UK ↔ EU ferry travel documents & border checklist (2026)

Last updated: 13 February 2026

Disclaimer: This checklist is meant to help you prepare for a smoother ferry crossing - not to replace official advice. Requirements can change, and checks vary by route, port and nationality. Always verify with official sources and your ferry operator.

Quick checklist (60 seconds)

- **Passport** valid and compliant with destination rules (issue date + remaining validity).

- If travelling **to the UK**: check if you need a **UK ETA**; apply early (each traveller needs their own).

- If travelling **to the EU/Schengen**: check the **90/180** short-stay rule (use the official calculator if unsure).

- Car travellers: bring **V5C** (or **VE103** if hired/leased, where relevant) + insurance/breakdown details.

- Pets: microchip + rabies + **Animal Health Certificate** (timing matters).

- Pack a **car-deck grab bag** (meds, chargers, snacks, kids' essentials) - you may not access the vehicle mid-crossing.

Avoid unnecessary fees (third-party ETA/visa assistance sites)

Many third-party websites offer to submit an ETA/visa application on your behalf and charge an extra **service fee**. That convenience is optional - in most cases you can apply directly for the **official price** using the authority links below.

- For a UK ETA, use **GOV.UK** or the **UK ETA app**. Third-party sites may charge more because they add a service fee - and they **cannot** get a faster decision.

- Check the web address carefully (official UK pages use **gov.uk**; EU pages often use **europa.eu** or **ec.europa.eu**).

- For pet vaccines and Animal Health Certificates, use a **registered vet** and follow GOV.UK guidance.

- If you think you used an **outright scam/phishing** site (or entered details on a suspicious domain), report it and change passwords.

Official links (bookmark these)

1 **1. UK ETA (check if you need one):** https://www.gov.uk/eta

2 **2. Apply for a UK ETA (official):** https://www.gov.uk/eta/apply

3 **3. Check your UK ETA status (official):** https://www.gov.uk/check-eta

4 **4. UK: report suspicious emails/websites (phishing):** https://www.gov.uk/report-suspicious-emails-websites-phishing

5 **5. EU Entry/Exit System (EES):** https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/ees

6 **6. ETIAS (EU visa-waiver) - official portal:** https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/etias

7 **7. Schengen 90/180 short-stay calculator (official):**
   https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/border-crossing/short-stay-calculator_en

8 **8. Official EU visa calculator:**
   https://ec.europa.eu/assets/home/visa-calculator/calculator.htm?lang=en

9 **9. Driving abroad (GOV.UK):** https://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad

10 **10. Taking your pet abroad (GOV.UK):** https://www.gov.uk/taking-your-pet-abroad

Printable checklist (copy/paste)

Use this as a 'save on phone' list. Tick items the day before you sail.

DOCUMENTS

- [ ] Passport valid + meets destination rules (issue date / remaining validity)
- [ ] UK-bound: ETA checked/applied (if required) + passport used in the application
- [ ] Travel insurance details saved offline
- [ ] Booking confirmation + check-in closing time saved offline

DRIVING / VEHICLE

- [ ] Driving licence
- [ ] V5C log book (or VE103 if hired/leased, where required)
- [ ] Insurance + breakdown cover for abroad confirmed
- [ ] UK identifier on car (sticker or UK on plate)
- [ ] Basic kit (varies): hi-vis, warning triangle, headlamp converters (as needed)
- [ ] Any low-emission zone permits/stickers for destination cities

PETS (DOG/CAT/FERRET)

- [ ] Microchip
- [ ] Rabies vaccination (allow enough time before travel)
- [ ] Animal Health Certificate issued within the valid window
- [ ] Tapeworm treatment if required (dogs)
- [ ] Return-to-GB rules checked

ONBOARD 'GRAB BAG'

- [ ] Meds + essentials (you may not access the car mid-crossing)
- [ ] Chargers / power bank
- [ ] Warm layer + snacks + kids' entertainment
- [ ] Offline maps + downloaded tickets

Real-life note (Saint-Malo to Portsmouth): Our car's clutch failed at disembarkation; staff helped and a flexible fare let us move our return sailing. Full story: ferrygogo.co.uk/ferry-from-saint-malo-to-portsmouth-our-experience-and-visual-impression/

Reminder: Confirm requirements on official sites (GOV.UK / EU portals) and with your ferry operator before travel.