Country Guide (IAM)

France

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.

From non-EU countries (transfer of primary residence)

- Passport copy
- Detailed inventory list in French, valued in EUR, dated and signed by the shipper
- Certificate of non-resale / power of attorney (completed, dated, and signed; must mention a vehicle when applicable)
- Certificate of change of residence issued by the French Consulate, stipulating the date of arrival in the origin country and date of departure. This certificate is only requested for French nationals. The shipper must have stayed abroad for at least 12 months for duty-free treatment.
- Certificate of transfer or certificate of employment on employer letterhead with date of employment in the origin country and date of transfer (confirming at least 12 months abroad and primary residence at origin)
- Proof of residence in France (electricity bill, phone bill, or rental contract less than 3 months old)
- Two originals (three in case of transit) of Form Cerfa N° 10070*01: declaration of duty exemption entry of personal effects from a non-EU country
- Bill of lading (express release accepted) / air waybill (AWB)
- Sales invoices for items purchased within 6 months prior to import
- Visa (only if other documentation cannot be provided)

For secondary residence (non-EU origin)

- Authorization certificate from the Regional Customs Directorate of the secondary residence area (requested in triplicate)
- Detailed inventory in French, valued in EUR, dated and signed
- Evidence of ownership or rental of the secondary residence
- Evidence of normal residence abroad
- Bill of transport and insurance

Intra-EU moves

- Inventory of goods. No customs formalities required. Personal goods circulate freely within the EU, though certain sensitive items (health, security, environment, cultural considerations) remain subject to regulation.

Specific Information

Less than 12 months abroad: If the shipper has been abroad for less than 12 months, the shipment is subject to duties and taxes. If payment of duties is required, authorization must be obtained from French customs prior to arrival.

Secondary residence: Goods for a secondary residence are subject to duty and 20% VAT. The authorization from the Regional Customs Directorate is a separate application.

Multiple consignments: If goods arrive in separate consignments, they must all be shown on the first inventory list deposited with customs.

Alienation restriction: Goods must remain in the importer's possession for at least 12 months from the date of importation.

Shipper presence not required. The importer may authorize another person to handle formalities on their behalf.

Customs clearance: Approximately 3-4 days once documentation is complete.

Payment methods: Customs duties must be paid in cash or with bank/postal cheques. Cheques must be certified by the bank.

Carte de libre circulation: Customs supplies on request a free trade card for items such as cameras, lenses, and radios. This document proves the correct condition of objects during a 10-year period.

Missing documents (non-EU): If documents are missing but the importer needs household effects immediately, the customs office can provide information on existing possibilities.

Non-duty-free rates (non-EU): For items from outside the EU that do not qualify for duty-free entry, expect VAT of 20% plus duties of approximately 10%.

Currency: Euro (EUR).

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions (non-EU origin): Used household goods and personal effects are duty-free provided the shipper has had their primary residence outside the EU for at least 12 months, the goods have been in the shipper's possession and use for at least 6 months, and the shipper's primary residence will be in France. Goods must be imported within 12 months of the date of transfer of residence.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Weapons, ammunition, and explosives — prohibited without import permit
- Products made from animals (ivory, turtle shell, etc.) — prohibited
- Endangered flora and fauna species and products made from them — prohibited CITES
- Items protected by the 1973 Washington Convention — prohibited
- Narcotics and illegal drugs — strictly prohibited
- Category 1 dog breeds (pit bull-type, Boerboel-type not belonging to recognized breeds)
- Meat and dairy products from non-EU countries (standard EU prohibition with limited exceptions)
- Counterfeit goods — prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Traveler Allowances (from non-EU countries, 17 years and older)

Alcohol:

- 1 litre of spirits exceeding 22%, or 2 litres of alcohol not exceeding 22%
- 4 litres of still wine
- 16 litres of beer

Tobacco:

- 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250g smoking tobacco

Alcohol Within Household Goods Shipments

Alcohol is subject to duties in all cases. Only "Fond de Cave" (personal wine cellar) is accepted, limited to 15 bottles. A separate and detailed inventory of each bottle is required. An import license or state liquor license may be required. Diplomats are treated as private persons for alcohol importation and are subject to the same duty rules. Important cellar provisions are also subject to duties.

Restricted Items

- Tobacco and related products — subject to duties
- Firearms, weapons, and ammunition — import permit from the Directorate General of Customs (Bureau D3, 23bis rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris) required; proof of ownership, registration, certificates, and licenses must be obtained prior to import; some weapons are prohibited PERMIT REQUIRED
- Medications — for personal use only; narcotics require authorization from the Ministry of Health (Direction de la Pharmacie et du Médicament)
- New items — subject to VAT (20%) and duties (approximately 10%); must be declared separately with sales invoices

Consignment Instructions

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

Inventory must be in French. The inventory must be in French, valued in EUR. This is a harder requirement than many EU countries.

Certificate of change of residence (French nationals only). This document from the French Consulate is mandatory for French nationals returning to France. It is not required for foreign citizens.

Form Cerfa N° 10070*01. Two originals (three if transiting) of this customs declaration form are required for non-EU household goods. Standard copies are available at French customs offices or online.

Secondary residence is not duty-free. Unlike primary residence moves, goods for a secondary residence in France are subject to 20% VAT plus duties. This requires separate authorization from the Regional Customs Directorate.

Alcohol: diplomats pay duties too. France treats diplomats as private persons for alcohol importation, meaning they are subject to the same duty rules as everyone else.

Fond de Cave limit: 15 bottles. Only personal wine cellar ("Fond de Cave") is accepted, capped at 15 bottles.

Overseas territories: France has numerous overseas territories (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Réunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Mayotte, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna). Several of these territories have different customs regimes from metropolitan France. Confirm specific requirements with the destination agent for moves to/from overseas territories.

Ports of entry: Le Havre (primary container port), Marseille, and Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport for air freight. Calais and Dunkirk for Channel crossings from the UK (post-Brexit, these are now non-EU to EU moves requiring full customs clearance).