

Donations for the Calais Camp: what to bring and how to pack A comprehensive guide

How will following this guide help?

Essentially, this is about reducing the burden on the Calais warehouse and the overloaded people that work there organising, sorting and packing.

The warehouse has to deal with limited space and a limited number of volunteers. Donations that haven't been sorted correctly before packing create a bottleneck between the warehouse and the people in the camp. We can't just drive into the camp with unsorted items and expect the distribution to go well. It won't. We'll end up with a distressing situation where people will be pushing and shoving each other, sometimes worse.

Items need to be sorted and organised for distribution so that when they are taken to the camp, the items can be given out as fairly and humanely as possible.

By using the warehouse space and our hard-working volunteers' time more efficiently we can help the people that really need your donations get more of them, more quickly.

If you arrive with ready packed and well sorted donations, we may also be able to distribute directly to the camp without using the warehouse at all.

Why is there so much emphasis on boxes?

Most of the items needed can be packed into boxes. And that will help with storage and distribution.

Many of the boxes in the warehouse are recycled and those arriving come in different shapes and sizes. This makes stacking hard and so they end up being a really poor use of space. It is also a bit dangerous as they can lean and fall over.

As far as possible, the warehouse is attempting to standardise the box sizes so that they only have boxes that are:

Medium: 60 x 40 x 30 cm
Large: 90 x 60 x 50 cm

Please try to pack in good quality boxes that are as close as possible to these sizes.

In addition to more efficient storage in the warehouse, we can get at least 5 round trip distributions from each good quality carton.

This is really important: *each box should have only have one type of item in the same box*. Think about making storage and distribution easy so when someone wants something we can reach into the box and know exactly what it is. That means for example just size 32' trousers in one box, only men's size 8 shoes in one box, etc.

Label the box clearly (and ideally in more than one place) with what is inside (eg. item and size) and how many of each item there is.

How can I distribute donations directly to the camp?

There is plenty of advice here to help you pack in a way that will make it possible to donate directly to the camp with the support of experienced volunteers.

A plea: you will help if you pack for immediate distribution but please don't try to distribute without the support of people on the ground. Distributions can easily go very wrong and even if you know what you are doing, the situation on the ground can change from week to week and even day to day so up-to-date local knowledge is critical. It is very upsetting to see distributions being handled poorly and frustrating to see people distributing in the same part of the camp while other areas go without.

Focus on one item. This is important. If you load up with just one item (e.g. blankets) we can help you to immediately distribute them in the camp. Then we can:

- Relieve the pressure on our overstretched warehouse
- Give the refugees your items one at a time so that it is fair and easy
- Avoid any conflict and fighting in the camp over who gets what
- Help you have a more rewarding experience

If you come with more than one item, we will probably need to sort your items at the warehouse and then decide what to take into the camp.

Footwear

Trainers and walking boots sizes 5-11 (38-45) are the footwear that are really needed. We need the most of sizes 42 and 43, and fewer pairs of the larger and small sizes. At least double the amount of size 42 and 43 to other sizes.

Donate footwear in a clean, wearable condition. Volunteers have spent far too long cleaning thick mud and poo (yes, poo) off boots that have been too good to bin.

Bundle pairs of shoes together, loosely tying them together with shoelaces.

Only place one size of shoe in each box. And only one sort of shoe in each box, ie only trainers of the same size together in one box, only walking boots of the same size together in one box. Shoes are particularly challenging to distribute because we normally ask people to try them for size which can make it a slow process. We need to be able to lay our hands on the shoe type and size quickly.

Wellington boots are in less demand but some people want them given how much flooding there is in the camp. Flip flops are useful for showers but are not considered an immediate need. If you have these, please sort and box in the same way as shoes so they are readily accessible for when needed.

Having said all that, shoes are in short supply right now so if you haven't got time to sort them you can bring them unsorted.

Clothing

Think practical. We need items that are good for the winter and that will last. And please only bring clean and undamaged clothing. That is very important. Some believe that desperate people would be better off with something that is dirty or torn or too large than have nothing at all but they are wrong. We are trying to treat people with dignity and care for their self-esteem as well as their comfort. If you wouldn't wear it, neither should they.

The biggest priority is warm waterproof and windproof jackets (ideally with a hood and dark colour). Sizes small, medium, and large are in greatest demand. Please check the sizes and box the sizes separately.

Trousers, ideally jeans, size 28-36 are in biggest demand. Check the sizes and pack waist sizes separately.

Other items that are needed and should all be boxed separately are:

- Socks (wet socks are an issue when you can't dry)
- New underwear
- Warm men's hats
- Warm gloves
- Hooded tops and sweatshirts
- Thermal underwear
- Men's belts

To quickly and efficiently equip individuals with a range of important items, we would like to distribute **Winter Basics Packs**. Fill a single bag with a T-shirt, thermal underwear, a pair or two of socks, pair or two of underpants, a scarf, a hat, pair of gloves, some toiletries, a torch, and some candles. It doesn't need all of these so any combination is good, the more of these there are the better. The key thing is to make sure that each bag is for one individual and all bags have the same or very similar contents. Mark each bag S/M/L. If possible, different colour bags for each size would make distribution a lot easier.

Accommodation items

Blankets and warm sleeping bags are a key priority. Duvets are not needed. Pack sleeping bags and blankets separately and these can then be distributed immediately. As with clothes and shoes, please make sure they are clean and undamaged.

These other accommodation items below will be received at the warehouse for more targeted distribution.

Tents should be double-skinned and complete. Multi-person tents are very welcome, as well as smaller ones. Festival tents are not appropriate. Please check that they have all the necessary parts to put them up and that they are all packed in a bag that will keep them together.

Tents, mattresses, camp beds and roll mats are probably all too big to be packed in boxes so please just bundle together.

To make the tents and huts more fully waterproof damp proof membrane is ideal for cover and as groundsheets. Plastic tarpaulins are also very useful but need to be large – think at least 9 square metres (3m x 3m) and the larger the better. Please pack tarpaulins separately.

Other useful items that should be packed separately:

- Wood for building (timber lengths)
- Tools, including hammers, saws and shovels
- Nails for wood
- Rope
- Chairs and stools, e.g. folding chairs, camping stools

Many new arrivals to the camp have nothing and have emergency needs for accommodation. To deal with these immediate needs **Welcome Bundles** are essential. Bundle together these items for 2,3,4 or 5 persons: a tent, 2-5 sleeping bags, blankets, torch, emergency long life food, 1x tarpaulin, 2-5 rollmats. Make clear how many people the bundle is for.

Food

Food should be packed for immediate distribution into individual parcels with enough for 2-3 meals in each parcel.

We cannot distribute catering sizes so if you can't pack individual parcels, we need the items below and the warehouse volunteers will then need to pack them into individual parcels. This is very time-consuming so please make every effort to pack them yourselves into individual parcels with 2-3 meals in each parcel.

Packed in plastic bags or bin bags then into large boxes for transport works best. Make sure the bags are tied securely and will not tear open.

This list is not absolute by any means; what matters within a distribution is that each parcel is the same (or very similar). But if you do another delivery at a later date it could contain different items - of course variety is good.

Main thing to bear in mind is NUTRITION, always include the tinned fish and oil if you can.

These items are all good for individual food parcels:

- One pack easy-cook rice 1kg (not portioned into smaller bags please) AND/OR 2x tins potatoes AND/OR plain flour
- 1x tin lentils/kidney beans/chickpeas NB all tins ring-pull
- 1x tin green beans/carrots/peas
- 1x tin sardines/mackerel AND/OR 1 x tin lamb/beef/chicken
- Small bottle of oil (this is probably the most expensive item, but the most coveted)
- Vegetable stockcubes, spices such as chilli, cumin, turmeric and cinnamon, cardamom (for tea) salt and pepper sachets, chilli flakes sachets. Strong seasoning is used.
- Tomato paste OR tin of tomatoes
- 1 bag sugar
- Dried dates/apricots AND/OR rice pudding (please mark as 'sweet')
- Teabags/green tea/coffee
- Long-life milk (preferable to powdered)
- Onions and garlic last up to 2 weeks, please put them in a ziplock bag within your parcel
- Bottle of water

Tin openers are important if your tins aren't ring-pull.

Extras:

- Peanut Butter, nutritious, plastic jars only

- Pitta bread is well-received so if you are packing close to your distribution day do add this in.
- Tins of fruit eg peaches
- Fruit juice (not squash)
- Cereal bars
- Chocolate

If you have the opportunity to buy fresh fruit out there this is highly needed and appreciated, especially oranges and bananas. Apples also keep well.

Please do NOT pack these items (they aren't eaten or take too long to cook):

- Pasta
- Couscous
- Noodles
- Oats
- Dried beans or baked beans
- Pork
- Perishables
- Baby formula milk

Items that are needed and will be accepted into the warehouse for later distribution are listed here. As with everything else, please pack similar items into their own box:

- Pans, pots, grills
- Washing up liquid, sponges
- Cooking utensils, cups, mugs, plates, bowls, cutlery

Hygiene

The warehouse already has a lot of toiletries and demand for these is low. However, they can be packed into bags with needs for one or two people for immediate distribution. If packing toiletries for individuals, place them into individual plastic bags and tie the bag securely. It is important that all the individual bags are of a similar size with the same (or very similar) contents in each one.

Individual bags can be packed with all or some of these:

- Anti-bacterial handwash
- Cleaning products
- Basic toiletry products
- Moisturising soap
- Shampoo
- Shower gel (which is preferred to soap)
- Anti-perspirant or deodorant (they really like the spray kind)
- Moisturiser
- Kitchen paper, toilet paper, tissues
- Razors and shaving products
- Wet wipes
- Basic first aid kits

Other useful items, packed into individual boxes for storage in the warehouse:

- Plastic bowls and basins (usable for small laundry, washing dishes, etc)
- Bin bags (heavy duty)
- Gloves suitable for picking up rubbish
- Plastic bins

Women's sanitary items are NOT needed.

Useful items

People in the camp need phones to stay in touch with family, communicate with each other and get the latest news and information.

These items are highly prized and will be accepted into the warehouse for targeted distribution:

- (Unlocked) mobile phones (and the chargers) that work
- SIM Cards (French Lyca mobile and UK Three 3G)
- Plug adaptors (UK -> continental, for UK phone chargers, etc)

Please pack these separately and of course label the boxes.

All of these items need to be packed separately and will be accepted into the warehouse:

- Fire extinguishers (foam & powder)
- LED wind up lanterns and torches
- Umbrellas
- Duct tape
- Candles
- Tea-lights
- Matches
- Buckets
- Solar-powered lights
- Radio (and batteries)/ wind up radios
- Pens, notebooks, paper
- Bicycle paraphernalia is needed pumps, lights, locks, repair kits