

Bahrain

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.

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Documents

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

Required Documents

Confirmed by Bahrain Customs:

- Sea waybill, surrendered/express bill of lading, or original bill of lading
- Original air waybill (for air shipments)
- Clear copy of the packing list in English
- Clear copy of passport with signature page
- Clear copy of valid Residence Permit endorsed for all shipments
- Clear copy of Central Population Registry Card (CPR ID, both sides)
- Signed authorisation letter to customs
- Signed customs declaration form
- House/property lease agreement copy (as proof if client resides in Bahrain but works in Saudi Arabia)

Specific Information

CDs, DVDs, LDs, VCDs: Only a small number permitted duty-free. Large quantities will incur charges. DVDs and magazines are subject to inspection by the Ministry of Interior for banned content.

100% inspection: All shipments are subject to 100% inspection at the port or airport. This is systematic, not risk-based.

GCC customs union: Bahrain is part of the GCC Unified Customs Union. The standard import duty rate is 5% on most commodities from outside the GCC. Alcohol is assessed at 125% duty and tobacco at 100% duty. Goods from within the GCC that have already had duties paid at the first point of entry are duty-free within the union.

US-Bahrain FTA: Under the Free Trade Agreement, bilateral trade in industrial and consumer products (apart from some agricultural items) is duty-free between the US and Bahrain. This may benefit US-origin items within household shipments that do not qualify for the personal effects exemption.

Temporary admission: Incoming passengers can bring personal goods subject to customs duties under a temporary import regime for 6 months (extendable). A financial deposit may be required, recoverable when the goods are re-exported.

OFOQ system: Bahrain uses the OFOQ automated customs clearance system for declarations.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Per the GCC Unified Customs Law (confirmed on customs.gov.bh and by multiple industry sources), used personal effects and household items are exempt from

customs duties for nationals residing abroad or foreigners coming to reside in Bahrain for the first time, subject to conditions set by the Director General of Customs. Used household goods can be imported duty-free provided: the owner intends to make Bahrain their new place of residence; they are the owner of all items; goods are imported within 6 months of arrival in Bahrain; items are for personal use, not commercial purposes; and the owner has a valid Residence Permit with Ministry stamp and QR code plus CPR card.

New items within shipments: Any new items are subject to 5% customs duty plus 10% VAT. Whether used or new, customs duty of 5% applies to personal computers and musical instruments. Videos attract a duty of approximately USD 0.55 per video.

VAT: 10% VAT applies on imports (in addition to customs duty where applicable).

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs — Strictly prohibited; severe penalties
- Weapons, explosives, and ammunition — Prohibited without permit
- Knives and deadly weapons — Prohibited
- Live swine — Prohibited
- Indian Paan and derivatives — Prohibited
- Advertisement material for all types of cigarettes — Prohibited
- Children's toy guns capable of firing projectiles — Prohibited
- Goods of Israeli origin — Prohibited (confirm current enforcement)
- Printed publications, photographs, pictures, books, or magazines that conflict with Islamic teachings or Bahraini morality — Prohibited
- Pornographic material — Prohibited
- Material promoting violence or terrorism — Prohibited
- Counterfeit goods — Prohibited
- All types of lithium batteries (UN3090, UN3091, UN3480, UN3481, UN3536) — Banned whether classified as dangerous goods or not
- Hazardous goods classes 5.1, 5.2, 4.2, and 4, and most class 2.1 and 2.3 materials — Prohibited (except UN1950 in limited quantities)

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances (per customs.gov.bh)

- 8 oz of perfume
- Personal gifts not exceeding BHD 250 (not subject to regular duty)
- Personal belongings exempt from duty
- Video and still cameras with accessories
- CD/DVD players in non-commercial quantities
- Telescopes, mobile phones, computers/laptops in non-commercial quantities
- Sports equipment, baby strollers, portable music equipment, disabled wheelchairs

Restricted Items

- Alcohol — 125% duty; restricted quantities
- Tobacco — 100% duty
- Cats, dogs, and other animals PERMIT REQUIRED — Valid import permit from the Ministry of Agriculture required
- Plants and plant products PERMIT REQUIRED — Subject to agricultural controls
- Animal and animal products PERMIT REQUIRED — Subject to veterinary controls
- Medicines — May require Ministry of Health approval
- Printed publications, photographs, pictures, books — Subject to Ministry of Interior review for content

- Telecommunications equipment — May require regulatory approval
- Currency: Travellers must disclose local or foreign currencies exceeding certain amounts upon request by customs/security authorities

Goods of Israeli Origin

Per VisaHQ and the GCC boycott regulations, goods of Israeli origin or bearing Israeli trademarks or logos are prohibited. Confirm current enforcement status with the destination agent, as this is subject to evolving regional politics.

Consignment Instructions

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

100% inspection: All household goods shipments are subject to complete physical inspection at the port or airport. Plan for additional time and handling costs.

Customs declaration: May be completed electronically via the OFOQ system. The importer, representative, or authorised customs broker submits the declaration with all required documents.

Routing / ports of entry: Khalifa Bin Salman Port (sea freight). Bahrain International Airport (air freight). King Fahd Causeway (land freight from Saudi Arabia). Bahrain is an island nation in the Persian Gulf connected to Saudi Arabia by the King Fahd Causeway.

Clearance agent: It is strongly recommended to use a registered, licensed clearing agent (per trade.gov).

Currency: Bahraini dinar (BHD). Pegged to the US dollar at approximately BHD 0.376 = USD 1. The Bahraini dinar is one of the highest-valued currencies in the world.

Regulatory Updates

- September 2024: Documentation requirements updated, including the 10% VAT rate and 100% inspection policy.
- 2022: VAT increased from 5% to 10%.
- 2017: GCC Unified Customs Tariff entered into force. Unified Selective Tax Agreement ratified.
- US-Bahrain FTA: Continues to provide duty-free bilateral trade in most industrial and consumer products.
- 2025: NSA Bahrain Veterinary Treatment Facility updated pet import memorandum (May 2025) clarifying FAVN requirement and vaccination proof standards.