

Bolivia

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

- Passport (must demonstrate a minimum 2-year stay abroad for duty-free eligibility)
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Insurance policy
- Detailed inventory in Spanish
- Validation document issued by the Bolivian Consulate General, Consulate, or Consular Section in the country of origin (indicating the activity carried out abroad)
- Sworn Declaration of Entry of Domestic Goods (Declaracion Jurada)
- For diplomats: tax exemption certificate, accreditation from the Chancellery
- For foreigners: proof of visa (Visa de Objeto Determinado — "specific purpose visa" — is required for anyone planning to reside in Bolivia; tourist visas do not qualify)

Specific Information

Retorno a Bolivia (Return to Bolivia) programme: Bolivia has a specific duty-free programme for household goods import. Originally established for Bolivians and foreigners with Bolivian spouses, it was expanded in 2013 to include all foreigners who meet the requirements.

Timing requirements (critical):

- If household goods arrive before the owner: the owner must enter Bolivia within 30 days of the cargo's arrival date
- If the owner enters before the goods: the goods must arrive within 6 months of the owner's entry
- Failure to meet either deadline results in loss of the duty-free treatment

30-day re-entry restriction: Returning citizens must not have entered Bolivia for the 30 days immediately prior to the shipment's arrival to qualify for duty-free import.

Consulate validation mandatory: The Bolivian Consulate in the country of origin must issue a validation document confirming the owner's stay abroad. This must be obtained before shipping.

Registration as non-habitual importer: The owner must register as a "Non-Habitual" importer in the National Customs computer system (SUMA/ASYCUDA++) at <http://suma.aduana.gob.bo/>.

Owner presence: The owner or legal representative must be present for customs clearance.

Document lead time: The destination agent must receive all documentation prior to the shipment's arrival.

Document language: Inventory must be in Spanish.

Non-qualifying goods: Items that do not meet the duty-free requirements are subject to standard import duties.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Bolivian citizens returning to the country and foreigners entering to establish residence may import personal effects and household items duty-free, provided they have remained abroad for at least 2 years immediately prior to their return.

Value limits for duty-free import:

- Up to USD 35,000 FOB for household items only (kitchenware, clothing, furniture, appliances, and items normally used in a home)
- Up to USD 50,000 FOB when household items also include machines, equipment, and tools of trade
- Motor vehicles are NOT included in the duty-free allowance

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs and narcotics — Strictly prohibited
- Unauthorised firearms, explosives, and ammunition — Prohibited
- Knives and deadly weapons — Prohibited
- Unauthorised pharmaceuticals and drugs — Prohibited
- Unauthorised chemicals — Prohibited
- Food products containing noxious substances — Prohibited
- Plants, fruits, vegetables, and seeds containing parasites harmful per the Ministry of Agriculture — Prohibited
- Pets and animals containing diseases — Prohibited
- Used clothing without sanitary certificate — Prohibited
- Radioactive scrap and hazardous material — Prohibited
- Counterfeit money and goods — Prohibited
- Gambling machines — Prohibited
- Pornographic material — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

- 400 cigarettes (2 cartons), or 50 cigars, or 500g tobacco
- 3 litres of alcoholic beverages
- 1 photographic camera
- 1 non-professional camcorder
- 1 personal portable computer
- 1 tape recorder, 1 electronic memo book, 1 cellular phone

Specific Duty Rates for Non-Diplomatic Private Imports

The following items imported for private use by non-diplomats are subject to:

- Appliances, machinery, tools: approximately 32% of CIF value
- Vehicles: approximately 55% of CIF value
- Pets: 12% of CIF value
- Alcohol: Subject to duties (diplomats may import duty-free)

Restricted Items

- Used clothing — Prohibited without a sanitary certificate
- Transmission devices for radio and television PERMIT REQUIRED — Must be authorised by the Telecommunications Office
- Pharmaceutical products PERMIT REQUIRED — Must be approved under WHO guidelines and registered with the Vice Ministry of Health

- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED — Authorisation required
- Plants, fruits, vegetables, seeds PERMIT REQUIRED — Sanitary/phytosanitary certificate from SENASAG required
- Meat and animal products PERMIT REQUIRED — Sanitary certificate from SENASAG required
- Pets and animals — Must be accompanied by official health certificate
- Potential contaminants (refrigerators, vehicles, AC equipment) — Subject to environmental inspection upon arrival

Export Restrictions

- Pre-Colombian artefacts, historical paintings, Spanish colonial architecture items, and native textiles — Require permission for legal export from Bolivia

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.

Consulate validation: Must be obtained from the Bolivian Consulate in the country of origin before shipping. This is the critical first step.

SUMA registration: Register as a non-habitual importer in the ASYCUDA++ system before clearance.

Owner presence: Required for customs clearance (for repatriating citizens).

Timing: Strict 30-day (goods arrive first) or 6-month (owner arrives first) windows apply. Missing the deadline means losing the duty-free treatment entirely.

Routing / port of entry: Bolivia is landlocked, bordered by Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, and Peru. International freight typically arrives via Chilean ports (Arica or Iquique, which provide Bolivia with duty-free transit corridor access under treaty) or via Peruvian ports (Ilo). Air freight arrives via El Alto International Airport (La Paz/El Alto, at 4,061m / 13,325 ft elevation — the highest international airport in the world) or Viru Viru International Airport (Santa Cruz). Overland routes from Argentina and Brazil are also used.

Altitude consideration: La Paz and El Alto are at extreme altitude. Electronic equipment with sealed containers (e.g., CRT monitors, certain sealed packaging) may be affected by the low atmospheric pressure. Advise customers to prepare for altitude effects on both themselves and their goods.

Currency: Boliviano (BOB). The economy has experienced dollar shortages; confirm current foreign currency availability with the destination agent.

Regulatory Updates

- 2013: Retorno a Bolivia programme expanded to include all foreigners (not just Bolivians and foreign spouses of Bolivians).
- Ongoing: The Aduana Nacional uses the ASYCUDA++ (SUMA) electronic customs system for declarations and importer registration.