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Pillars of Hercules, ancient name for mountains flanking the Strait of Gibraltar, watch 30,000 merchant ships a year pass through. Telescopic lens compresses the distance between Gibraltar's rooftops and 2,782-foot Jebel Musa in Morocco, 15 miles away. Ships of the Royal Navy, illuminated by their own lights at dusk, blaze at berths in sight of Spain. For views of two continents, visitors may ride aerial cable cars to the top of the Rock, off limits until this year.

Staunchly British, the 19,000 Gibraltarians claim Portuguese, Italian, Maltese, Spanish, and Jewish ancestry. Some 6,000 resident aliens from every corner of the world add to the cosmopolitan flavor. With the military garrison, they jam the Crown Colony's 2 1/4 square miles.

Regarded as impregnable, the Rock fell to a British-Dutch fleet in 1704; in the Treaty of Utrecht, Spain ceded the fortress to Britain "to be held and enjoyed absolutely with all manner of right forever."



*BROKEN BRIDGE TO AFRICA dangles from Europe: Gibraltar once formed part of a mountain wall that linked the continents. Caves riddling the Rock have yielded elephant and rhinoceros fossils. The city crowds beside its mole-enclosed harbor. Andalusia spreads beyond Gibraltar Bay.*