

Vessels Transiting the Çanakkale Strait Without Passing the Istanbul Strait

1. Geographic Context

The **Çanakkale Strait (Dardanelles)** and the **Istanbul Strait (Bosphorus)** form the two maritime gateways connecting the **Aegean Sea**, **Sea of Marmara**, and **Black Sea**. A vessel moving between the Aegean and the Black Sea must cross **both straits**, but many voyages terminate within the **Sea of Marmara**, resulting in transits through Çanakkale only.

The **Sea of Marmara** is a major industrial and logistical hub that hosts Turkey's largest ports, refineries, LNG terminals, and shipyards. This regional concentration of maritime infrastructure explains why annual transit counts through Çanakkale often exceed those through the Istanbul Strait.

2. Categories of Çanakkale-Only Traffic

2.1 Container Ships

Container ships serving Marmara terminals such as **Ambarlı (Marport, Kumport, Mardaş)**, **Tekirdağ (Asyaport)**, and **İzmit Bay (DP World Yarımca, Evyap)** enter Turkey from the Aegean via Çanakkale. Their routes originate in the Mediterranean or Western Europe and terminate in these Marmara ports, making traversal of the Bosphorus unnecessary.

2.2 Ro-Ro and Car Carriers

Ro-Ro and automobile carriers on **Europe–Turkey trade routes** (e.g., **Trieste–Pendik**, **Trieste–Yalova**) use Çanakkale to access Marmara's western shore. These vessels deliver freight and vehicles directly to Turkish logistics terminals and return to Europe without continuing northward.

2.3 Tankers and LNG Carriers

Energy transport vessels supply the **Tüpraş İzmit refinery** and the **BOTAŞ Marmara Ereğlisi LNG Terminal**. These ships bring crude oil, petroleum products, or liquefied natural gas from the Mediterranean and discharge at these Marmara facilities, requiring only passage through the Çanakkale Strait.

2.4 Bulk and General Cargo

Bulk carriers and mixed cargo vessels frequently service **Gemlik (Borusan Port, Gemport)** and **Bandırma** in southern Marmara. These ports handle metals, fertilizers, and grain, drawing vessels that transit only the Dardanelles.

2.5 Shipyard and Repair Traffic

Ships calling at **Tuzla Shipyards**—one of the world's densest ship-repair zones—transit via Çanakkale from Mediterranean routes. Their journeys end in the Marmara, eliminating the need for Bosphorus passage.

2.6 Domestic Ro-Pax Ferries

Numerous domestic ferries, including **Çanakkale–Eceabat** and **Lapseki–Gelibolu**, operate exclusively within or across the Dardanelles. These vessels constitute local traffic but are recorded in annual transit figures for Çanakkale.

3. Strategic Implications

- **Trade Distribution:** Çanakkale-only transits indicate the Marmara region’s pivotal role as Turkey’s industrial heartland and its maritime buffer between the Aegean and the Black Sea.
- **Traffic Volume:** Because many ships originate or terminate in Marmara ports, Çanakkale’s traffic consistently exceeds Istanbul’s by 2,000–4,000 ships per year.
- **Starlink Relevance:** For maritime connectivity studies, the Dardanelles and surrounding Marmara ports represent prime early deployment zones, given the concentration of high-frequency maritime operations and vessel density without the navigational constraints of the Bosphorus.

4. Key Çanakkale-Only Ports

Region	Major Port / Facility	Primary Cargo Type	Example Vessel Classes
Tekirdağ	Asyaport, Marmara Ereğlisi	Containers, LNG	Container ships, LNG carriers
İzmit Bay	Tüpraş, DP World Yarımca	Petroleum, containers	Tankers, container ships
Gemlik	Gemport, Borusan	Autos, bulk cargo	Car carriers, bulkers
Bandırma	Bandırma Main Port	Grain, chemicals	General cargo, bulkers
Pendik / Yalova	DFDS Terminals	Ro-Ro freight	Ro-Ro vessels
Tuzla	Tuzla Shipyards	Ship repair	Various vessel types