

Benin

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

- Packing list
- Copy of passport
- Original bill of lading (OBL) — no express release accepted — or air waybill (AWB); 2 originals required
- Bordereau de Suivi de Cargaisons (BSC) / Cargo Tracking Note (CTN)
- Original valued inventory in French, dated and signed by the owner of the goods
- Invoice for all electrical items less than 6 months old
- Resident permit / work permit / letter of employment
- Certificate for change of residence
- Non-sale certificate
- Diplomatic exemption certificate (diplomats only)

Specific Information

OBL requirements: The original bill of lading must clearly indicate the weight in kilograms, the number of items, and state "personal belongings." Express release is not accepted. The weight of a vehicle (if applicable) must be shown separately from the weight of personal effects.

BSC / Cargo Tracking Note: The BSC must be attached to the OBL. If the BSC is not available, a penalty of EUR 200 must be paid in Benin.

Non-sale certificate: Must state that the owner will not sell personal effects in Benin.

Certificate for change of residence: Must be obtained in the country of origin by the owner from either the city hall or the embassy of their passport country (if the owner is not a citizen of the country from which they are moving).

Letter of employment: Must explain that the owner is starting a new contract in Benin.

Document lead time (critical): Documents must be provided to the agent 3 weeks prior to the arrival of the shipment to obtain duty-free clearance.

All shipments inspected: All import shipments are subject to customs inspection.

Document language: The valued inventory must be in French.

SEGUB one-stop-shop: Benin uses the SEGUB system for customs clearance. SEGUB issues a receipt (Bordereau de Frais Unique / BFU) to the clearing agent once documents are submitted. The BFU enables cargo removal from the port within 24 hours.

ECOWAS / CET: Benin is a member of ECOWAS. The Common External Tariff (CET) applies to imported goods from outside the ECOWAS region. Tariff rates range from 0% to 35% depending on the nature and origin of goods.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Household goods are allowed into Benin duty-free if they have been in the owner's possession for at least 6 months.

Import taxes (not waived even for duty-free shipments):

- Diplomatic shipments: 0.15% import tax based on declared value
- Non-diplomatic shipments: 3.15% import tax based on declared value

Diplomatic exemption: A diplomatic exemption certificate must be obtained before the goods arrive to avoid storage charges.

VAT: 18% VAT is levied on most imported goods at the point of entry.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs and narcotics — Strictly prohibited
- Firearms and ammunition without authorisation — Prohibited
- Hazardous materials — Prohibited
- Animals and pets without proper documentation — Prohibited
- Asbestos — Prohibited
- Precious metals and stones — Prohibited in shipments
- Ivory — Prohibited CITES
- Furs — Prohibited
- Gambling devices — Prohibited
- Counterfeit money and goods — Prohibited
- Pornographic materials — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

- 200 cigarettes, or 25 cigars, or 100 cigarillos, or 250g tobacco
- 1 bottle of wine and 1 bottle of spirits
- 500ml eau de toilette
- 250ml perfume

Restricted Items

- Alcohol within household shipments — Only "Fond de Cave" is acceptable and duty-free, maximum 12 bottles
- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED — Authorisation from the territorial administration required
- Knives and deadly weapons PERMIT REQUIRED — Authorisation required
- Plant and plant products PERMIT REQUIRED — Permission from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries required
- Meat and meat products PERMIT REQUIRED — Permission from the Ministry of Agriculture required
- Pets and animals PERMIT REQUIRED — Veterinary health certificate and rabies certificate required; permission from the Ministry of Agriculture
- Electrical items less than 6 months old — Invoice required; may be subject to duties

Consignment Instructions

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

Document lead time: 3 weeks before shipment arrival. This is critical for obtaining duty-free clearance.

BSC / CTN: Must be obtained before shipping and attached to the OBL. EUR 200 penalty if missing.

Express release: Not accepted for Benin. Original bills of lading required (2 originals).

Inspection: All shipments are subject to customs inspection.

SEGUB clearance: Once documents are submitted via SEGUB and the BFU is issued, cargo can be removed from the port within 24 hours.

Routing / port of entry: Port of Cotonou (primary seaport; Cotonou is the economic capital and largest city). Cadjehoun Airport (Cotonou) for air freight. Benin also serves as a transit country for landlocked neighbours (Niger, Burkina Faso).

Currency: West African CFA franc (XOF). Pegged to the euro at XOF 655.957 = EUR 1. Benin is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA) and uses the common CFA franc.

Regulatory Updates

- 2015: ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) implementation began, standardising tariff rates across member states (0-35%).
- 2011: SEGUB one-stop-shop for customs clearance became operational, significantly improving clearance efficiency.
- Ongoing: BSC/CTN requirement continues as mandatory documentation for all sea freight.