

Burundi

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

- Copy of passport
- Letter of employment
- Original packing list
- Original bill of lading (OBL) — no express release accepted — or air waybill (AWB)
- Freight invoice, or OBL showing freight charges
- Original valued inventory in English or French, dated and signed by the owner
- Invoice for all new items (if applicable)
- For diplomats: certificate of free entry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Specific Information

Diplomatic shipments: Diplomats must obtain a certificate of free entry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If granted, the owner is liable only for the statistic tax of 1.5% of the CIF value.

NGO expatriate staff: Personal effects of NGO expatriate staff may be exempted from duty and taxes, provided they are imported within the first 6 months upon arrival. UN agencies may have different agreements. The exemption requires approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OBR.

Pre-shipment inspection: If the shipment value exceeds USD 500, a pre-shipment inspection may be requested, along with an import licence.

Express release not accepted: Only original bills of lading are accepted.

Documents must arrive first: All documents must be provided to the agent prior to the arrival of the shipment to obtain duty-free clearance (for qualifying categories).

Deposit on technical items: A deposit will be needed for any technical items being imported such as computers, phones, DVD players, etc.

EAC membership: Burundi is a member of the East African Community (EAC). The EAC Customs Management Act governs customs procedures. The EAC Common External Tariff applies to goods from outside the community.

Duties & Taxes

No blanket duty-free exemption for non-diplomatic shipments. All used household goods for non-diplomatic shipments are subject to import duties and taxes of approximately 7.5% of the CIF value. This applies regardless of how long the goods have been owned or used.

New items within shipments: All new household goods for non-diplomatic shipments are charged duty and taxes as commercial goods. Average duties on new items are approximately 40% of the CIF value.

Taxe de voirie: If the owner works for an NGO, embassy, or international organisation, a "taxe de voirie" of 0.85% of CIF value is applicable on all diplomatic shipments.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs — Strictly prohibited
- Weapons, explosives, and ammunition without authorisation — Prohibited
- Knives and deadly weapons — Prohibited
- Hazardous materials and hazardous wastes — Prohibited
- Counterfeit money and goods — Prohibited
- Pornographic and obscene materials — Prohibited
- Matches manufactured with white phosphorus — Prohibited
- Distilled beverages containing essential oils or chemical products injurious to health — Prohibited
- Any product containing mercury — Prohibited
- Used tyres for light commercial vehicles and passenger cars — Prohibited
- Some agricultural and industrial chemicals — Prohibited
- Any article bearing the Armorial Ensign or Coat of Arms of an EAC partner state without authority — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

Per VisaHQ:

- 1,000 cigarettes
- 1 kg tobacco
- 1 litre of alcoholic beverages

Per Hinterlandtravel (EAC framework):

- Perfume and eau de toilette up to 500ml (of which 125ml may be perfume)
- Personal goods up to the value of RF 500,000 (Burundian franc equivalent)

Restricted Items

- Alcohol within household shipments: Only "Fond de Cave" is acceptable and duty-free, maximum 20 bottles
- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED — Authorisation from the territorial administration required
- Pre-shipment inspection: Required for shipments valued over USD 500
- Import licence: Required for shipments valued over USD 500
- Technical items (computers, phones, DVD players) — Deposit required upon import
- Postal franking machines PERMIT REQUIRED — Permit from competent authority required
- Plants and plant products PERMIT REQUIRED — Phytosanitary certificate required
- Meat and meat products PERMIT REQUIRED — Health certificate required
- Endangered species CITES — Protected species permits may be required

EAC Export Restrictions (for reference)

The following may not be exported from Burundi under EAC regulations:

- Waste and scrap of ferrous scrap iron
- Timber from any wood grown in EAC partner states
- Fresh unprocessed fish (Nile Perch and Tilapia)
- Wood charcoal

Consignment Instructions

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

Documents first: All documentation must reach the agent before the shipment arrives.

Express release: Not accepted. Original OBLs required.

Pre-shipment inspection: Triggered for shipments over USD 500 — a very low threshold.

Baggage clearance: Cleared at the first airport of entry. Transit passengers with destinations outside Burundi who do not leave the transit area are exempt.

Routing / port of entry: Burundi is landlocked, bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Burundi has no seaport. Sea freight is typically routed through the Port of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and transported overland, or via Mombasa (Kenya) through Uganda and Rwanda. Melchior Ndadaye International Airport (Bujumbura) is the main international airport. Customs clearance offices are located in Bujumbura, Kayanza, Gitega (the political capital since 2019), and the Kobero border crossing.

Currency: Burundian franc (BIF). Local currency: no restrictions on import/export. Foreign currencies: up to USD 10,000 may be imported.

Regulatory Updates

- 2019: Political capital moved from Bujumbura to Gitega. Customs clearance operations continue in Bujumbura.
- 2017: WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement entered into force, applicable to Burundi as a member.
- Ongoing: EAC Customs Management Act governs customs procedures. OBR is the principal revenue collection body.