

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.

Updated 2026-08-19

Documents

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

For All (Foreign and Colombian Citizens)

- Notarized passport copy at a Colombian notary (must include blank pages). Do NOT use the biometric gate at the airport; the immigration stamp in the passport is needed for the customs process.
- Typewritten packing list without values, with brands, serial numbers, model numbers, and references for all electronic items (no "packed by owner" notations accepted)
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Powers of attorney provided by the local (destination) agent
- Declaración de Viajeros o de Equipajes No Acompañados (Traveler's Declaration for Unaccompanied Baggage) -- completed at the airport and stamped by Customs upon arrival

Additional for Returning Colombian Citizens (Ley 1565 de 2012 applicants)

- Certificate issued by the Colombian Consulate at origin proving time abroad
- "Certificado de Beneficiarios de la Ley 1565 de 2012" (obtained by registering online through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website) -- required if applying for duty exemption after 3+ years abroad

Additional for Foreign Diplomats

- Diplomatic permit obtained through the embassy, consulate, or diplomatic organization from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (takes approximately 15-20 business days to approve)
- Must be duly registered at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to shipment arrival

Specific Information

Returning Colombian citizen conditions:

- Must prove time abroad of at least 2 years
- During any visits to Colombia during the 2-year period, the owner must not have exceeded 15 days of temporary stay per visit
- Cannot have imported a household goods shipment in the last 5 years
- Must obtain a certificate from the Colombian Consulate at origin as proof of time abroad

Re-importation (citizens abroad less than 2 years): If the citizen did not live abroad for at least 2 years, the goods must go through a "re-importation" process. The items must be the same items that were originally exported from Colombia; the weight, volume, and number of packages must match the original export documents.

One shipment per family every 5 years. Only one household goods shipment can be imported per family during a 5-year period.

Arrival timeline:

- Household goods: must arrive within 30 calendar days before or 120 calendar days after the owner's arrival in Colombia
- Unaccompanied baggage: must arrive within 30 calendar days before or 90 calendar days after the owner's arrival
- Upon arrival, Customs initiates a 30-calendar-day countdown to complete clearance

Owner must be present. The owner must be at least 18 years old and must be present in Colombia for Customs clearance. Partial customs clearance is not permitted; the shipment must be cleared in full at the airport or port of arrival.

All shipments are physically inspected (except diplomatic shipments).

Confiscation triggers: Customs will confiscate goods in the following cases: excess of the authorized allowance (e.g., more than one of each major appliance), goods destined for purposes other than those declared, arrival outside the established time period, and commercial quantities.

Appliance limits: Only one of each type of major appliance may be imported (excluding televisions, of which 3 are permitted maximum). Only one bedroom set per family member.

Serial numbers required: The detailed inventory must include the product serial number for every electronic item in the shipment. This is strictly enforced.

ISPM 15: Mandatory. Wooden crates must show an ISPM-15 certification stamp. Non-compliant packaging will cause delays and potential return.

Advanced Declaration (2024): As of June 2024 (Decree 659 of 2024), all importers must file an Advanced Declaration at least 48 hours before cargo arrives in Colombia.

Diplomatic shipments: Cleared without physical inspection. Returning Colombian diplomats must use the diplomatic permit within 6 months of completion of their employment contract abroad.

Currency: Colombian Peso (COP). VAT (IVA) is 19% on most goods.

Language: Spanish. All customs documentation should be in Spanish or accompanied by certified Spanish translations.

Duties & Taxes

Duties and taxes: 15% CIF on all non-diplomatic shipments. Household goods shipments are subject to duties and taxes of approximately 15% of cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value. Consular-notarized inventories do NOT exempt the payment of duties. The value on which duties are charged is calculated after the Customs inspection, not based on the declared value.

Duty exemption under Ley 1565 de 2012: Colombian returning citizens who have lived abroad for 3 years or more may apply for duty and tax exemption. The owner must register online through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and provide the "Certificado de Beneficiarios de la Ley 1565 de 2012" to the moving company.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs
- Autos, motorcycles, boats, jet skis, golf carts within household goods shipments (must be imported separately)
- Commercial quantities of any goods
- Weapons without prior Ministry of Defense authorization PERMIT REQUIRED
- Items in excess of authorized allowances (more than one of each major appliance)
- Counterfeit goods
- Products that violate Colombian intellectual property laws

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Items with quantity restrictions within household goods:

- Only one of each type of major appliance (e.g., one refrigerator, one washing machine, one dryer) -- excluding televisions
- Maximum 3 televisions
- Only one bedroom set per family member
- No commercial quantities permitted

Firearms and collection weapons: Authorization from the Colombian Ministry of Defense is required and must be obtained prior to import. PERMIT REQUIRED

Alcohol: Subject to duties and restrictions. Contact destination agent for current limits.

Traveler's duty-free allowances (accompanied baggage):

- Up to USD 2,000 tax-free (excluding personal effects)
- If abroad at least 5 days: up to an additional USD 3,000, but subject to 15% single tax and must be declared
- Maximum 10 units per type for other personal/family items
- Maximum 3 units per type for household, sports, artistic, or professional items

Consignment Instructions

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

Do NOT use the biometric gate at the airport. The immigration stamp in the passport is needed for the customs process. If the owner uses the biometric/automated gate, there will be no stamp, which will complicate or prevent customs clearance.

Declaración de Viajeros: This traveler's declaration form must be completed at the airport upon arrival and stamped by Customs. This document is essential for clearing the household goods shipment.

Serial numbers on the inventory: Every electronic item must have its brand, serial number, model, and reference listed on the packing list. "Packed by owner" is not accepted. This is one of the most common causes of delays and problems in Colombia.

Pre-alert accuracy: The pre-alert must state actual weights and/or volumes and delivery details. Discrepancies between the pre-alert and the actual shipment will cause delays.

5-year rule: Confirm with the owner that they have not imported a household goods shipment to Colombia in the last 5 years. If they have, the shipment will not qualify for the standard import regime.

Advanced Declaration: As of June 2024, an Advanced Declaration must be filed at least 48 hours before cargo arrives. Failure to file on time results in fines; if the declaration is not submitted within 2 days (air) or 5 days (sea) of arrival, the goods are considered abandoned.

Ports of entry: Major sea ports include Buenaventura (Pacific coast), Cartagena and Barranquilla (Caribbean coast). Air freight arrives at Bogotá El Dorado International Airport (BOG) and other international airports.