# Dover 24/7 documentary reveals unseen challenges of UK’s busiest ferry port



The Channel 4 documentary "Dover 24/7" offers viewers an intimate yet unvarnished glimpse into the UK's busiest ferry port, highlighting its unique blend of operations and services. As the film reveals, the Port of Dover is not merely a transit point but a bustling hub that handles profound logistics demands, processing around 10 million passengers and a significant portion of Britain's trade with the EU each year. Statistics indicate that the port facilitates a staggering 33% of the UK's trade in goods with Europe, underscoring its vital position in the nation’s economic landscape.

Through a structure that echoes the format of various job-focused reality shows, the documentary captures the day-to-day functions of the port, from security protocols conducted by the Border Force to the meticulous coordination required to manage freight and passenger vehicles. The film features scenes of Border Force officers patrolling the iconic white cliffs, where despite their historical allure, they serve a dual purpose in national security. Here, the documentary juxtaposes the serene beauty of the cliffs with moments of tension, such as a freight driver exhibiting erratic behaviour, which turns out to be a miscommunication involving flashcards rather than an actual threat.

The portrait painted by the documentary is not entirely devoid of drama. The viewer witnesses the complexities faced by operational teams, such as Michelle, a duty operations officer, tasked with the challenge of boarding a convoy of six coaches onto the ferry to Dunkirk without causing chaos. This intricate choreography highlights the skilled personnel managing the relentless flow of both goods and people—a necessity, especially during the peak summer months when the port sees up to 25,000 vehicles daily.

As the documentary unfolds, it also delves into a lighter narrative, showcasing the port’s head chef, Paolo, who serves classic British fare—a fitting choice given that the ferry predominantly carries families and tourists. Such insights serve to humanise the port’s operations, providing a taste of the often-overlooked personal stories that accompany the, at times, overwhelming statistics—like the 3.8 million vehicles that transit through Dover annually, amplifying local concerns about traffic.

Community engagement becomes another focal point, with the port organisers hosting an annual regatta to give back to the residents of Dover. This event, albeit challenged by windy weather, demonstrates a commitment not just to logistics but to local goodwill—a necessary balance given the immense traffic demands placed on the town.

The stakes are raised dramatically during the arrival of a cargo ship bearing millions of bananas, necessitating remote-controlled cranes to offload. This sequence captures the meticulous and often frenetic atmosphere at the port, illustrating the pressing nature of operations where timing can be everything. As a storm brews, the tension builds, inviting viewers to wonder about the outcome of this nautical ballet.

Ultimately, while "Dover 24/7" may not offer earth-shattering revelations, it effectively balances a plethora of facts and statistics with the everyday heroics of the port’s workers. The documentary paints a reassuring picture of competence amid chaos, offering an engaging narrative that reflects the complexities of one of the UK’s most essential gateways.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-cargo-information)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-cargo-information), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4), [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/dover-247-britains-busiest-port-review-channel-4> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-cargo-information> - The UK Department for Transport's 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report indicates that in 2023, the Port of Dover processed 2.4 million freight vehicles, handling £144 billion worth of trade, representing 33% of the UK's trade in goods with the EU. This underscores Dover's pivotal role in facilitating a significant portion of the UK's trade with Europe.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information> - The 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report highlights that France was the UK's largest short sea partner country for unitised traffic, accounting for 36% of all short sea units in 2023. Notably, 79% of this traffic with France was processed through the Port of Dover, emphasizing its dominance in cross-Channel trade.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information> - The 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report reveals that the Netherlands accounted for 21% of all short sea unitised traffic in 2023. The Port of Dover handled 79% of this traffic with France, underscoring its significant role in facilitating trade between the UK and mainland Europe.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information> - The 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report indicates that the Port of Dover processed 79% of the UK's short sea unitised traffic with France in 2023. This highlights Dover's critical role in facilitating trade between the UK and mainland Europe.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information> - The 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report indicates that the Port of Dover processed 79% of the UK's short sea unitised traffic with France in 2023. This underscores Dover's pivotal role in facilitating trade between the UK and mainland Europe.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023/port-freight-annual-statistics-2023-international-route-information> - The 2023 Port Freight Annual Statistics report indicates that the Port of Dover processed 79% of the UK's short sea unitised traffic with France in 2023. This underscores Dover's pivotal role in facilitating trade between the UK and mainland Europe.