

Sailing to France in 2024

Updated November 2023 - Michael Lithgow - milithgow@me.com

The information and guidance provided has been sourced from a number of locations, including the UK government website.



Introduction

This short note will take you through what you need to do if travelling outside of UK to EU and Channel Islands. Do not be intimidated by this process. I have used it many times over the last couple of years and it is straightforward. For those with longer memories who recall travelling pre EU - it is a lot simpler now with the ubiquitous availability of digital devices and email.

New Electronic Process for Entering and Leaving EU

Next year was due to be a year of change with the introduction of two new processes. Both of these have now been postponed. An overview is provided below as they will be terms you will come across when searching for information on travel to the EU.

- ETIAS European Travel Information and Authorisation System. This is electronic authorisation of members of visa exempt countries wishing to travel to the Schengen region. Very similar to the system in use in the USA. This has been postponed to mid-2025.
- EES - European Entry Exit System. This would be used to log you into and out of the EU whereas ETIAS gives you permission to travel. EES was going to be problematic for sailors as it required biometric registration of each individual coming into and out of EU. It was thought given the timescale of deployment that there would be insufficient infrastructure deployed to support ports of entry outside of main ferry or airport locations. This has also been delayed and is not expected to be in use for the main 2024 sailing season

Departing and Arriving UK

UK Border Force have put in place an easy to use and mobile friendly system. I have used it many times over the last couple of years - it is a practical and pragmatic procedure. Note that it is applicable not just for journeys to EU but also going to and returning from the Channel Islands. There are two main components:

- Registering you and your boat
- Planning a Voyage

Registration - <https://www.spcr.homeoffice.gov.uk/pleasure-crafts>

Create an account on using the link above:

- You will need to set up an account on the sPCR (small Pleasure Craft Report) service.
- Once done you can register your vessel providing basic information: name, type, mooring, registration number, MMSI, call-sign, VAT status.
- You only do this once for each pleasure craft.

Voyage Plans - <https://www.spcr.homeoffice.gov.uk/sign-in>

Now you have your account and boat set up in the system, creating a voyage plan is simple and can be done on laptop, iPad or mobile device.

- Once you have logged in you will be taken to a page called Voyage Plans. Here you can view your previously submitted voyage plans as well as create new ones.
- 1st page gives you details of contact numbers for your area of departure - RSrn is South Region - Southampton.
- 2nd page is departure details - day, time and marina location. There can be some confusion as to whether you enter your immediate point of departure from UK (ie Yarmouth) or your home marina (Mercury Marina Hamble). I use home port.
- 3rd page are arrival details. Exactly the same as above. The form provides you with a drop down list of the most common ports.
- 4th page asks you to state if you will be on-board
- 5th page - who will be on board. The first time you set this up you will need to enter names of crew plus passport details. Once entered the system then saves them for you until you delete. You can set all of this up at the beginning of the season.
- 6th page - having selected those that will be with you you will be asked if anyone is 'employed' to provide services on the boat.
- 7th page - usual duty goods questions.
- 8th page - enter your details as skipper. You should also have included yourself on 6th page.
- 9th page - check details
- 10th page - submit

Returning to the UK

You complete exactly the same form except your port of departure with the the last location you were in outside of the UK.

When you enter the 12 mile limit of UK waters you are asked to fly the Q flag (Yellow Flag). The government website states if you do not you are liable to a penalty.

You no longer are required to contact the National Yachtline if you have submitted your electronic sPCR and you have no duty goods on board.

If Border Force have any concerns they will contact you. This has happened to me on one occasion as I had on board non-UK nationals. They proved to be very helpful and pragmatic.

Channel Islands

There is a requirement to submit a form for leaving to and coming from the Channel Islands. This can cause some confusion as there is a line of thought that as they are 'British' there is no need to inform UK Government. However to get to the Channel Islands you are leaving UK Territorial Waters and visiting tax free islands.

Arriving and Departing France

France wants you to visit. They are doing all they can to make this easier but in doing so it has created some confusion and is subject to change.

Note France request that you **do not** fly the Q flag unless you have good to declare.

You should also be aware of the 90/180 day rule that states that you can stay no longer than a total of 90 days in any 180 days in an EU country without a visa. This is a rolling 180 days not based upon a calendar and includes all travel - pleasure, business and sailing.

There are two types of port of which you should be aware:

- Port of Entry/Exit - an official entry or exit point in the EU. Once you have been 'stamped' in you are free to travel throughout the EU in line with the 90/180 rule until you depart from a port of entry/exit.
- Ports with Special Dispensation - allows you to enter a region of France and travel within that region only. You are not approved to travel beyond the region or to another country.

PAF and PPF

These are two terms you will come across frequently:

- PAF - Police Aux Frontiere - responsible for controlling entry/exit into France - equivalent of UK Border Force.
- PPF - Preavis Police Aux Frontiers - the form that needs to be completed upon arrival and departure.

A typical form - this one is for Cherbourg can be found here: https://www.portchantereyne.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/Port_Chantereyne/Services_et_demarches/Informations_pratiques/Formulaire_PAF_plaisanciers_britanniques.pdf

It is simple to complete. Whilst many ports ask you to email, it is worth printing out a hard copy and take with you a handful of 'blanks'. The same form is used at all official ports of entry and exit.

Note a separate form needs to be completed for both arrival and departure.

You (this includes all of your crew no matter the age) will be required upon arrival and departure to visit the PAF to present your passports for stamping. It is important to do this when you leave otherwise the EU clock keeps ticking and it will be assumed you are still in the UK which can cause issue if you go beyond the 90 days in 180 days.

Check local marina website or contact them to find out if there are any local arrangements in place to have your passport stamped. For example in Cherbourg during the summer months, the PAF visit the marina twice per day to stamp passports.

France - Channel Ports of Entry/Exit

The designated ports of entry/exit on the French Channel coast are:

- Dunkirk
- Calais
- Dieppe
- Le Havre

- Honfleur
- Caen-Ouistreham
- Cherbourg
- Carteret
- Granville
- St Malo
- St Brieuc/Légué
- Roscoff
- Brest.

Ports with Special Dispensation - Temporary Derogation

These ports cause the most confusion. They are subject to change, are seasonal and have specific rules pertaining to their use. As a general statement ports of special dispensation/derogation are regionally based/grouped together. You can enter one of the members of the group and depart from another member of the group but not onward travel to other parts of France or Schengen without going through an official port of entry or exit.

Taking the example of N Brittany in 2023. The ports which had temporary derogation were: Saint-Cast, Saint-Quay, Lezardrieux, Treguier and Trebuerden. These ports used the same form:

- Download form and send to the marina office 24 hours before arrival.
- Marina office forwarded to Saint-Brieuc for processing.
- Marina office, once form has been validated returns it to you.
- You retain a copy on board and it acts as the 'Schengen Stamp' for duration of stay.
- Departure must be from one of the ports in the group.
- Download Declaration of Departure and submit. If there are changes to crew then there is a need to contact the 'controlling station' - Saint-Brieuc - to let them know.

A list of Ports of Special Dispensation will be published for 2024 once known. This is unlikely to be before May 2024.

The groups of ports of special dispensation for 2023 were:

- Binic, Paimpol and Pontrieux
- Saint-Cast, Saint-Quay, Lezardrieux, Treguier and Trebuerden

In addition there were a number of individual ports where you could arrive and depart in 2023:

- Carentan
- St Vast
- Barfleur
- Dielette
- Carteret
- Portbail
- Granville

Help and Assistance

If you have any questions feel free to contact Michael Lithgow milithgow@me.com

The information provided is known knowledge as at November 2023. As we enter the 2024 season there are likely to be changes particularly relating to Ports with Special Dispensation - so check before you depart for a Channel Port. Marina websites are usually very helpful or ring/email them. They want you to visit and will be helpful.

