

CHINA

This guide is compiled from the FIDI Customs Guide for reference only. Customs regulations change frequently; please consult your Seapoe relocation consultant for the latest requirements before shipping.

Updated 2026

Household Goods - Foreign Passport Holders

Documents Required

- Import Permit ("Customs QR code") is required for customs clearance.
- Documents required for Import Permit are as follows:
- Passport with Residence Permit (valid period should be no less than 1 year).
- Combined WP and Social Security Card applicable as from Dec. 1, 2024, replacing the Work Permit requested so far.
- Employment Approval Letter issuing by the Foreign Expert Bureau (Required in Beijing and cities in South China Region).
- Representative Card (required for foreign representative office).
- Application Form with client's signature and company's chop.
- Inventory packing list and OBL/AWB for all incoming shipments.
- 'Baggage Declaration Form'
- It needs to be completed identically and handed to the Customs officials to get stamped.
- The form returned to the shipper should be forwarded to his destination agent for clearance of his goods.
- For Shanghai, Wuhan and Nanjing, this is only needed for air
- shipments.
- In Shanghai, this can also be waived for air shipments as long as the client holds a resident and work permit valid for at least a FULL year.
- In Beijing, each shipment needs one baggage declaration form (except diplomatic shipments).
- Copy of the client's property deed or rental contract in China.
- If the shipment originates from a country that differs from the client's nationality, the original visa showing they resided in that country for at least one year is necessary. If there is no original visa at origin (e.g. EP in Singapore) then an explanation letter will be required.
- If moving to Shanghai for their studies: Student card and school or university enrolment letter if applicable.
- A printout of the client's entry record into mainland China for the last 2-3 years (issued by the PSB).
- For Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau Resident import into Shanghai / Guangzhou:
- For Taiwan Resident: Taibao Zheng, Residence Permit (Ju Zhu Zheng) are requested.
- 'Baggage Declaration Form'
- It needs to be completed identically and handed to the Customs officials to get stamped.
- The form returned to the shipper should be forwarded to his destination agent for clearance of his goods.
- For Shanghai, Wuhan and
- Nanjing, this is only needed for air shipments.
- In Shanghai, this can also be waived for air shipments as long as the client holds a resident and work permit valid for at least a FULL year.

- In Beijing, each shipment needs one baggage declaration form.
- Copy of the client's property deed or rental contract in China.
- If the shipment originates from a country that differs from the client's nationality, the original visa showing they resided in that country for at least one year is necessary. If there is no original visa at origin (e.g. EP in Singapore) then an explanation letter will be required.
- For Hong Kong / Macau Resident:
- ID Card, Tong Xing Zheng, Residence Permit (Ju Zhu Zheng) are requested.
- 'Baggage Declaration Form'
- It needs need to be completed identically and handed to the Customs officials to get stamped.
- The form returned to the shipper should be forwarded to his destination agent for clearance of his goods.
- For Shanghai, Wuhan and Nanjing, this is only needed for air shipments.
- In Shanghai, this can also be waived for air shipments as long as the client holds a resident and work permit valid for at least a FULL year.
- In Beijing, each shipment needs one baggage declaration form.
- Copy of the client's property deed or
- rental contract in China.
- If the shipment originates from a country that differs from the client's nationality, the original visa showing they resided in that country for at least one year is necessary. If there is no original visa at origin (e.g. EP in Singapore) then an explanation letter will be required.
- If moving to Shanghai for their studies: Student card and school or university enrolment letter if applicable
- A printout of the client's entry record into mainland China for the last 2-3 years (issued by the PSB).
- For Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau Resident import into Beijing.
- The Tong Xing Zheng and Residence Permit (Ju Zhu Zheng) valid for a full year are requested for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau Resident. If shipper cannot get the Ju Zhu Zheng, the shipment cannot be cleared in Beijing and cities in South China Region.

Customs Prescriptions

- Any items containing pornographic and subversive material will be confiscated and a fine may be levied on the owner.
- Asian/Chinese antiques must be indicated on the inventory with a separate demand to local Customs to register them for reexport. There is no guarantee that such items will be allowed out of the country. Importation of Asian/Chinese antiques into China is not recommended.
- Fax machines, photocopy machines are NOT ALLOWED in personal shipments (for Shanghai).

Remarks

- In summer of 2020, the Ministry of Finance issued directive A05920200038 - key points are:
- First time importers holding foreign passports may import their personal shipments duty-free, provided that all goods are assessed by Customs to be within reasonable limits for personal use. (HK, Macau and Taiwan residents are considered "foreign" for the purpose of this regulation) High-value items such as golf clubs, as well as any other goods classified as high-value by Customs, shall not qualify for this duty exemption.
- Chinese passport holders still see duties levied on their shipments.
- This is not yet applied nationally (for example not applied in Beijing, Zhuhai now), but it is applied in Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan, Qingdao, Guangzhou amongst other cities.
- To obtain the Baggage Declaration Form with customs chop, exit should be through the Red Channel.
- Application for Work Permit and the Chinese Residency Permit are issued within approx. 3-4 weeks after arrival to China with Z visa.
- After issuance of the Residency Permit, the expatriate through the destination agent applies for import permit of his/her personal effects/household goods to the local Customs Bureau.

- Anything listed and approved in the application may be imported within the next 6 months only.
- All shipments are subject to inspection by local Customs.
- All electrical items must be clearly indicated on the inventory with its model, serial number & size (if applicable), a separate list is also acceptable.
- All video tapes/CD must be clearly indicated on the inventory (exact quantity). Such items may be subject to an estimated 2–3 weeks inspection by Customs Bureau (for Shanghai).
- This category applies to expatriates employed by and working for foreign representative office, joint venture, or wholly owned company REGISTERED in the city where they will reside in China that will be resident in China for at least 12 months.
- Note that customs officers are given broad discretion, and actual procedures may vary from city to city.
- For Shanghai, the first inbound sea shipment is treated as duty free. This regulation is based on “reasonable quantities” (i.e. one TV per family member, 26 golf clubs for a whole family, etc).
- For Beijing, the first inbound sea shipment, any item which unite price is assessed to be valued at CNY 5,000 or above will be dutiable. This regulation is based on
- “reasonable quantities” (i.e. one TV per family member, 28 golf clubs for a whole family, etc).
- Second shipment to China (whatever Air or Sea shipment) even though a few years later is 100% dutiable. Please contact your agent for current advice.
- From December 2024, “duty free” policy is no longer valid for all air shipment arriving into Shanghai PVG airport, all air shipments are subject to duty and tax
- The 'Baggage Declaration Form' is required by some cities only. For more details, please check with your agents in the area.
- General remark regarding Inbound Air shipments:
- We discourage the inclusion of foodstuff, wine/alcohol (strictly prohibited), cosmetics, health products and toiletries.
- Please do contact your destination agent for specific and further details.

Household Goods - Returning citizens

Documents Required

- Original passport showing a stay of at least one year abroad (or more than 6 months in the case of an air shipment).
- A printout of the client’s entry record into mainland China for the last 2-3 years (issued by the PSB).
- Declaration of unaccompanied luggage stamped by airport customs upon arrival into China.
- Copy of the client’s property deed or rental contract in China.

Customs Prescriptions

- Shipments for returning citizens must be imported within 180 days of the shipper’s return to mainland China. Due to travel restrictions during COVID, some customs offices will consider exemptions to this rule, but shippers are advised to seek counsel of their destination agents on this point if pertinent.

Remarks

- Shanghai: upon the arrival of a returning Chinese national at the Shanghai airport, they will be required to declare the value of their accompanying flight luggage at the same time as collecting the Baggage Declaration Form.
- It is therefore important to remind the client of this when giving advice on what will happen in Shanghai.
- The amount declared for the luggage will be deducted from the shipper’s duty-free allowance of RMB 5,000.00.
- If the shipper declares more than RMB

- 5,000.00 for his luggage, it will be subject to tax & duty and will be required to be paid at the time of entry at the airport.
- During the clearance of the household goods shipment, the duty-free amount (e.g. RMB 5,000.00 minus declared value of the luggage) will be assessed for tax and duty.
- Beijing: the shipment has to be imported within 6 months after shipper's returning / arriving to Beijing.
- If shipper has frequent trips in the past years, the shipment cannot be cleared at Tianjin Customs.
- During the clearance of the household goods shipment, the duty-free amount (e.g. RMB 5,000.00 minus declared value of the luggage) will be assessed for tax and duty if the client gets the Customs chopped baggage declaration form.

Removal goods - Employees from News Agency

Documents Required

- Import Permit is required for customs clearance.
- Documents required for Import Permit is as follows:
 - Passport with Residence Permit.
 - Journalist Card.
 - News Agency Certificate.
 - Customs Registration Book.
 - Customs Application Form with client's signature and News Agency chop
 - Inventory packing list and OBL/AWB for all incoming shipments
 - Original delivery order for sea and copy of arrival notice for air.

Customs Prescriptions

- Customs regulation is the same as for foreign enterprise expatriate.

Removal goods - Diplomatic Personnel

Documents Required

- Import Permit is required for customs clearance and has to be applied by the Embassy.
- Documents required for Import Permit is as follows:
 - Diplomatic Card
 - Passport
 - Original AW B/or OBL with embassy's chop (Consignee is Embassy)
 - Shipment arrival notice from local shipping agent (both for sea and air shipment)
 - Inventory packing list with embassy's chop
 - Application form with authorized signature from Embassy and embassy's chop.

Customs Prescriptions

- Normally no customs inspection on diplomatic shipment.
- No duty on diplomatic shipment.
- Quarantine inspections are more common depending on content of the shipment.
- Vehicles for diplomats will undergo quarantine check.
- Diplomats are restricted to one motor vehicle per diplomatic card.
- Diplomats may import alcohol duty free and should consult with their diplomatic mission beforehand for any restrictions that may apply (see 'Alcohol section below).

Remarks

- Note that though customs inspection almost never happens, they actually can. Customs has to be authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that needs to have notified the concerned

diplomatic mission and obtained their approval.

Visas

Remarks

- It is recommended to ask shippers to opt for multi-years visa.
- Applicable in Shanghai as from 22 July 2016:
- Shanghai Foreign Investment Commercial Bureau (SFICB) requires pre-assessment of the Chinese Visa Invitation Letter application documents before issuance of official Invitation Letter for foreign applicants.
- This Invitation Letter is for purposes of the entry Z-visa, M-visa and F-visa application at the Chinese Embassies / Consulates abroad.
- Total processing time for the Chinese Visa Invitation Letter: 5 working days.
- China continues to have restrictions on issuing Multiple Journey/Entry Visas to all foreigners.
- The maximum duration of stay for business visa holders and for tourist visa holders will be determined by the Chinese consulate overseas as to whether the visa will be issued for 30, 60 or 90 days respectively.
- For Guangzhou: invitation Letter" should be applied at The Bureau of Foreign Trading and Economic Corporation of Guangzhou Municipality, if the inviting company is a Municipal enterprise; 'Invitation Letter' should be applied at Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Corporation of Guangdong Province, if the inviting company is a Provincial enterprise.
- There should be little impact to the overall application and immigration process however there is expected to be an additional application processing fee of approximately RMB 1,000 for the later.
- Other cities in Guangdong Province do not have such regulation.

Books

Documents Required

- Documentation to support the appeal to customs:
- Original Passport with entry exit stamps indicating at least one-year residence overseas.
- Original completed Baggage Declaration Form and stamped by customs upon entry (This is a MUST for returning Chinese).

Customs Prescriptions

- For Returning Chinese imported to Shanghai:
- Anything over 10 books will be dutiable, and an explanation letter is required.
- The explanation letter needs to be as detailed as possible, stating where the books were purchased (China or abroad), how many books, what titles and the value of the books. If books are related to work / study. Novels and entertaining literature would cause problems.
- Should not be more than 50 books.
- For Returning Chinese Imported to Beijing:
- Anything over 10 books will be dutiable.
- Should not be more than 1/3 of the
- whole shipment (max 400 books).

Remarks

- In some cities, there is quantity limitation on the books' importation to China for Foreign Passport holders as well, please check with your destination agent for further information.

CD-DVD

Documents Required

- Business License (Copy with Company Chop).
- Employment Letter from the company
- Explanation Letter needs to be handwritten in Chinese by the shipper.

Customs Prescriptions

- For Returning Chinese imported to Shanghai:
- Anything over 20 pcs will be dutiable.
- Explanation letter has to be issued, stating on where the discs were purchased and what titles.
- Should not be more than 100 pcs.
- For Returning Chinese imported to Beijing:
- Anything over 20 pcs will be dutiable.
- Should not be more than 1/3 of the whole shipment (max 400 pcs).
- For Returning Chinese imported to Guangzhou:
- No duty exemption for any quantity.
- Should not be more than 50 pcs.

Remarks

- In some cities, there is quantity limitation on the CD/DVDs importation to China for Foreign Passport Holder as well.
- Check with your destination agent for further information.

Furniture

Customs Prescriptions

- Ban on import on furniture for returning Chinese (only for shipments' import via Dalian port).

Remarks

- Import can be tried with explanation letter; special approval needs to be obtained from Senior Customs official.

Piano

Customs Prescriptions

- Grand pianos cannot be imported to Shanghai any more unless client is a musician or music teacher in professional conservatory of music.
- Grand pianos can be imported to Beijing but need to get approval from the Customs before shipping out.
- Grand pianos cannot be imported to Guangzhou.

Remarks

- Please request information before dispatching shipments.

Office items

Documents Required

- Import Permit is required for customs clearance.
- Documents required for Import Permit:
- Inventory packing list.
- Pro-forma invoice.

- Original AWB/OBL.
- Company Business License.
- Company Customs Registration book.
- Application forms with company's chop.
- Importing items list approved by customs (applicable to J-V or wholly owned company).

Customs Prescriptions

- Office items are subject to be inspected and dutiable.

Remarks

- Office items importation to China is complicated due to the Quarantine Regulation; please contact your agent before dispatch.

Cars and Mini vans

Documents Required

- Import Permit is required for customs clearance but currently only diplomats can import used cars.

Customs Prescriptions

- Any automobile imported into China that was manufactured prior to January 1, 2005 must comply with Euro V standards and requires an environmental and mechanical inspection.
- Import restrictions are governed at the local level.
- Duty free for diplomats.
- Only diplomats can import used cars.

Remarks

- Contact your agent for specific advice and information.
- Non-Diplomatic Cars and Mini-vans importation to China: not allowed. Please contact your agent for more information.

Food

Customs Prescriptions

- Must be dry goods in original/sealed packaging, canned or vacuum packed but not suggest packing in Beijing import shipment.
- Cannot be fresh, dairy, eggs, honey, unprocessed grains; seeds; nuts, live plants/bulbs or any perishables (no live animals or fresh milk).
- Milk powder, chicken essence, beef or chicken extract, meat products and/or meat by-products are not allowed (this includes all forms of pet food).
- For Beijing & Shenzhen: no alcohol.
- Alcohol is restricted in all cities, but level of
- restriction varies by province.

Remarks

- Only a small quantity of acceptable foodstuff for private consumption can be sent within the following parameters, e.g., one small carton for an air shipment and two-three small cartons for a sea shipment (nothing by air to POE Chengdu & Shanghai).
- Food, essence or extract from eggs including egg white, poultry and birds found in any of the food items from the following 21 countries will be confiscated and destroyed.
- Quarantine Division may add more countries to the list if there is a spread of the bird flu:
- 1. Cambodia, 2. Chile, 3. Greece, 4. Hong Kong, 5. Indonesia, 6. Italy, 7. Japan, 8. Kazakhstan, 9. Laos, 10. Malaysia, 11. Mongolia, 12.

Pakistan, 13. North Korea, 14. South Korea, 15. Romania, 16. Russia, 17. South Africa, 18. Thailand, 19. Turkey, 20. USA, 21. Vietnam.

- Shanghai Customs pulls all food items from both Air and Sea shipments inbound to China. While this is still not occurring on all shipment to Shanghai, we recommend not including food in Air or Sea shipments.
- Guangzhou Customs pulls all food items from Sea shipments inbound to China. It is recommended not including food in Sea shipments.
- Other China locations: the inclusion of food items remains a case-by-case event for other areas of China with respect to Air and Sea shipments.
- Customs duties/taxes are currently based on 10% of the declared value (maybe USD0.70 per chargeable kilo at some airports) subject to customs discretion.
- Customs reserve the right to levy higher duties/taxes on what is deemed as commercial quantities.
- Food items invite inspection by customs / quarantine division and may delay the clearance.
- Undesirable items will be confiscated / destroyed without any explanation or refund. Entire shipment may be placed into quarantine inside the customs bonded warehouse for an indefinite period. Additional charges incurred for the quarantine, trucking etc., may amount up to USD500.00 depending on the period and the size of the shipment.

Forbidden Items

Customs Prescriptions

- Weapons.
- Imitation weapons.
- Ammunition.
- Drugs.
- Pornographic and politically subversive material.
- Any products made from endangered species.

Remarks

- Import strictly forbidden.

Computers

Remarks

- PC's with encryption capabilities require approval of software prior to importation.
- Import of normal PC's and laptops with simple password software for e-mail, windows, Microsoft outlook, etc. as part of a HHG shipment would however not be a problem.
- Contact your agent for more details.

Alcohol

Documents Required

- Must be clearly marked on the packing list as wine/alcohol.
- Separate alcohol/wine list detailing the type of alcohol, year of manufacture, alcohol content and quantity.

Customs Prescriptions

- Import restrictions are governed at the local level and will vary from city to city.
- Diplomats are allowed to import alcohol/wine into China, with alcohol 1222% - 300 bottles/person/year; alcohol above 22% - 100 bottles/person/year.

Remarks

- At present, only Shanghai and Nanjing allow the importation of alcohol via sea shipments. Import duties, alcohol strength and quantity restrictions will also be applicable, and will vary from city to city.
- This information may change with limited notice, so please contact your destination agent for specific advice and information.
- Alcohol importation into other cities in China is strictly prohibited.
- Alcohol import to Shenzhen is prohibited.

Dutiable Items

Customs Prescriptions

- All electrical appliances, furniture, lighting fixtures, foodstuffs, golf club, wine/alcohol included in shipments of household & personal effects are subject to import duty.

Remarks

- In summer of 2020, the Ministry of Finance issued directive A05920200038 - key points are:
- First time importers holding foreign passport can import their shipment duty free (HK, Macau and Taiwan residents are considered "foreign" for the purpose of this regulation), however this is not applicable for air shipment, since December 2024, air shipment import in Shanghai have seen duty and tax and it becomes very common now.
- Chinese passport holders still see duties levied on their shipments.
- This is not yet applied nationally (for example not applied in Beijing & Guangzhou now), but it is applied in Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan, Qingdao, Guangzhou amongst other cities.

Fumigation / Disinfection

Customs Prescriptions

- All shipments leaving the USA to China (PRC) and South Korea must be disinfected due to the risk of the spread of the Zika virus.
- Proof of disinfection must be provided at the destination port. Disinfection can take various physical or chemical forms including fumigation, netting, traps, pest management processes and spraying.
- The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China requires that wooden packaging material imported into China be either heat treated or fumigated with methyl bromide and properly marked.
- The new measure follows ISPM-15 (International standards for Phytosanitary Measures Publication 15) Guidelines for
- Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade (aka NIFM-15) to standardise the treatment of wood packing materials used for the transport of goods.
- The wood packing material must be marked in a visible location on each article, on at least two opposite sides of the article with a legible and permanent mark in black ink.
- Labels and adhesives are not allowed.
- The mark should be as follows: Where XX is the country code, 000 the producer number, YY the treatment type, and AAA the inspection agency logo.

Remarks

- WPM exempt from this regulation includes:
- Manufactured wood materials such as plywood, particleboard, oriented strand board and fibreboard.
- WPM consisting entirely of wood pieces less than 6mm thick in all and any dimensions, including sawdust, woodwool and paring etc.
- If you have questions, contact your local agent.

Antiques

Remarks

- Any customers wishing to import into China items of Chinese origin that could fall under the new regulations, must register them with the authorities prior to customs release.
- Anyone not doing so may have great difficulty in later re-exporting these items when they leave China.

Customs rules applicable for Shanghai only

Customs Prescriptions

- All shipments entering China are subject to customs duties.
- All shipments are inspected by x-ray (at minimum) by both customs and quarantine.
- Shippers cannot hide any restricted items as these are usually found and can lead to complications, delays and extra costs.
- Customs clearance is quite lengthy and usually takes 10-15 working days.
- On arrival at Shanghai airport, upon first entry or return to China, the shipper should go through customs RED CHANNEL (located after luggage carousel) and declare their unaccompanied luggage that will follow. Customs will then counter stamp the "Declaration of Unaccompanied Luggage" which is used to reduce part of the customs duties owed on the shipment.
- Packing lists need to be accurate and complete as well as numbered sequentially.
- Groupage shipments are not allowed to be imported.
- Food is not recommended at all as quarantine tends to be stricter. All meat and meat by products as well as grains and seeds are automatically confiscated, as well as many products if deemed inappropriate by quarantine officials.
- Non-diplomats cannot import vehicles into China at present as import of second-hand vehicles is not permitted by law. Please note that for customs, a new vehicle is considered second hand if the title is in your name. It may be possible for you to import a vehicle on special order via a dealer but not personally.
- Air shipments and Less than Container Load (LCL) shipments should not transit via any other Chinese (air) port prior to their final APOE. Otherwise, they will most likely be sent back to their point of origin. This needs to be taken under careful consideration when booking a shipment as the forwarder needs to understand this routing requirement clearly and ensure it is followed. It is not enough to check that the airline has direct service to the final AOE but one also needs to ensure that they
- understand routing cannot be changed to transshipment via another airport. Whilst this is not an issue for commercial cargo, this is not allowed for personal effects.

Remarks

- Foreign passport holders:
- Shippers need to possess a valid work permit and a valid residence permit that were issued for at least a FULL year in order to import a sea- and most types of air shipments. It is important when applying for these permits to ensure they be issued for at least a FULL year and, wherever possible, we advise that shippers apply for multi-year permits.
- Only four (4) bottles of alcohol are permitted (two (2) are duty free and two (2) are taxed) except for shipments come from Hong Kong/Macau which allowed to import (2) bottles. Shipper cannot import more by paying more duties. A bottle is defined as 75 CL maximum; hence a 1 L bottle will be counted as two (2) bottles.
- Starting 01 November, Shanghai has joined a pilot programme for the introduction of the "unified work permit". This means that foreign staff previously categorized as "experts" will now also be issued work permits rather than expert certificates. For customs purposes, applicants should be issued permits valid for a minimum of a FULL year. The unified work permit will be issued in the form of a RFID enabled card rather than the previous passport-

like form.

- Chinese passport holders:
- Chinese passport holders need to have resided outside China with no interruption for at least one FULL successive year prior to their import application being granted.
- Chinese customs are typically stricter with Chinese shippers than foreign shippers. They usually require more documents and impose a higher rate of duties.
- Customs will usually automatically grant import permits for Chinese citizens having resided outside China for a FULL year, but any volume above that limit is subject to case-by-case authorization and at their discretion.
- Only two (2) bottles of alcohol are permitted (one (1) is duty free and one (1) taxed). Shippers cannot import more by paying more duties. A bottle is defined as 75 CL maximum; hence a 1 L bottle will be counted as two (2) bottles.
- Diplomats:
- Diplomatic missions process import permits with customs. This is the only type of shipment where the permit application cannot be done by a broker. The processing with quarantine and customs is still done by a broker, but it is important to note that the permit application needs to be done by the consulate for which the diplomat works. As such, the consulate should be the point of contact on what is acceptable or not from a customs clearance point of view.
- Diplomats are currently restricted to import one motor vehicle per person. This includes motorbikes. Please note in addition, that whilst motorbikes may be cleared with the appropriate documentation, it has been reported that registration, even for diplomats, may not currently be possible. We advise shippers to ask their embassy for advice on these matters.