

Ecuador

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

Ecuador's customs regime for household goods (menaje de casa) is governed by the Código Orgánico de la Producción, Comercio e Inversiones and SENAE resolutions. Requirements differ significantly between returning Ecuadorians, foreigners, and diplomats.

For returning Ecuadorians (non-diplomats)

- Color copy of the importer's citizenship card (current marital status must be visible)
- Color copy of the importer's passport
- Color copy of the importer's granted visa issued by the competent migration authority, or other document accrediting migratory condition
- Color copy of the importer's voting certificate
- Address where the importer plans to reside, with a color copy of a basic service bill (water, electricity) from the Ecuador residence, dated within 3 months prior to shipment release
- Color copies of Ecuadorian passports for all family members
- Returning Migrant Certificate: sworn statement, migratory movements, and 3 documents from origin certifying the importer's stay abroad
- Professional title or courses taken (if work equipment is included)
- Detailed inventory of goods

For foreigners

- Color copy of the importer's passport and passports of family members
- Color copy of the importer's and family's import visa (permanent or temporal visa required)
- Original certificate of migratory movements for the importer and family members
- Documents justifying the visa granted (work contract or assignment letter)
- Address where the importer plans to reside, with color copy of a basic service bill dated within 3 months prior to shipment release
- Detailed inventory of importing goods
- Professional title or courses taken (if work equipment is included)

For diplomats

- Color copy of the importer's passport or ID card
- Inventory of legalized goods
- Note Verbale issued by the Foreign Ministry for household goods and motor vehicles
- Release agreements issued by Customs for household goods and motor vehicles
- Diplomatic franchise

Additional documents

- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB) (2 originals)

- The OBL/AWB must include the consignee's passport number (or RUC/ID number for Ecuadorians)
- The OBL cargo description box must state: "EFECTOS PERSONALES Y MENAJE DE CASA USADOS" (Used personal effects and household goods)
- Transportation insurance policy issued in Ecuador (required by law to determine CIF value)
- Migratory certificate issued at destination by Migration Police
- Verification certificate issued locally by an inspection company (for shipments valued over USD 4,000)

Specific Information

Repeat importation: Household goods can be imported more than once as long as 10 years have elapsed since the last importation. An older baseline source states the shipper can import again after maintaining residence in Ecuador for at least 5 years with no more than 150 days abroad; the 10-year figure is more recent and should be used.

One shipment only: Only one shipment is admitted duty-free. If 2 shipments are sent (e.g., a small airfreight plus a container), one of them will be subject to import taxes.

One item per type: Only one of each item is allowed, including appliances. Duplicate items are subject to duties. Customs accepts one electrical appliance of each type; extras incur duties at approximately 43-45% of CIF value.

Clothing limit: Up to 200 kg net of clothing, footwear, and accessories per member of the family unit.

Alcohol limit: Up to 50 litres of alcoholic beverages may be included, without exceeding 2 litres of the same characteristics (brand/type). Quantities exceeding this are subject to taxes.

Eligible goods: Eligible goods can be new or used as long as they are acquired by the importer for everyday use.

Electrical appliances: Must specify year and serial number on inventory.

Shipments valued over USD 4,000: Must be inspected at origin before embarkation (customs value, not replacement value). The inspection is requested and coordinated by the destination agent. Lack of verification at origin will cause delays and additional costs. If a shipment arrives without the inspection certificate, the customer has 15 working days to request customs inspection at the port/airport. Cost of local verification may reach approximately USD 800 and take approximately 3 weeks.

Inspection at destination: A 15% sample of total household goods will be inspected. In case of inconsistencies, a fine for regulatory breach will be imposed. Undeclared items found during inspection are treated as a felony and may result in criminal prosecution.

Shipper must arrive first: The shipment must arrive after the client. The client should be in Ecuador 2 weeks prior to arrival of the shipment. If the shipment arrives after the client, they must not leave the country for more than 30 calendar days during the clearance period.

Inventory must be valued: Use declared value for customs purposes, not insurance or replacement value.

Packages identification: Packages and items must be identified with the importer's full name and their respective numbering. Clothing must be packed separately.

Non-compliant shipments: Subject to import taxes of approximately 43-45% of CIF value, calculated by customs after inspection.

Work equipment: Can be new or used, intended for the importer's activity, profession, art, or trade. Must not exceed 160 basic salaries (USD 482 x 160 = approximately USD 77,120 at the 2026 basic salary; previously USD 72,000 at the 2024 rate of USD 450). Professional title or documentation of courses taken must be provided.

ISPM 15: Wood packaging materials must comply with ISPM 15 (NIMF-15 in Spanish).

Currency: Ecuador uses the United States dollar (USD) as its official currency.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions (returning Ecuadorians): Must have stayed abroad for more than 2 years and not stayed more than 180 days in Ecuador within the 2 years prior to return. The exemption of taxes benefit must be requested within 36 months of arrival with intention of residing in Ecuador.

Duty-free conditions (foreigners): Must have a permanent or temporal visa. Must have stayed abroad for more than 2 years and not stayed more than 180 days in Ecuador within the 2 years prior to return. Shipments arriving up to 1 month before and 6 months after entering Ecuador may be considered as household goods. If the visa is not stamped on arrival, a guarantee (banking, cash, or insurance policy) equivalent to 120% of eventual taxes with 180 working-day validity must be presented. If the working visa is not presented to customs within 90 days, the guarantee is forfeited and full duties apply.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and drugs — strictly prohibited; severe criminal penalties
- Pornographic materials — prohibited
- Firearms and ammunition — prohibited without Ministry of National Security permit PERMIT REQUIRED
- Live plants — prohibited without phytosanitary certificate and Ministry of Agriculture permit
- Foodstuffs, including spices — prohibited
- Appliances using refrigerant R12-R15 — prohibited
- Cleaning products — prohibited
- Creams, colognes, perfumes, and cosmetics — prohibited within shipments
- Pitbull dog breeds — prohibited from entry

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Traveler Allowances

Per VisaHQ:

- 300 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 200g tobacco
- 1 litre of alcoholic beverages
- Perfume for personal use in reasonable quantities

Restricted Items Within Household Goods Shipments

- Electrical appliances — one of each type permitted duty-free; additional items incur duties at approximately 43% of CIF value
- Wine — up to 50 litres permitted; an older baseline source cites 4 litres with duties of approximately 10% CIF, but the higher figure is more current. Authorization of the Health Minister and Sanitary Register may be required. All quantities exceeding limits attract duties.
- Alcohol — permitted in reasonable quantities; included in the 50-litre overall limit for all alcoholic beverages
- Cigarettes and cigars — permitted in reasonable quantities
- Firearms and ammunition — permit from the Ministry of National Security required for returning citizens or residents PERMIT REQUIRED
- Plants — phytosanitary certificate and permit from the Ministry of Agriculture required prior to import PERMIT REQUIRED
- Precious metal objects (jewelry, coins) — subject to taxes of 20% of value
- Spare parts, machines, and appliances — commercial invoice, import permit, inspection certificate, and OBL/AWB required; subject to duties on customs valuation
- New goods — commercial invoice required; subject to duties

Consignment Instructions

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

Shipper must arrive before shipment: The client should be in Ecuador at least 2 weeks before the shipment arrives. Shipments arriving before the client will incur taxes.

One shipment only: Only one shipment is admitted duty-free. Do not split into air and sea unless prepared to pay duties on one of them.

One item per type: Duplicate appliances, furniture items, or electronics will attract duties. Advise customers to bring only one of each.

Valued inventory required: The inventory must be valued at customs value (not replacement or insurance value). Overvaluation based on insurance amounts will increase duty liability.

OBL requirements: The bill of lading must include the consignee's passport number (or RUC/ID for Ecuadorians). The cargo description must state "EFECTOS PERSONALES Y MENAJE DE CASA USADOS." Contact the destination agent for specific required wording.

Transportation insurance must be issued in Ecuador. This is required by law. It does not replace insurance issued at origin.

Pre-shipment inspection for shipments over USD 4,000: Mandatory and coordinated by the destination agent. Without the inspection certificate, the customer has 15 working days to request local verification (approximately USD 800 and 3 weeks).

Clearance timelines: 4-5 weeks in Guayaquil, 1-2 weeks in Quito.

Criminal penalties for undeclared items: Items not declared on the inventory may result in felony criminal prosecution. Items that do not belong to the shipper (gifts or favors for others) disqualify the entire shipment from tax-exempt status.

Foreigners cannot import vehicles: This is critical for foreign assignees. Only returning Ecuadorians and diplomats can import vehicles as part of household goods.

Galapagos Islands: The Galapagos Islands are part of Ecuador but have their own strict environmental regulations. Shipments to the Galapagos require additional permits and inspections. Contact the destination agent.