

NAT Guide 2026 - My First NAT Flight is Tomorrow

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29 April, 2026



In the fewest number of words possible we will tell you what you need to know about crossing the North Atlantic. If you have a couple of days to spare, then read the official ICAO North Atlantic Operations and Airspace Manual (NAT Doc 007). Otherwise, pay attention and you'll be an expert in 15 minutes.

So, what's different about the NAT?

It is BUSY

There's a ton of traffic on the NAT. So, ATC squeezes most of it onto the "NAT Tracks" to make it easier for them to keep everyone apart. That doesn't mean it's easier for you.

The rules keep changing

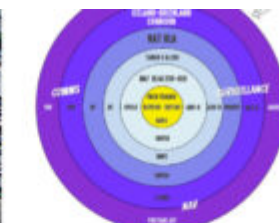
As soon as you think you've got things figured out, the rules will change. So we'll start with "What Changed"

Shanwick Shanwick

When you talk to "Shanwick Radio" it means you're not talking directly to ATC. So, when something major happens, know how to get off track safely without a clearance.

Acronym heaven

HLA, RCL, OCR, CPDLC, ADS-C, OTS, OEP, SLOP, PBCS, RNP. Know 10 out of 10? Good. There's more.



A FEW NOTES:

- 1. The NAT REGION covers the area from 10°N to 60°N and 10°W to 30°W. It is divided into three main areas: NAT TRACKS, NAT TRACKS, and NAT TRACKS.
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The **latest edition** (2026) of the NAT Guide ("My First North Atlantic Flight is Tomorrow") has now been published. This **21-page guide** is for pilots and dispatchers, to help you understand the basics of North Atlantic flying.



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There's a lot of water

And not many airports. So it pays to know which ones are suitable, and closest.

Shanwick Shanwick

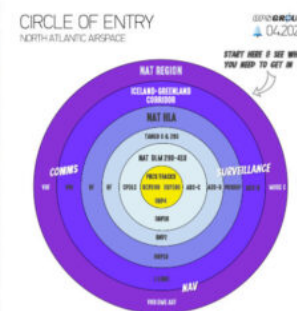
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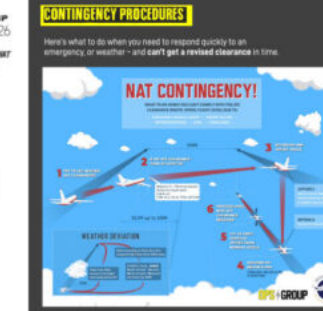
"It's complicated"

Normally, you can get airborne, read the paper, do what ATC says, yawn, and land again. Easy. On the NAT, things are a good deal more challenging. Read on ...



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Contents:

1. What's different about the NAT?
2. **What's changed?** Recent updates (2026 → 2016), including datalink, tracks, comms, and procedures.
3. (Updated 2026) **Circle of Entry:** what you actually need to enter different parts of NAT airspace (now reflects current surveillance and corridor logic).
4. **NAT Quick Map:** Gander and Shanwick boundaries, plus updated routing overview.
5. **Routine Flight Example:** Brussels to JFK (step-by-step): HLA requirements, flight planning, paperwork, RCL vs clearance, oceanic entry, weather deviations, contingencies.
6. **Non-Routine Flights:** what you can do without: PBCS, RVSM, RNP4 / RNAV 10, HF, 1 LRNS, HLA approval, ETOPS, TCAS, datalink - including the Iceland-Greenland corridor workaround.
7. VHF Coverage Maps - FL100 / 200 / 300 across the NAT
8. **Diversion Airports Guide:** practical notes on key alternates from Keflavik and Shannon to Goose Bay and Bermuda.
9. **Airport Data:** updated list including Keflavik, Shannon, Gander, Goose Bay, plus revised Greenland options (BGGH, BGQO, etc).
10. **Special NAT Procedures:** Mach number technique, SLOP, comms, transition areas, exits, and common mistakes.
11. **North Atlantic ATC Contacts:** Shanwick, Gander, Iceland, Bodo, Santa Maria, New York, plus adjacent domestic units.
12. **NAT FPL Codes and Flight Levels:** what to file and how.
13. **Contingency Procedures:** weather deviations and in-flight emergencies.
14. **Oceanic Clearance vs RCL:** who does what now, including timing windows and differences between FIRs.
15. **Common Gotchas:** real-world mistakes and lessons from OPSGROUP members.
16. **GNSS Interference / Spoofing:** what to expect and what to do.
17. Links, Questions, Guidance

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available through the Member Dashboard. Join with an individual, team, or airline/dept membership, and connect with over 8000 other pilot, dispatch, ATC, and operations members.

What's changed?

Now for a quick look at what's changed since last year. We've updated the guide to match how the NAT is actually operating today, and cleaned up a few areas that have changed or still catch people out!

OCR vs RCL - what's actually happening now

We've updated the oceanic clearance section to reflect how things actually work now. **Gander, Bodo and Santa Maria use RCL, Shanwick still issues clearances the old way, and Reykjavik and New York don't require one at all.** We've also added the actual RCL timing windows, so it's clearer when to send requests.

Blue Spruce gone, Iceland-Greenland corridor explained properly

The old Blue Spruce routes are gone! So we've replaced these with a clearer explanation of the Iceland-Greenland corridor instead. It reflects how these routes actually work today - **using VHF and ADS-B surveillance instead of HF or datalink.**

FLIGHT #2 NON-ROUTINE
Adventure 2: A non-routine NAT crossing

There are lots of reasons your North Atlantic crossing might be **non-routine** – mostly because something's broken, you're on a delivery flight, or you're flying a crusty old Gulfstream II that hasn't been updated since the Berlin Wall came down. What you **don't** have dictates where you **can't** go, so let's take a look:

If you don't have RVM, then: NAT Doc 007 Chap 1

- You can fly at FL200 westbound, FL270 eastbound, or FL400 in either direction.
- If you are **HLA approved**, you can climb and descend through HLA RVM airspace to reach your non-HLA level, and ATC may approve you to fly within RVM airspace. If you 1. Are a delivery flight, or 2. Did have RVM approval but returning for repairs, or 3. Humanitarian. Contact the first Oceanic Centre by phone about 6 hours before you plan to enter.

If you don't have RNP4, then: NAT Doc 007 1.3.3

- You can't use the NAT PGSS Tracks.
- If you **also** don't have RNP4 10 (RNP10), then you can't enter the NAT HLA Airspace – except via the Iceland-Greenland corridor under VHF + ADS-B surveillance.

If you don't have HF, then: NAT Doc 007 Chap 5

- You can't operate outside VHF coverage. If you're making a full NAT crossing, then you're basically going via the Iceland-Greenland corridor.
- Canada publishes two routes that can be flown with VHF only, without prior approval:
 - below FL 180, routing YYY – CZN (or NAY) – KPV.
 - FL 180 or above, routing YYY – CZN (or NAY) – KPV.
- You still need HLA approval to go above FL200, of course.
- Canada may approve other routes without HF, but you'll have to ask ATC really fast. In general, crossing from Greenland-Canada south of GDN, at FL200 or above, should be fine.

If you don't have PGSS, then: NAT Doc 007 1.3

- You can't use the PGSS Tracks.
- PGSS means having both RCP940 and RSP180 – 4 minute comms loop, and 3 minute position reporting.

If you don't have HLA Approval, then:

- Going around if isn't really feasible, because it extends from about 20N to the North Pole.
- You can fly at FL200 westbound, FL270 eastbound, or FL400 in either direction.
- Or, get it. Assuming the aircraft requirements (RNP4 or 10, basically) and pilot requirements (a NAT procedures course) are satisfied, then you just need a letter from your State of Registry or Operator. Contact your local FSDO if you're Hing, or your Civil Aviation Authority.
- There is a workaround for non-HLA aircraft using VHF + ADS-B surveillance – in practice, that means the Iceland-Greenland corridor.

If you don't have ETOPS, then:

- First, ATC doesn't care about your ETOPS approval status. It's down to your aircraft approval and the regs you're operating under.
- Crossing the NAT does not automatically mean you need ETOPS. On many routes you can stay within diversion range of alternates like CYYT, BNP, and EDN and go straight across.
- But if your operation requires ETOPS and you don't have it (recent engine change, MEL, etc), then you must stay within your approved diversion time from adequate airports – which usually means routing via Iceland/Greenland/Canada rather than going far out over the ocean.

If you don't have TCAS, then: NAT Doc 007 Chap 1

- Since 2017, you must have TCAS 7.1 to enter the NAT region if you're heavier than 5.7 tons (12,500 lbs). That's not just the NAT HLA, but the entire region.
- If you don't have 7.1, then you can't cross the Atlantic – but you may be able to get an exemption. For that, check with your own Authority.

If GNSS is unreliable (jammed/poofed), then: NAT Doc 007 Chap 6

- Tell ATC before entering oceanic airspace. Treat position as uncertain – don't rely on it.
- Expect reroute, lower level, or to remain in radar/VHF coverage.
- If already oceanic, follow contingency procedures and advise ATC.
- You may get a "CONFIRM RNP" message – only confirm if you're confident your navigation performance is reliable, otherwise tell ATC.

If you only have one Long Range Nav System: NAT Doc 007 Chap 1

- For a full crossing, use the Iceland-Greenland corridor. You need a single LFRS and ADS-B, using VHF + ADS-B surveillance.
- You can use Tango 9 and 200 with a single LFRS, but T13, T213 and T16 need two.

If your Datalink isn't working: NAT Doc 007 1.7 and 1.8

- Then either, or both, ADS-C and CPDLC isn't working.
- You can't operate in the NAT HLA between FL200-FL410, except for:
 - Anywhere north of 60N
 - New York Gander
 - the Iceland-Greenland corridor (you need ADS-B)
 - the Bodo corridor (you need ADS-B)
 - the Azores corridor (you need ADS-B)
 - Tango 9 and 200 (you need ADS-B)
 - GOTA (ADS-B preferred but not mandatory)

ICELAND-GREENLAND CORRIDOR
APRIL 2026

Map showing the Iceland-Greenland Corridor routes, including Gander, Bodo, and Santa Maria, with various waypoints and altitudes.

GNSS interference now a common concern

GNSS jamming and spoofing now get a bit more attention, with **practical guidance on what to do** if you've already had issues before entering the NAT. We've also added info on the "CONFIRM RNP" message, which more crews are now seeing.

Datalink and surveillance logic cleaned up

The datalink section has been simplified to make it easier to understand **where it's required, where it isn't**, and how surveillance-based operations (like the corridor or GOTA) fit in.

Greenland alternates brought up to date

The alternates section now reflects the latest changes in Greenland. **BGBW is no longer in use, BGGH is now a jet-capable option, and BGQO has been added as a new southern alternate.** It's a more current picture of what's available on the ground.

General tidy-up

- Removed a bunch of **older wording** that didn't quite match how things are done now.
- Added a clearer explanation of **NAT Tracks** and how they're actually used.
- Navigation specs have been standardized to **RNAV 10 (RNP 10)**, in line with ICAO PBN terminology, just to keep everything consistent.
- Updated **waypoint naming**, including half-degree fixes.
- Tidied up the **airport data** and **Greenland alternates**.
- Added a few extra **real-world notes** (like squawk exceptions and small ops details).
- Other bits and pieces that we've forgotten about.

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We hope you find the guide useful! ☺☺✈✈☺☺ ✈

If you want the full background on the recent NAT changes behind all this, it's worth checking these too:

- March 2026 changes here.
- The full NAT timeline of all changes going back to the dawn of time.