

Ferry Crossings to France

Contributed by Martyn Davis
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Have you ever traveled to France by ferry? If you have you will know how convenient it is having all the onboard facilities from duty free shopping, restaurants, cafes etc. and for the families you will be so grateful for the children's amusement areas.

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If you are looking at visiting France, then going over the water by ferry crossing is a very popular way of traveling especially from the United Kingdom and for some it can be a lot more fun than sitting in an airport hoping that the plane is going to depart on time!

And with so many different ferry operators, like P&O Ferries, Sea France, Norfolk Line, etc. and with the numerous departure points in and around Europe, which range from Dover in England, Cork in Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey, Olbia in Sardinia and Bastia in Corsica, you will be able to find the best possible crossing for your particular needs.

{bot_wrgoogle}Personally, we prefer traveling by ferry crossing to France, as we make it part of our holiday experience and it gives you flexibility of travel, because even though we leave in plenty of time to negotiate the atrocious UK roads, you can quite easily end up stuck in a jam and if it were by plane, you can have a lot more hassle getting another flight, whereas if we are early, sometimes we can get an earlier crossing, or if late, the cross channel operators will do their best to get you on the next ferry, which is not too long to wait, and there is no extra charge providing that you are booking in within three hours either way of your designated time you have booked.

But instead of the standard ferry crossings we think about, for example Dover to Calais that we normally use, there are also speed ferries now operating exclusively for car passengers between Britain and France and the crossing takes just 50 minutes, also Speed Ferries have exclusive port facilities in Dover and Boulogne and offer low cost tickets from £20 one-way on the all year Dover to Boulogne fast ferry service.

Brittany ferries is another cross channel operator that is able to offer the classic cruise, along with high speed services that sail from Portsmouth, Poole and Plymouth to the ports of Cherbourg, Caen, Roscoff and St Malo in France, and having the option of getting further down into France to places like the port of St Malo, can mean far less driving to get to your desired destination, and this means that whilst on board you can relax while enjoying the many facilities they have to offer, even opting for a cabin that all have en-suite facilities, so you can get a great rest and arrive at your port of call ready and refreshed before the next part of your journey.

Yet for a short ferry crossing, you may just like to do a bit of duty free shopping and catch a bite to eat or a have lovely café latte before walking out on deck to experience the sea breeze and the scenery as you are entering the harbour, but in comparison to a longer ferry crossing, not only do you also have the option of a cabin, but the services on offer are even vaster, with numerous different restaurants, bars, and activities, obviously the ever important onboard duty free shopping and in some cases they even have entertainment such as a band, cinema or disco, mind you, the disco can be an interesting experience in high swells when you really don't need to move as the boat is doing it for you!!

Obviously, they all have Bureau de Change facilities for exchanging your currency into Euros, which is the French currency, but normally you are only ever provided with notes, so it is also a good idea to use a Euro note to get some change and if cannot do this on board then try and do it as soon as possible, as you will find this extremely useful for things such as a coffee in a petrol station or utilizing some of the public toilets.

And even though you can convert your Euro coins back to your own currency on board the ferries, which you cannot do back in your country, if you think you will be taking a trip to Europe in the near future, it is worth while keeping hold of a few coins for this very reason, as it will save you time and hassle next time around.

Now, you are probably aware that you can also get to France via the Channel Tunnel, which is quicker than even by traveling via high speed ferry as the EuroTunnel will only take around 35 minutes from Folkestone, whereas the high speed catamarans take just under an hour and the ferry crossing is an average of 90 minutes, but we have found that with the on board ferry facilities that cater for children of all ages, including the provisions of baby food and changing areas for the extremely young through to play areas and then the video arcades for the older children, it can make for a

more peaceful trip for the stressed out adults, rather than being stuck in a train, even if it is only for a short time!

And if like us, you have decided on a weekend break, or traveling back over the weekend so that your children get back to school on time, then don't forget that most places are shut on a Sunday, so if you have certain activities in mind, double check that it is not a national holiday or odd hours, otherwise you will end up with rather a bored party! And as we always say now, planning is very important, especially in France, when they tend to stop for at least two hours every day for lunch! and this is especially important if you are traveling through France and want to stock up with your beer and wine before heading for the ferry port.

But providing you know to avoid the national holidays (which are always cheaper crossings), if you hunt around you can find some excellent deals, right through from day trips to France, a 5 day return, or even an open ended ticket for any length of time you wish to go on holiday in France and we have found that Norfolk Line and Sea France offer some fantastic prices, but not all operators take all credit cards on board, which is the same for paying for your ticket, such as American Express, so it is worth checking if you always use a card such as Amex.

The only other thing we have to say, is enjoy the whole experience, as it can become part of your French holiday.

About the Author:

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