

## **FLYING ABROAD - GENERAL AVIATION REPORT (GAR) FORM FOR EUROPE AND FRENCH CUSTOMS**

This article covers the submission of a GAR Form for a flight to Europe (Schengen). Completion of the form is exactly as per for a flight with the CTA the key difference is the form is sent to Border Force for Customs purpose as opposed to Special Branch, not that you have to do anything as it is automatically done via the NCU unless you fax which you should also recall is actively discouraged!

So, leaving the UK is rather simple, it's not required! You are not wrong in submitting but you don't have to, you can also leave from any airfield. Returning to UK (Inbound) is also simple but you must submit a GAR and you can return to any UK airfield: **Notification must be sent at least 2 hours in advance.**

The GAR form with comprehensive guidance notes can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-operators-and-pilots-notification-of-flights> But the vast majority of pilots will have SkyDemon or another electronic means to hand, so as long as you inputted all the required detail this should go smoothly.

Border Force has an Emergency GAR telephone line only to be used in extremis: +44 (0) 845 723 1110 but note not for use on flights covered by the Terrorism Act 2000.

Of course satisfying the UK Customs is only half of the story... Where many pilots come unstuck is meeting the French Customs requirements or for that matter Dutch, Danish, German etc... Remember the UK is outside of Schengen and its free cross border movement, so understandably you have to tell the other country you are coming and departing to comply with their requirements. You must also land and depart from an airfield in Europe with Customs clearance so do your home work and ensure you comply, French on the spot fines can be eye watering! Typically, you will require Prior Notification with differing time requirements for example Le Touquet is 2hrs notice with the request direct to the airfield.

Le Touquet Airfield website: <http://www.aeroport-letouquet.com>

Please note Abbeville like many other smaller French airports previously used by UK microlight pilots has lost its Customs status. It is not a legal flight to arrive from the UK or to depart to the UK from Abbeville.

The French SIA web site should be high on your list to visit. <https://www.sia.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/> Here in English you will find landing plates and airfield information, customs availability and time notification and who to send it to (try the VAC tab). NOTAMS, AIC Info like the ULM Blois Show. But do your homework to comply with the French Regulations, for example they require a Transponder to enter Class D airspace and whilst this appears not to be enforced to strictly I would recommend talking with say Le Touquet before just turning up! Try the AZBA tab to check on the military low flying corridors activity, all told an excellent site.

Finally, remember what we have discussed is for Customs purpose, as you are crossing the FIR (an International border) a Flight Plan is required for both directions.