in Tirana in 2024. They will continue on the five shores throughout 2025.

Association Bel Espoir - AJD

The Bel Espoir - AJD association implements the intuitions of Jesuit Father Michel Jaouen: mixing people, those facing difficult circumstances with others, for the benefit of all.

AJD owns two three-masted schooners, as well as a fleet of small sailing, rowing and motor boats, the Île de Stagadon in the Iroise Sea, a shipyard for training in the sea trades, a base at Aber Wrach (Finistère), a base in Paris and since 2014, in Marseille.

It has around thirty active members, and its shipyard trains around sixty youths a year.



Since 2014, AJD has an office in Marseille.



The diocesan association of Marseille participated in the Rencontres Méditerranéennes in 2023.

The diocesan association of Marseille

Through its Mediterranean Relations Department, the Marseille diocesan association is committed to promoting the Mediterranean peace process. As such, it helped organize the Rencontres méditerranéennes in Marseille in September 2023.





200 giovani navigheranno su Le Bel Espoir per otto mesi.

Crew on board

200 youths on board

- ➔ From all five shores
- ➔ Of different nationalities, cultures and religions
- ➔ Engaged citizens and involved in their communities in their respective countries
- ➔ Curious to learn more about the Mediterranean region
- ➔ Open to meeting others
- ➔ Interested in training with other young people
- ➔ Willing to take action to build peace in the Mediterranean



For each leg of the trip at sea (AJD)

1 skipper
6 AJD crew members
25 youths on board



On land, for each stopover country (Mar-Yam)

1 steering committee
1 facilitation and events team
1 logistics team

Typical program between stopovers:

- ➔ Youths arrive in the port of departure
- ➔ 3-day thematic symposium/conference
- ➔ Take accommodations on board ship
- ➔ Ten-days of sailing with intermediate stopovers
- ➔ Navigation, maneuvers, and community life on board.
- ➔ Training session on dialogue for peace
- ➔ Welcome festival in port of arrival
- ➔ Commitment to peace





Bel-Espoir at sea



MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir: a famous three masts

The Bel Espoir II is a 29-meter, three-masted schooner with a 2.80-meter draught. She was built in 1944 in Denmark, to transport livestock between Copenhagen and Hamburg.

Following the Thalassa operation in 1993, an influx of donations enabled her restoration. Nearly put away in 2017, Bel-Espoir was saved by a second restoration. After a major refit, which gave her a new steel hull, while preserving her original rigging, she was able to set sail again in the summer of 2023, and is now preparing to sail the Mediterranean.



The hull of the bel-Espoir, before refitting



Bel-Espoir during the restoration



First outing in 2023 following two years of refurbishments.



Ship operating costs	310 k€
Transportation and living costs for the participants	90 k€
Port fees	100 k€
Overall annual budget	500 k€

70 € = 1 day on board
the boat for 1 youth = 1 day of dialogue for peace



MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir:

reminders about the Mediterranean process

The MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir expedition is part of the Mediterranean peace process launched in Bari in 2020.

1. FRONTIERA DI PACE

Bari - 2020

At the initiative of the Italian Bishops' Conference, a process aiming to foster communion between the dioceses bordering the Mediterranean was launched in Bari in 2020. This process is in keeping with the spirit of the Mediterranean journeys of Pope Francis who, since his first trip to the island of Lampedusa (2013) and then to Tirana, Sarajevo, Lesbos, Cairo, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Rabat, Naples, Malta, etc., has been committed to making this sea a message of hope for all.

2. FRONTIERA DI PACE 2

Florence - 2022

After Bari, a meeting was held in Florence in 2022, bringing together bishops and mayors from across the Mediterranean, in tribute to Giorgio La Pira, a former mayor of Florence who was deeply committed to peace and dialogue. On this occasion, a "Mediterranean Youth Council" was launched. To date, 50 youths sent by 25 Mediterranean bishops' conferences are working on various peace-building projects in the Mediterranean.

3. MEDITERRANEAN MEETINGS

Marseille - 2023

The Rencontres Méditerranéennes took place in Marseille in September 2023, with an assembly of 70 youths and 70 bishops at its center. Many other events took place throughout the city to celebrate: a major festival with theatrical programming, cultural visits, inter-religious meetings, a solidarity banquet, an NGO forum, and more. Pope Francis closed the festival at the Pharo after paying tribute to migrants who died at sea at Notre-Dame de la Garde. He also visited the Saint-Mauront district to meet people in precarious situations, and celebrated mass at the Velodrome stadium in the presence of 57,000 people.

4. MED 24 MIGRATIONS

Marseille - April 2024

In early April 2024, some 50 people from all over the Mediterranean region, as well as from Afghanistan, Cameroon and Burkina Faso, gathered in Marseille to discuss migration issues. Six Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Spain, Albania, Greece, Israel, Italy) and six French dioceses (Marseille, Montpellier, Aix en Provence, Nice, Gap-Embrun, Nantes), as well as some twenty associations, were represented. Conferences, workshops in small groups, a round-table discussion on "The issues and challenges of pastoral commitments in the service of migrants" and an NGO festival took place in a fraternal and festive atmosphere.

5. SCHOOL OF PEACE

Tirana - September 2024

From September 15 to 21, Tirana, Albania, played host to the 2024 edition of the "School of Peace" training session initiated at the 2023 Mediterranean Encounters. 50 youths took part. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Druze, or agnostics, they were selected for their community involvement and their concrete commitment to peace in the Mediterranean. They were joined by 14 bishops, with whom they discussed the challenges of religious pluralism in the fields of education, environmental safeguarding and communication. These "School of Peace" sessions complement the initiatives taken by the Youth Council run by the Italian Bishops' Conference.



Staff members preparing to welcome visiting youths to Tirana in September 2024.

Climb aboard the **Bel Espoir**

APPLY TO PARTICIPATE

If you are between 20 and 35 years old and want to take part in the MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir expedition,

Submit your application on: www.med25belespoir.org before **December 31, 2024**.

PARTNERSHIPS

Are you an association, university, company or local authority interested in supporting the MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir expedition?



To become a partner, contact
Charles de Castelnaou: partenaire@med25belespoir.org

SPONSORSHIP

Become a sponsor of this event now, either personally or on behalf of your company or foundation. You can become a sponsor by providing financial support to one of the three partner associations. Under certain conditions, your donations may be tax-deductible. All donations of €5,000 or more are subject to a sponsorship agreement.



To become a sponsor, contact
Edouard Detaille: mecenat@med25belespoir.org

PRESS

Are you a journalist or media representative?

In addition to relaying information about MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir, we offer you the opportunity to become a media partner of our odyssey: we'll help support your arrival, facilitate interviews on board or during stopovers and on-board reporting. You'll have access to thematic symposia and festivals in the eight departure ports, and we'll promote your content on the www.med25belespoir.org



To become a sponsor, contact
Amaury Guillem: presse@med25belespoir.org

Follow us on our journey:
www.med25belespoir.org



MED 25 - Le Bel Espoir
Association Mar Yam
14 place colonel Edon 13007 Marseille
www.med25belespoir.org
info@med25belespoir.org