

Travelling to Calais from Dover or Folkestone? RAC advice to motorists

What is happening?

Motorists who are travelling to the Continent will have probably seen that industrial action by French workers and actions by those trying to enter the UK illegally have caused delays on the operation of cross-channel ferries, and to the Eurotunnel cross channel rail link. As a result of this, the most direct route to Dover or Folkestone via the M20 has been subject to closure to implement 'Operation Stack'.

Operation Stack – M20 closures

Phase 1	Coast-bound from junction 11 (Hythe) - 12 (Cheriton) ⁱ
Phase 2	Coast-bound from junction 8 (Maidstone) – 9 (Ashford) ⁱⁱ
Phase 3	London-bound from junction 9 (Ashford) – 8 (Maidstone) ⁱⁱⁱ
Phase 4	Coast-bound from junction 8 (Maidstone) – 12 (Cheriton) ^{iv}

When Operation Stack is in operation, motorists heading to Europe will need to find alternative routes whether they are boarding the ferry at Dover or catching the Eurotunnel at Folkestone. The [RAC route planner](#) can help you with this. In the event of closure, the M2 provides an alternative route to Dover and Folkestone from the M25, though motorists should be warned that when Operation Stack is operating, the M2 and A2 are likely to be busier and delays should be expected. Motorists heading towards Folkestone should continue past Dover on the A259.

Motorists may also like to consider using the M26, leaving at junction 2a, and using the A20 towards Maidstone, connecting to the A249 and join the M2 at junction 5. Traffic around Maidstone will be particularly heavy and delays can be expected.

Motorists can also use the A20 as an alternative from junction 8-9 of the M20 but this is usually the busiest option with traffic related congestion causing motorists significant delays.



Key:

Red: M20 closed during Operation Stack (phases 1, 2 & 3)

Black: M20 closed during Operation Stack (phases 1-4)

Green: Alternative Routes

Orange: A256 busier than normal when Manston Airport is in use during Operation Stack

1: Manston Airport

Phase 1:



Advice to Motorists:

- Plan ahead: Primarily, motorists are urged to plan their routes carefully and monitor for updates of when Operation Stack is operating. Motorists can find live updates on Operation Stack from Kent Police http://www.kent.police.uk/news/latest_news/000000_op_stack.html or from Highways England <http://www.highways.gov.uk/traffic-information/>. Those travelling via Eurotunnel can find the latest information on their services at <http://www.eurotunnel.com/uk/traveller-info/latest/>. Social media may also provide useful tactical information on routes to choose or avoid at any particular time.

- **Check with your operator:** If ferry or Eurotunnel services are subject to delays and cancellations, motorists should contact the operator for any further status updates and information on departure times. We have provided some contact numbers and live links below for assistance.
- **Allow plenty of extra time:** Alternative routes to Dover on the M2, A2 and various other A-Roads will be considerably busier than normal, particularly during peak summer periods. Be prepared for delays in traffic and remember that it will take longer than normal to travel between service stations. Particular areas of heavy traffic can be expected around Rochester, Canterbury and Faversham and on the A20 around Maidstone and Folkestone.
- **Avoid roads around Manston:** In early August 2015, the Government announced Manston Airport would operate as a temporary parking area for HGVs during Operation Stack. As such, motorists should be warned that the A256 from Manston to Dover will be more congested than normal and should be avoided whenever possible.

Advice from other organisations:

Port of Dover advises motorists: "Tourist traffic heading for the Port of Dover is strongly advised to use the A2/M2. Routes are expected to be busy so please allow plenty of time for your journey."

Foreign Office advice: "Check online with your chosen operator and plan your journey to avoid disruption. See [this information on the situation](#). Information about alternative routes and operators is available via this [interactive map](#)."

There are large numbers of illegal migrants in and around Calais, who may seek to enter the UK illegally. You should keep vehicle doors locked in slow moving traffic and secure your vehicle when it is left unattended. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france>

Contact numbers and delays checker

Port of Dover Twitter can advise on estimated delay times:
https://twitter.com/PoD_travelnews

Eurotunnel Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/LeShuttle>

P&O Ferries Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/POferriesupdate>

Kent Police Twitter feed: www.twitter.com/kent_police

P&O Ferries contact number: +44 (0) 8716 64 64 64, and for freight on +44 (0) 1304 863 340

DFDS Seaways contact number: call +44 (0) 208 127 8303 for tourists, and for freight +44 (0) 871 230 0440

RAC Breakdown: 0333 2000 999 (mobile friendly)



Public Affairs

RAC European Breakdown Cover: <http://www.rac.co.uk/breakdown-cover/european-breakdown-cover>

ⁱ http://www.kentnews.co.uk/news/essential_guide_to_operation_stack_1_3924803

ⁱⁱ http://www.kentnews.co.uk/news/essential_guide_to_operation_stack_1_3924803

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^{iv} <https://twitter.com/KCCpressdesk/status/616244730725302272>