

Barbados

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

Updated 2026-09-05

Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

Required Documents

- Passport (alternatives: Barbados ID card, certificate of citizenship, or Barbados birth certificate with photo ID)
- Proof of residence in Barbados
- Detailed inventory
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / express release / air waybill (AWB)

For diplomats

- Original bill of lading and inventory required prior to shipment arrival (for exemption certificate application)
- Diplomatic accreditation (verified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Specific Information

Customs interview and examination: The client must be available for a customs interview prior to the release of goods and must declare contents to the customs officer. Following the interview, a physical examination by a customs officer is conducted at the importer's residence (for FCL shipments). This at-residence inspection is a distinctive feature of Barbados customs.

Returning Nationals Programme: Barbadian citizens who are at least 50 years old, are citizens by birth/registration/naturalisation/descent, and have lived abroad for 10 or more years continuously prior to resettlement qualify for duty-free concessions on: one motor vehicle per household (imported from outside CARICOM unless relocating from within CARICOM); household effects (used or new); and tools of trade (subject to Customs Department approval). Returning nationals must: provide proof of retirement or resignation from overseas employment; submit documentation proving permanent residence abroad for at least 10 years; and reside in Barbados for at least 183 days annually for a specified period. Vehicles and goods may not be purchased duty-free in Barbados under this programme. Building materials are not covered.

Non-nationals: Used household goods owned for 1+ year are duty-free. New items are subject to applicable duties and taxes.

Temporary importation: Barbados does not subscribe to the international carnet. A customs bond/guarantee must be established and backed by a local financial institution for the value of the duty liability on the shipment. This permits goods to enter without paying duties, on condition they will be re-exported. Items not re-exported are subject to full duties and taxes.

Diplomatic shipments: Usually exempt from customs duties and taxes. The diplomatic agency must apply for an exemption certificate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (approximately 4 working days for approval). Clearance can proceed within 1 day after the exemption documents are returned.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Used personal effects and household goods are allowed into Barbados free of duties, provided the items have been owned and in the importer's possession for at least 1 year. Items that are new, purchased within the last year, or unused are subject to duty.

New items within shipments: Subject to import duties. Duty rates vary by item category under the CARICOM Common External Tariff (0-20% for most goods, higher for certain categories).

New/commercial furniture attracts approximately 60% duty plus 1% environmental levy plus 17.5% VAT.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs — Strictly prohibited
- Firearms, guns, explosives, and ammunition without permit — Prohibited
- Knives and deadly weapons — Prohibited
- Plants and plant products without authorisation — Prohibited
- Meat and meat products without authorisation — Prohibited
- Pets and animals without proper permit — Prohibited
- Foreign rum and matches — Prohibited
- Bags, clothing, and articles made from camouflage material — Prohibited (this is a distinctive Barbados restriction)
- Radioactive or hazardous materials — Prohibited
- Counterfeit money and goods — Prohibited
- Pornographic material — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

- 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars
- 1 litre of spirits and 750ml of wine
- Personal effects not intended for sale

Restricted Items

- Alcohol — 1 litre limit; excess subject to duties and taxes (diplomats exempt)
- Fruits, vegetables, plants, cuttings, seeds, unprocessed plant products PERMIT REQUIRED — Must be declared and inspected by a Plant Quarantine Officer; import permit and phytosanitary certificate may be required; fresh fruits from certain countries prohibited
- Meat and meat products PERMIT REQUIRED — Special permit from the Ministry of Agriculture required
- Plants and live plants — Must be inspected by Plant Quarantine Division
- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED — Both police and government permits required; import licence mandatory; strictly enforced
- Commercial and new furniture — Subject to approximately 60% duty plus environmental levy plus VAT
- Wooden furniture — Must be physically examined by a Plant Quarantine Officer (for FCL, examination at residence during unpacking)

Tax Structure

- Import duties: CARICOM Common External Tariff, generally 0-20% (higher for specific categories: fruits/vegetables 40%, jewellery 60%, watches 50%, motor vehicles 45%, t-shirts 115%)
- Excise tax: 5-60% on alcoholic beverages, tobacco, motor vehicles, and petroleum products; 10% on sweetened beverages

- VAT: 17.5% on most goods and services (8.75% on hotel accommodations)
- Environmental levy: 1% general; higher fixed amounts for vehicles (BDS 1,500-2,000), refrigerators (BDS 15), TVs (BDS 10); 0.75% on CIF value for goods in non-standard containers

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air / sea shipments.

Customs interview: Mandatory before release of goods. The importer must declare all contents to the customs officer.

At-residence examination: For FCL shipments, a customs officer conducts a physical examination at the importer's residence after delivery. This is standard practice in Barbados.

Minimum clearance time: Allow at least 3 working days.

Vehicles in containers: Must be packed last for mandatory removal and inspection at the port. Do not pack vehicles deep inside containers — they must be accessible.

Routing / port of entry: Bridgetown Port (sea freight). Grantley Adams International Airport (air freight). Barbados is the easternmost Caribbean island. Transit times: approximately 6 days from Miami, 13 days from UK via sea.

CARICOM membership: Barbados is a full member of CARICOM. Goods originating within CARICOM may qualify for preferential duty rates under the Common External Tariff.

Currency: Barbados dollar (BDS), pegged to the US dollar at BDS 2 = USD 1. US dollars widely accepted.

Regulatory Updates

- Ongoing: The Returning Nationals Programme now allows duty-free purchase of a vehicle from a local Barbados dealer (payment via overseas wire transfer), in addition to the traditional vehicle import option.
- 2021: Barbados became a republic (November 30, 2021), though this did not change customs regulations.
- VAT: Currently at 17.5%, having been adjusted from earlier rates.