

A GUIDE ONLY

POSTED TO LILLE IN THE

NORTH OF FRANCE?

READ ON

1. TRAVEL TO LILLE – ON POSTING AND ON OFFICIAL DUTY

The official means of travel between the UK and Lille is Eurostar to/from St Pancras. Travel is booked through the United Kingdom Joint Support Unit (UKJSU) travel office at SHAPE. Personnel may use their own vehicles for travel but must obtain prior authorisation and will be capped up to the limits detailed below:

- a. Assignment – Lille to UK, up to the Flat Rate Refund from Lille to St Pancras and Motor Mileage Allowance (MMA) to the assignment destination.
- b. Duty Travel – Personnel will be capped up to the cost of travel obtained by the travel clerk. A cost comparison will be given prior to travel. Applications for duty travel are to be submitted at least 14 days prior to the required travel or when travel is realised.

A full explanation of this will be available on arrival. You are reminded to retain all receipts for up to 24 months.

2. ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation in Lille is rented on your behalf by Defence Estates and managed by the Housing Section at UKJSU SHAPE. Service Family Accommodation (SFA) provided for personnel with Headquarters Rapid Reaction Corps tends to be located in the surrounding communities, rather than in the immediate vicinity of the Citadel in order to provide a higher quality of accommodation and garden space. Single Living Accommodation (SLA) is normally a 2 bedroom apartment in the centre of Lille. When you take over your accommodation you should find a folder with a Staff list for the UK contingent in Lille, emergency contact details and other relevant local information.

3. ADMINISTRATION

On arrival at the Citadel there are many forms etcetera to be completed. The in-processing for ensuring that all your French forms and ID Cards are active is quite time consuming. The need to visit SHAPE to complete all your documentation, in-processing

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there and obtaining a SHAPE ID card is also very time consuming, so be prepared to spend some time seeing these processes through.

4. FUNDING ON ARRIVAL

On arrival in Lille you will need to open a French bank account into which a portion of your wages, when you have requested it, will be paid (known as an allotment and paid at FFR). Until this transaction is effected, you will be allowed to cash up to 4 UK cheques per month for 2 months with the Cashier in UKJSU SHAPE. I can pick this up for you, if necessary.

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5. SHAPE

UKJSU at SHAPE provides the support to Lille personnel and families (UK National Support Element (NSE) at Lille is part of UKJSU). Access to SHAPE is arranged by UK NSE/UKJSU. However, it is worth noting that access is permitted only to the Support Unit, Medical Centre and the library. The GB supermarket (Carrefour) can be used but not for tax-free goods: access to other facilities, e.g. any clubs, cinema etc is not permitted.

6. ADMIN & MEDICAL DOCS

Ensure these are all forwarded to Army SNCO UKJSU SHAPE or UK NSE HQ RRC-FR.

7. MEDICAL/DENTAL

The Senior Medical Officer (SMO) and the Senior Dental Officer (SDO) of the Medical Centre explain how medical and dental treatment is provided in Lille.

Primary Health Care

The choices for Primary Care include:

UK MEDICAL CENTRE SHAPE. This is a two-doctor dispensing practice which provides UK primary health care for entitled personnel, dependants and entitled civilians. UK standards of care are delivered such as military medicals, cervical screening, family planning, chronic disease clinics, immunisations, minor surgery, acupuncture, X-Ray, Ultrasound and laboratory testing. Reception tel. no. 0032 6544 5824, Fax 5016.

LILLE. Local GP treatment may be used for routine consultations although we would prefer you to travel to SHAPE where we have your medical records. Payment may be required in advance for treatment (25-40 Euros to the doctor) and prescription charges to the pharmacy. The doctor should sign a 'feuille de maladie' or 'feuille de soin' which should be passed to the UK NSE to forward to the SMO UK Medical Centre, SHAPE. You do not have to register with a local GP; a visit can be made to any GP as long as payment is made.

If you are sent for an X-Ray or blood test you will normally be given a form to take to a local X-Ray 'shop' or laboratory which may not be in the hospital. Payment is processed as above. If medication is required for the X-Ray investigation or equivalent, it may be necessary for you to pick this up from a pharmacy, producing the referral document so the pharmacist will know what is required. This should be paid for and reimbursement claimed in the usual way through UK NSE and the Medical Centre.

A point to note is that as you do not register with a doctor, you are responsible for your X-Ray or your results. You are expected to keep these safe and produce them at the next meeting with your doctor or to SHAPE doctors.

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Please forward the medical outpatient letter to the SMO UK Medical Centre, SHAPE in order that your medical records can be updated and vaccinations or medication added.

EMERGENCIES. For medical emergencies the Service d'assistance medical d'urgence (SAMU) can be called. It is possible that payment for this service will be required immediately. Reimbursement should be claimed in the usual way, through UK NSE to the SMO SHAPE. The telephone number for the SAMU is: Lille – 15.

LILLE FRENCH ARMY MEDICAL CENTRE. This should be used only for urgent / emergency treatment or for pre and post deployment procedures as part of a NATO medical plan. If an ambulance is required the bill should be passed to the SMO UK medical centre SHAPE via the UK NSE. Vaccinations, medical notes and medication should be passed to the medical centre, SHAPE to be added to your medical records.

It is a good idea to acquire a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) – although it will not normally be needed for everyday medical needs.

You can apply for an EHIC, free of charge, using any of the methods below:

- <http://www.ehic.org.uk/Internet/home.do> (click on 'Apply Now' link)
- by calling 0845 606 2030; or
- by picking up an application form from the Post Office (whilst still in the UK).

Dental

Dental Support for personnel and dependants in Lille is provided by the British Dental Unit (BDU) SHAPE. Inspections and any treatment required following an examination would be carried out at BDU SHAPE.

Dental appointments should be made with the Practice Manager within the Dental Centre at SHAPE.

Dental Charges for entitled personnel (dependants and UKBCs) are currently at NHS equivalent rates, paid via a debit system to the head of household/individual.

Your ID card must be presented to prove entitlement.

Emergency treatment should be dealt with firstly by the BDU or if this is not possible a local dentist for temporary treatment and relief of pain until you can get to SHAPE. Payment for treatment will be demanded prior to leaving the dentist and can be claimed back via UK NSE/SHAPE processing on presentation of receipts to the Medical Centre.

8. VEHICLE/DRIVING INFORMATION

Export: If you intend to bring your UK registered vehicle to Lille in order to gain the benefit of tax free fuel, you must apply to DVLA Swansea for a Certificate of Export (V56), quoting the date the vehicle will leave UK. Application is made on Part C of the Vehicle Log Book (V5) or on the form V756 available from Vehicle Registration Offices,

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or from the Customer Enquiry Unit, DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1BL (Tel: 0870 240 0010). Applications should be made 2 months before departing the UK. If you have a new style log-book (approx 2 years old or less) you should use the tear-off Section 11 to send to Swansea. At the moment the process of registering your vehicle in France is a little involved but not difficult as long as you have all the documents required. This process will take about two weeks and can be done at any time during the initial period whilst your vehicle is still insured by a UK company. Details of this process can be obtained from UK NSE. However, you must bring with you the log book in your name (and only your name), proof of purchase and also a Certificate of Conformity from the manufacturer (which can also take a while to obtain, can be quite costly or not cost anything at all, dependant on the company you are dealing with). There is nothing which can be done prior to arrival in post to begin the process of exporting the car, other than that mentioned above.

Cars under 10 years old. A car less than 10 years old (including brand new) must have GV or EU Type Approval. The detail is shown on the V5 Log Book or on a Certificate of Conformity. This can prove to be a problem with vehicles imported from Cyprus or North America.

Vehicle Documentation you must bring with you:

- Registration document
- VAT exemption certificate (if bought tax-free)
- Insurance documents
- Certificate of Conformity

Things to do before Driving a Car in France

Before setting off to France it is advisable to contact your motor insurance company. Some companies only provide third party cover in France, so it's always best to speak to them before you leave to ensure everything is in order and that you have appropriate cover.

French Road Signs and Legal Obligations when Driving a Car in France

- EU Citizens can drive in France on the driving licence issued by their particular country.
- Legally, drivers must keep their driving licence, insurance documents and car registration documents with them at all times. The driver may be liable for an immediate on the spot fine if stopped by a gendarme without these papers.
- It's advisable to carry a valid passport as an additional form of identification. Non -EU citizens are required to carry a valid passport at all times.
- Motorists in France are legally required to carry spare bulbs, a first aid kit, a warning triangle and a fluorescent jacket in their vehicle.
- The jacket must be carried inside the car, not in the boot, so that it can be worn by the driver before exiting the car in the event of a breakdown or accident. Failure to carry a fluorescent jacket can result in an immediate 130 euro fine.
- Alcohol limits are lower than in the UK and the best advice in France as with everywhere else is do not drink and drive.
- The wearing of front and rear seatbelts is compulsory.

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- Children under the age of 10 years are not allowed to travel in the front seat of the vehicle. They must be suitably restrained in the back seat.
- If driving a right-hand drive car the headlights must be adjusted. This can be done either by using stick-on adapters or by manual adjustment.
- Drive on the right.
- Roundabouts in France are anti-clockwise, give way to the left.
- Over take in the left hand lane on dual carriageways or motorways.

9. TAX FREE STATUS

The multi-nationals have been granted tax-free status in Lille. This entitles you to buy a tax-free vehicle and have a fuel card on which you can charge tax-free fuel: the Economat des Armées will then produce a monthly bill. The price of fuel fluctuates daily. There is a small 'shop' in the Citadel from which can be purchased a variety of cigarettes, alcohol and electrical items; however, the variety may not be as extensive as expected, however UK NSE can provide a full list of items that are available, though much will have to be ordered. It is worth noting that in France you are not entitled to go into any shop and buy goods, expecting to be reimbursed the VAT. There is a system in place that requires you to visit Belgium to price your goods, return to France with the detail and quote, obtain a signature for the authority and then return to Belgium to purchase the goods duty free.

10. SCHOOLING

Primary School Education in Lille: There are a number of good primary schools in and around Lille although it must be stressed that the language used is French. There are no English-speaking primary schools in the area.

Secondary School Education: Personnel with children of secondary school age should be aware that there are 4 options open to them:

- Boarding School in UK.
- Weekly boarding at Windsor School (JHQ Rheindahlen although due to close in 2012))
- Local French school (bearing in mind that language is French)
- SHAPE International School (Belgian, German or US Sections). In most cases these sections will not be suitable for children approaching GCSE but, they may be an option for children aged 11-13 who prefer not to board and can cope with a foreign language and a non-British environment. However, please note that SHAPE is approximately a 50 mile drive away from Lille and you would be responsible for your child's transport to get there at the relevant times, rush hour traffic must be taken into consideration.

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Prior to posting, ensure your passport(s) have at least 9 months before expiry date. Passports can be renewed from here through the British Consulate in Paris.

12. MAIL

We have a BFPO address which is the same as SHAPE, i.e. BFPO 26, however; there is no post-office counter service. A receipt and despatch facility is available. Therefore you must ensure you attach the correct postage to items that you want to send through the system; otherwise you must use the French postal system. We only have a collection/delivery service twice a week in Lille, on Tuesdays and Thursdays arranged by the UK NSE driving to and from SHAPE. The UK NSE also keeps a small stock of 1st class stamps.

The BFPO address is:

Name Rank (+ Number)
HQ RRC-FR (Lille)
UKJSU SHAPE
BFPO 26

13. TELEVISION

If you are bringing a television with you, it should be **PAL** or **CECAM** compatible. (worth while checking on this with a TV expert). Some Landlords will not allow dishes to be put up, even on a tripod if it is seen. If television is viewed via a decoder from one of the Internet providers, you must sign up to several packages to achieve a good variety of UK TV. Some areas are not suitable to receive channels through a decoder at all as they receive their TV signal via cable.

14. TELEPHONE

Telephone connections are not good in France. Most personnel seem to take on an internet phone, which again is not good as the broadband internet connection is lost quite often. Land lines are more difficult to connect/disconnect but provide a better service. This is currently under investigation, hopefully, in the near future, I will have something in writing to help you decide what you would prefer to have when you arrive. Internet connection is generally Orange.fr or SFR. There are also other providers but their reliability and ease of connexion is unsure.

15. FRENCH LANGUAGE

It may be possible for Service Personnel to attend a French Language Survival Course at Beaconsfield but advice and authority must be sought from SNR HQ RRC-FR.

Tuition for spouses is not funded. There are courses that can be self-funded at SHAPE or Lille. Further information is available from the UK NSE.

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Advance notice is advised if you intend bringing pets to Lille as the housing stock consists of private hirings and some Landlords will not allow pets. You are strongly advised to contact your vet with regard to Passports for Pets and the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). The dogs listed below cannot be imported into France:

- Any dog of the type known as the Staffordshire terrier or American Staffordshire terrier (also known as Pit bulls) without a pedigree.
- Any dog of the type known as the Mastiff. (These types of dogs can be named 'Boerbulls'.)
- Any dog of the type known as the Tosa without a pedigree.

All information regarding importing of animals into France may be found on the French Embassy (London) website in the Consular Section. This information is in English:

<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Importation-of-animals-into-France.html>

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GENERAL INFORMATION

LILLE METROPOLE

Some information on the city itself can be found on a CD which is produced by the Host Nation for all those who are due to arrive in Lille, including the French themselves. This will be forwarded nearer your arrival date. You will see that one section is only for the French and has no relevance for you. Ignore the request to complete forms as they are dealt with elsewhere.

It would be advisable to have a general idea of the town from [WIKEPEDIA - LILLE](#)

Lille is the fourth largest city in France and is located to the north. It is the capital of the Nord Pas de Calais region and lies near the Belgian border. The Dutch/Flemish name for Lille is Rijsel and you only need to drive 15 miles up the road before you start seeing this on the road signs.

With over 144,000 students, the metropolitan area of Lille is one of the first student cities in France

The following websites may provide you with more information:

<http://www.planetware.com/france/lille-f-cal-li.htm>

www.lilletourism.com

www.vieuxlille.com

SHOPPING

Although Lille is a city, it has a smaller 'cosy' feel to it. There is an *old town* and a newer part of the town. It has a long history and in appearance seems more Flemish than French. In the old town there are many designer shops – and in the newer part many names you will recognise. Shopping in the supermarket: there are a number of product names you will be familiar with. There are, of course, some things which you cannot get here but there will be something which can be substituted. There is a shop not too far from the Palais des Beaux Arts, called Thomas Green's which carries a stock of those things which usually you are unable to get in French shops, e.g. sausages, bacon, British cheese, HP sauce, British bread, Marmite, whipping cream. Details of this shop can be found at www.thomasgreen.fr. However, be warned, it is expensive but good for when you are really desperate.

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The more you familiarise yourself with the supermarkets/hypermarkets you will be able to find much more in them and you can adapt many things to suit yourself. Also, although food is more expensive in France, the supermarkets and hypermarkets have fidelity cards (loyalty cards) which give a much higher return than in the UK, especially if you buy the shop produce rather than the brand name. Also it is generally reimbursed to you on your shopping rather than points which, after a couple of months, reduces your outgoings at the till (caisse).

There are many hypermarkets and commercial sites dotted around the outskirts of Lille that have most things available, although generally restricted to French goods.

For really multi-cultural shopping there is always the Wazemmes Market, which probably has most of the ingredients for cooking Asian or African dishes and is an experience in itself to visit. With food, flowers, fabrics and exotic products, it's one of the largest markets in France, and perhaps one of the liveliest (up to 50,000 visitors some Sundays). Colourful, with a "Soho" atmosphere, you'll often hear an accordion being played.

For a very traditional French market visit the Place Du Concert. A quaint, upmarket food market at the heart of Old Lille, featuring a few regional growers, surrounded by a pleasant cafe culture.

Common French Phrases for Shopping in France

The first thing you should know is that you say hello (bonjour) when entering a shop. It's like saying hello when you answer the phone. If you don't do it, it's weird for everyone.

"Bonjour, Madame." (boh-zhoor, mah-dahm) - Good Day, Ma'am

"Bonjour, Monsieur" (boh-zhoor, muhs-yur) - Good Day, Sir.

"Parlez-vous Anglais? (par-lay-vooh ahn-gleh) – Do you speak English?

"S'il vous plait?" (see voo play) – Please?

"Combien?" (kohm-bee-ahn) – How much?

"Merci." (mehr-see) – Thank you.

"Au revoir. (oh reh-vwahr) – Goodbye. (Casually, this sounds like "ohr-vwah".)

Proper Manners for Shopping in France; Bonjour: The first thing one says is always a clear and pleasant, 'Bonjour, Madame', (Hello, Ma'am) or, 'Bonjour, Monsieur' (Hello, Sir).

It is very awkward for both the salesperson and the customer unless the customer says, 'Bonjour' upon entering a store or before asking an assistant for help. Often, the assistant does not know if he or she should offer to help if this phrase has not been

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spoken. Proper pronunciation is not as important as the gesture. The assistant will understand what is meant. In fact if you only mutter the words but catch the eye of the assistant when you say it, it will always lead to you being served.

RESTAURANTS

As with all cities, there are many, many restaurants of differing styles and costs, so eating out can be a real joy..... It also has its share of not-so-good restaurants. There are a number of booklets on sale in the city describing many of the restaurants, or the internet can be used, giving customer feedback and ratings as well.

TRAVEL

There are 2 train stations in Lille. **Lille Europe** which is the Eurostar station as well as the starting point for other destinations in France, and **Lille Flandres** which seems to have a more local radius of destinations. It does not seem easy to define which station is used for which destination so it is always a good idea to check either for meeting visitors or for your own travel plans. Paris is one hour by TGV (leaving more or less every hour); Brussels is approx half an hour.

By car from the UK, there is a choice of ferry or using the Channel tunnel. Calais is approximately a one hour drive from Lille, remembering that many of France's motorways require payment of a road toll (peage).

Both Charleroi (Brussels) and Beauvais (Paris) are served by Ryanair although not an easy journey to get to them if you have no car. Easyjet leaves from Charles de Gaulle (Roissy, Paris) which is an easy reach by TGV, plus of course many International airlines.

Here are some travel websites which might be useful:

www.ryanair.com

www.bmibaby.com

www.easyjet.com

www.eurostar.com

www.thalys.com

www.eurotunnel.com

www.britishairways.com

www.lille.aeroporto.com

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public Transport is generally good, although for those who live in accommodation scattered around the outskirts it is not always conveniently situated. Public transport includes buses, underground, trams and trains. The last service of the evening is usually midnight, but it depends on where you are going, e.g. the last underground from Lille Flandres station departs for *4 Cantons* at 00h20 or for *Philibert* at 00h30. There is

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a **Reseau Clair de Lune** service which is either a bus or a taxi. You can also buy a book of tickets which reduces the cost by about 10%. Details can be found in a published booklet **Guide Intermodal** which although in French is perhaps not too difficult to understand.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lille has an Opera House, which shows not only opera, but ballet and a variety of other types of entertainment, and the Nouveau Siècle, home of the Lille National Orchestra. Programmes for both of these, and other theatres in and around Lille, are available on the internet.

There are a number of cinemas in Lille and some show films in English (VO - *version originale*) so it is easy to keep up to date with new films – and indeed old ones. One of the cinemas in the centre periodically shows old films or has a week of films starring, say, Cary Grant – great, if you like that sort of thing! There is also a multi-complex (Kinopolis) at Courtrain (Kortrijk) which is about 15 minutes drive from the centre of Lille just over the border into Belgium.

www.mairie-Lille.fr (official info)

www.theotherside.co.uk click on Lille on the small map

Naturally French television is in French (although occasionally an English-speaking film might be shown on something like the Arts channel (usually an old black and white one!)). However, there are a few companies who offer TV through a decoder if you have broadband. There are other options available. Of course, there are also a number of shops in Lille which sell DVDs, not to mention their availability on the internet. (There are websites that are willing to rent DVDs to those with a BFPO address, for example: easycinema.com & lovefilm.com) The British Library in Lille also rents DVDs and we also receive BFBS CDs for those that do not have any UK TV. BBC radio is available through BBCi player.

Young children in France do not go to school on Wednesday afternoons and around the Citadel there is a small zoo and a small children's playground and funfair that provides much entertainment at these times.

The canal that runs around the Citadel, le Deul, is used for water sports (canoeing, fishing, motor boat rides, pleasure boat rides) and the French take great pleasure in 'promenading' on the many paths that surround the Citadel on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Quite often there are activities put on by different organisations in the surrounding woodlands for children.

NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS / ENGLISH BOOKS

The *Furet du Nord* is a very large book/magazine/stationery shop on the Main Square (Place General du Gaulle or Grande Place). They stock national newspapers (i.e. The Times, The Independent, The Mail, and The Daily Express) available on the day of publication. The 2 main stations (Lille Europe and Lille Flandres) also stock national

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newspapers but they only have them on the day following publication. Because the *Furet du Nord* is closed on a Sunday, this means that Sunday papers are only available on Mondays from the train stations!

There are also newspapers that are published in English that highlight the news and noteworthy activities in France that effect the British Communities over here. They are interesting reads and well worth paying the couple of Euros.

The French Paper
The Connexion

Both of these papers are published monthly but there are also a couple of weekly papers available as well.

The *Furet du Nord* also has a fair sized stock of English books, although it would probably be cheaper to buy them on the internet. There are also other one or two shops which stock a selection of English books. [The British Library](#) is near the City Centre which started when the British Council here in Lille closed. They offered the books to the British Association, who now look after the library on a voluntary basis and keep it stocked.

Personnel in Lille can also use the American library at SHAPE although it is a long drive just to change your library books!

The [British Community Association \(BCA\)](#) organise many events, conversation classes, rambles and many other activities.

UK NSE Contact details:

Telephone: **0033 328 14 53 91**
Mobile: **0032 475 99 95 80**
FAX **0033 320 85 16 53**
Email: lille.liaison@gmail.com

		Local	
UK Postal	Liaison Officer	Postal	Liaison Officer
	UK NSE		UK NSE
	HQ RRC FR		CRR FR
	SHAPE		Quartier Bouffler
	BFPO 26		Rue du 43RI
			59044 LILLE CEDEX