

The Bahamas

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

- Home Consumption Entry Form (customs declaration required for all persons importing cargo)
- Bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Commercial invoice or receipts (proof of value)
- Freight invoice (proof of freight charges)
- Packing list
- Copy of passport
- Proof of residency or immigration status (work permit, permanent residency, etc.)

Specific Information

Processing fee: 1% customs processing fee (minimum BSD 10, maximum BSD 750).

Environmental levy: Based on the item type, ranging from a fixed amount of BSD 1 to BSD 500 or a percentage of value.

Household goods for permanent residents: Persons relocating to The Bahamas as permanent residents should contact the Bahamas Customs Department and the destination agent regarding duty concessions available for genuine household relocations. The government offers exemption concessions for certain imported goods — details available at <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/exemptions-on-imported-items>.

No automatic duty-free import for household goods: Unlike many countries, The Bahamas does not have a blanket "transfer of residence" duty-free exemption for household goods. Most imported goods, including used household items, are subject to customs duty. Specific concessions may be available through application to the government.

Oral vs. written declaration: Visitors with only used personal belongings make an oral baggage declaration. All others must complete a written Baggage Declaration (C17 form) via the Exempt App.

Duties & Taxes

Duty structure: The Bahamas is a duty-based economy (transitioning toward VAT). Customs is the primary agency for collecting duties and taxes at importation. Duty rates range from 0% to 220%, with the average rate between 5% and 35% depending on the item category. Duties are calculated on the CIF value (cost + insurance + freight).

VAT: In addition to customs duty, VAT applies. The rate was recently reduced to 5% on essential products per the 2025/2026 budget. Standard VAT rate may differ for other categories — confirm with the destination agent.

Duty-free exemptions — Residents: Bahamian residents are entitled to a personal exemption of BSD 500, available twice per calendar year, on personal items not intended for sale. This exemption is not cumulative and not transferable. It applies only to items in personal baggage, NOT to goods shipped as cargo.

Duty-free exemptions — Visitors: Bona fide visitors are allowed BSD 100 per trip in duty-free goods.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs — Strictly prohibited
- Counterfeit money and goods — Prohibited
- Pornographic material — Prohibited
- Weapons without permit — Prohibited
- Endangered species and their products CITES — Prohibited without permit

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

Per the Bahamas Customs Department:

- 200 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 454 grams (1 lb) of tobacco products
- 1 quart of spirits and 1 quart of wine (adults only)
- Personal items (clothing, shoes, watches, etc.) not intended for sale
- Other legal items up to BSD 100 in value (visitors) or BSD 500 (residents, twice per calendar year)

Restricted Items

- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED — Strictly controlled; permit required from the Royal Bahamas Police Force
- Fruits, vegetables, and dairy products — Restrictions apply; subject to agricultural inspection
- Meat and meat products — Subject to agricultural controls
- Plants and plant material — Subject to phytosanitary controls
- Medicines — For personal use; carry prescriptions
- Precious stones, jewellery, and precious metals in bullion — Must be declared if valued at BSD 10,000 or more and intended for trade
- Currency: Local currency (Bahamian dollar) can be imported with prior Central Bank permission. No restriction on foreign currency import/export. Residents can export up to BSD 70 with Central Bank permission.

2025-2026 Tariff Changes

The Tariff Amendment 2025 (effective July 1, 2025) reduced duties on many everyday items. Energy-efficient appliances, blenders, vacuum cleaners, air purifiers, shampoo, and cleaning solutions all received significant duty reductions or were made duty-free. These changes aim to lower cost of living and encourage energy efficiency.

Consignment Instructions

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

Entry form: A Home Consumption Entry Form must be completed and submitted for all cargo imports at the time of arrival.

Documentation: Proof of authorisation for processing, proof of value (invoices/receipts), and proof of freight charges (bill of lading or freight invoice) are the primary requirements.

Customs clearance: The Bahamas Customs Department is the primary agency. All goods must be declared in writing by the owner or an authorised agent.

Routing / port of entry: Nassau (New Providence) is the capital and primary port of entry for most shipments. Freeport (Grand Bahama) is the second major port with its own customs division. The Bahamas comprises over 700 islands; shipping to the out-islands (Family Islands) may require transshipment through Nassau or Freeport.

Freeport / Grand Bahama: The Freeport area operates under the Hawksbill Creek Agreement, which provides duty exemptions for certain businesses operating within the free trade zone. This may affect commercial imports but generally does not apply to personal household goods.

Currency: The Bahamian dollar (BSD) is pegged 1:1 to the US dollar. US dollars are widely accepted throughout The Bahamas.

Regulatory Updates

- July 2025: Tariff Amendment 2025 and Excise Amendment 2025 effective July 1, 2025. Significant duty reductions on everyday items (blenders, shampoo, cleaning supplies, energy-efficient appliances, cement). Some items made duty-free.
- May 2025: 2025/2026 Budget announced VAT reduction to 5% on essential products. Excise duty on butane fuel removed.
- July 2024: Tariff Amendment Bill 2024 updated duty rates for various items.
- Ongoing: The Bahamas continues transitioning from a primarily duty-based tax system toward a VAT-supplemented model.