

ARTICLE

Passage Planning Guide: English Channel and Dover Strait - 2026/2027

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DESCRIPTION

Passage Planning Guide: English Channel and Dover Strait - 2026/2027

This Passage Planning Guide provides up-to-date information for the safe and controlled transit of ships through the English Channel, Dover Strait and Southern North Sea. The 2026/27 edition has been fully revised and updated with input from serving Deep-Sea Pilots and industry organisations.

This Guide supports all stages of passage planning ? appraisal, planning, execution and monitoring ? and highlights aids to navigation, traffic separation schemes, reporting requirements and regional traffic patterns essential for a safe and effective transit. Recommended routes for NE-bound and SW-bound transits are illustrated on annotated, pull-out chartlets. The Guide covers passages to and from:

MAAS/Rotterdam
Sunk/Thames
Wandelaar/Schelde
Elbe/Weser/Jade.

New material in this edition reflects the evolving navigational and regulatory landscape of the region. Two additional hotspots have been included for the Jade/Weser region in response to the October 2023 collision between the ?Verity? and the ?Polesie?. Guidance for container ship operations in the Southern North Sea has been updated in line with the 2025 revisions to IMO circular SN.1/Circ.344. The sections on ferry and fishing vessel traffic have been expanded to give further information on the navigational and safety concerns involved with encountering them.

Practical advice is provided for Masters of arriving ships covering notification requirements and documentation, along with guidance for the Officer of the Watch and the bridge team tailored to the demands of the Channel, Strait and Southern North Sea environment. The Guide also examines ship reporting systems and small boat crossings, which are increasingly relevant to navigational safety.

Environmental compliance remains a core focus with updates addressing MARPOL and BWM obligations. In line with IMO Resolution A.1080(28), the Guide outlines the use of qualified and licensed Deep-Sea Pilots and provides contact details for recognised providers. Offshore renewable energy installations and associated navigational implications are also considered in detail. To support situational awareness and learning, the Guide incorporates case studies drawn from recent groundings and collisions in the region.

A companion publication, ?Useful Information for English Channel, Dover Strait and Southern North Sea?, is freely available to download and includes QR code links to useful reference PDFs, details of pilot boarding stations for Cherbourg and Brixham, a Pre-entry Bridge Team Meeting checklist and incident reporting procedures.

