

## Learn English With Photos 9 – The Cross-Channel Ferry

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Hello and welcome to episode nine of Learn English With Photos. My name is Jeffrey Hill and this lesson is based on photos I took during a ferry trip across the English Channel from Le Havre to Portsmouth. In the first part of the lesson I'll talk about the crossing. Then, we'll look at some of the vocabulary in more detail. And finally, I'll ask you some questions about your own travel experiences.

Right, let's get started. Although I'm English, I live in the French city of Le Havre in Normandy. Le Havre is situated in north-western France, on the right bank of the river Seine on the English Channel. I usually return to England a couple of times a year to visit family and friends. Ever since I've lived in Le Havre, which is nearly 30 years now, there's been a ferry service to Portsmouth on the south coast of England. The service is currently operated by LD Lines, which has one crossing in each direction every day. The ferry to Portsmouth leaves at 5pm and the crossing takes a bit less than six hours.

We booked online and printed our tickets at home. Since it was summer, the peak season, the fares were quite expensive. The return journey with a car and two passengers cost nearly 300 euros—and that's without any cabin accommodation. It's a lot cheaper in Autumn when you can get some special offers.

You're supposed to arrive at the ferry terminal at least an hour before departure. After going through the ticket and passport checks, you have to wait to board the ferry: foot passengers in the ferry terminal and car passengers in their cars. We travelled in August so there were lots of holidaymakers and caravans either going or returning to the UK.

We travelled on The Norman Voyager, a state-of-the-art vessel built in 2008, which has a capacity of up to 800 passengers, 200 cars and 120 freight vehicles. Here you can see the front of the ship, which is called the bow. The back is called the stern. The Norman Voyager has just one funnel. The Titanic, you may remember, had four! However, unlike the Titanic, the ferry does have enough lifeboats for everyone. The place on a ship from which it is steered is known as the bridge.

To board the ferry, you have to drive over a ramp, which you can see here. After parking the car on one of the car decks, passengers make their way to the upper decks. As you can see, there were quite a lot of lorries making the crossing, as LD Lines carry freight as well as passenger vehicles. Unusually, the Norman Voyager also has an outside deck for cars — not very good if it's raining!

If you've booked a cabin, you'll need to go to reception to get your key. Otherwise you can take advantage of the various facilities on offer. For example, there's a bar, a self-service restaurant, several lounges with reclining seats, an Internet café, and a small shop. I always like to go onto the outer decks to admire the views of Le Havre as the ship leaves the port. For this particular crossing the weather was fine, and I was able to take some nice photos of the fishing port, harbour and beach.

Six hours on a ferry can be a bit boring, so it's a good idea to take something to read. Alternatively, you can catch up on your sleep ...

We arrived in Portsmouth around ten pm English time, which is an hour behind Central European Time, so you mustn't forget to adjust your watch. There are plenty of interesting things to see as you approach the ferry terminal in Portsmouth harbour. There's the seafront and funfair at Southsea, the small beaches in Old Portsmouth, the historic ships, HMS Victory and Warrior, the naval dockyard and warships, and the Spinnaker Tower, a 170-metre tourist attraction.

It always takes a while for the ship to dock, but eventually we were able to return to the car and disembark.

The return journey a few days later was an overnight sailing leaving at 11pm. We arrived at the ferry terminal around nine so decided to spend some time in the brand new terminal building. Here you can see the LD Lines desk, where you can get information and make bookings. Foot passengers go through the Departures area, where their passports and tickets are checked. They are then taken to the ferry by a shuttle bus.

The new ferry terminal building has a wide range of facilities. There's a currency exchange where you can change your pounds into euros or vice versa, a shop, where you can buy newspapers, magazines, books, snacks and drinks, and a coffee shop, where you can get something to eat or drink while you wait to board the ferry.

The main problem facing overnight passengers is where to sleep. The cabins are very expensive and usually fully booked, so most people have to make do with the reclining seats. Some passengers are well-prepared and have sleeping bags, earplugs, and masks!

The ferry goes more slowly during the night crossing so we arrived back in Le Havre at 8am French time.

Fortunately, the sea was fairly calm for both the outward and return crossings, but it can get quite rough in the English Channel so if you suffer from seasickness, you might want to think about getting some pills.

Now let's look at some of the vocabulary we've seen in more detail. I'll say each word twice and you can repeat it after me if you like.

# Vocabulary

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- ❑ **accommodation** (U) — places or rooms where people stay
- ❑ **board** — when you board a plane, ship, or aircraft, you get on it to travel somewhere
- ❑ **book** — when you book something such as a room or ticket, you arrange to use it at a particular time
- ❑ **booking** — arrangement you make when you book something such as a hotel room or plane ticket
- ❑ **bow** — the front part of a ship
- ❑ **bridge** — the place on a ship from which it is steered
- ❑ **cabin** — a small room in a ship or boat
- ❑ **caravan** — a vehicle without an engine that can be pulled by a car or van. It contains beds and cooking equipment so that people can live or spend their holidays in it.
- ❑ **Channel** — the Channel or English Channel is the narrow area of water between England and France
- ❑ **currency exchange** — place where you can change money before going abroad or when you return
- ❑ **deck** — The deck of a ship is top part in the open air on which passengers can walk. The different levels of a ship are also called decks.
- ❑ **departure** — the act of going away from somewhere
- ❑ **disembark** — to leave a ship or plane at the end of a journey
- ❑ **dock** — when a ship docks, it is brought into an enclosed area of a harbour and tied up
- ❑ **dockyard** — place where ships are built, maintained, and repaired
- ❑ **ferry** — a boat that transports passengers and vehicles across short stretches of sea
- ❑ **freight** (U) — goods transported by lorries, trains, ships, or planes
- ❑ **funnel** — metal chimney on a ship through which steam or fumes are released
- ❑ **harbour** — area of water next to the land where the water is calm, so that ships are safe when they are inside it
- ❑ **holidaymaker** — a person who is away from their home on holiday
- ❑ **journey** — the act of travelling from one place to another, especially when they are far apart
- ❑ **lifeboat** — a small boat carried on a ship, which people can use to escape if the ship sinks
- ❑ **lorry** — large vehicle used to transport goods by road
- ❑ **lounge** — a room where people can sit and relax
- ❑ **outward** — an outward journey is one that you make away from a place you intend to return to later
- ❑ **overnight** — if something happens overnight, it happens during the night
- ❑ **passenger** — person who travels in a vehicle such as a bus, boat, or plane
- ❑ **passport** — official document which you need to show when you enter or leave a country
- ❑ **ramp** — a sloping surface between two places that are at different levels
- ❑ **reclining seat** — a seat with a back that can be adjusted to slope at different angles
- ❑ **sailing** — trip made by a ship carrying passengers
- ❑ **seafront** — the part of a seaside town that is nearest to the sea
- ❑ **seasickness** — feeling ill/sick or wanting to vomit when you are travelling on a boat or ship
- ❑ **shuttle** — a vehicle that makes frequent journeys between two places

- ❑ **state-of-the-art** — made with the most modern techniques and technology
- ❑ **steer** — control a car, boat, or plane so that it goes in the direction you want
- ❑ **stern** — the back part of a boat or ship
- ❑ **terminal** — a place, building or set of buildings where journeys by train, bus or boat begin or end
- ❑ **trip** — a journey to a place and back again, especially a short one for pleasure or a particular purpose
- ❑ **vessel** — a ship or large boat

# Questions

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1. What are the advantages of travelling by boat compared with other modes of transport?
2. What are the disadvantages of travelling by boat?
3. Describe a journey you made by boat.
4. How would you occupy your time on a ferry crossing lasting several hours?
5. What's your favourite method of travel and why?
6. Do you travel with a lot of baggage or do you like to travel light?
7. Would you like to take a cruise? Where to? With whom?
8. Have you ever been seasick? Describe what happened.
9. What's the worst journey you've ever made?
10. What do you like or dislike about travelling?