

India

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

- Original passport (for diplomats, a certified copy is accepted)
- Valued list of articles with dates of purchase
- Baggage customs declaration signed by the owner
- Detailed packing list
- Separate list of electronic items
- Authority letter (format varies for diplomats vs. non-diplomats; refer to destination agent)
- Original bill of lading (OBL), sea waybill, or copy of air waybill (AWB)
- Valid visa (minimum 1-year validity) / PIO card / Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card (for foreign nationals)
- Original residence permit (for foreigners)
- Employment letter, transfer letter, or assignment letter

For diplomats, additionally

- Duty-free exemption certificate issued by the diplomatic organization in India
- Packing list stamped by the consulate or embassy

Specific Information

Owner must be present: The owner of the goods must be present for customs clearance (except for diplomatic shipments).

Customs examination: All shipments are subject to customs examination unless they are diplomatic shipments.

Container handling: All non-diplomatic containers are offloaded at the port/terminal of entry and reloaded into vans for delivery. Direct container delivery is generally not available.

Residency requirements for Indian nationals: Must have lived abroad for at least 2 consecutive years preceding transfer to India and intend to reside in India for at least 1 year. The owner must not have visited India for more than 180 days in the preceding 2 years.

Foreign nationals: Must possess a visa valid for at least 1 year.

Shipment timing (air): Air shipments must be dispatched from the origin airport within 15 days after the owner's arrival in India.

Shipment timing (sea): Sea shipments must be dispatched from the origin seaport within 1 month after the owner's arrival in India.

Early arrival: Shipments may arrive at an Indian airport or seaport up to 2 months before the owner's arrival; however, demurrage and detention charges will apply.

Electronic items: Must be loaded at the front (opening side) of the container or lift-van. A

separate list of electronic items must be provided.

Important note: Customs regulations are the same throughout India; however, regulations may be interpreted differently among various customs offices. The destination agent's familiarity with local customs practices is essential.

ISPM 15: Wood packaging materials should comply with ISPM 15 standards.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Beef and beef products
- Narcotics, non-branded drugs, and psychotropic substances
- Obscene literature, photographs, or films
- Politically subversive literature
- Illegal drugs
- Firearms and ammunition (without license) PERMIT REQUIRED
- Knives and deadly weapons
- Birds and bird products (eggs, feathers) due to Avian Influenza restrictions
- Pigs and pig meat products (per VisaHQ)
- Endangered plants and species CITES
- Plants and plant products (without permission)
- Culturally important or valuable antiques (export restriction)
- Counterfeit goods
- Pornographic material

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Personal duty-free allowances (per VisaHQ):

- 200 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of other tobacco products
- Up to 2 litres of wine or alcoholic beverages
- 59 ml of perfume
- 250 ml toiletries

Currency: Unlimited foreign currency may be imported but amounts equivalent to USD 10,000 or more must be declared. Indian currency import by non-residents is restricted. Foreign travelers cannot take out more foreign currency than they brought in; amounts under USD 10,000 generally do not need to be declared.

Dutiable items within household goods:

- New items are subject to duties (invoice must be supplied)
- Plasma, LCD, and LED televisions (any technology): dutiable at approximately 38.5% whether new or used
- Certain electronics attract approximately 16.5% duty: old-technology televisions, video home theatres, dishwashers, domestic refrigerators above 300 litres, deep freezers, and video cameras
- Duplicate items or items in excess of INR 150,000 (INR 500,000 in Delhi and Mumbai) are subject to duties of approximately 36% to 61%

Foodstuffs: Import rules for food vary between cities throughout India. Foreign nationals may be allowed to import foodstuffs up to INR 1,000,000 per year. Confirm with the destination agent before including food in the shipment.

Firearms, ammunition, and weapons: Restricted item that must be included with the household goods shipment. A license must be obtained before import. PERMIT REQUIRED

Gold and precious metals: Subject to strict import controls and duties.

Radio transmitters: Prohibited without permission.

Special Categories

Common Mistakes

- Attempting to import a banned breed (extensive list; confirm before shipping)
- Not obtaining the NOC from AQCS before arrival
- Arriving outside the 5:00 AM to noon window on weekdays
- Not having the owner present with original passport for customs clearance
- Exceeding the 30-day window after the owner's arrival
- Indian citizens not obtaining a DGFT license when required
- Attempting to import birds (currently prohibited)

Discrepancies

- Number of pets allowed: The IAM guide (2018) states "only one cat, dog or parrot may be imported by the passenger." PetTravel (2026) states "up to two dogs or cats can enter India per person" with a DGFT license required for more than two. The one-pet limit in the IAM guide may reflect an older regulation or a specific condition. PetTravel's more detailed and recent information is likely more current; confirm with the destination agent.
- Electronics duty rates: The IAM guide (2018) lists specific duty rates (16.5%, 38.5%, 36-61%). These rates may have been revised under India's GST framework. Current rates should be confirmed with the destination agent, as India frequently adjusts import duty rates in its annual Union Budget.
- Terrier breed ban: PetTravel lists "Terriers" as a banned breed but notes "specific types not specified." The PetTravel comments section confirms that Boston Terriers are NOT on the banned list; the restriction applies to specific terrier breeds listed (American Staffordshire Terrier, Pit Bull Terrier). Owners of any terrier breed should confirm eligibility with AQCS before shipping.

Unverified Items

- The specific duty rates for electronics and duplicate items (from the 2018 IAM guide) could not be independently verified against a current CBIC source. India revises duty rates annually in the Union Budget. Current rates should be confirmed with the destination agent.
- The INR value thresholds for duplicate items (INR 150,000 general / INR 500,000 in Delhi and Mumbai) from the 2018 IAM guide may have been revised. Confirm with the destination agent.
- The Euro III emission standard requirement for vehicle imports (from the 2018 IAM guide) may have been updated to a higher standard (India implemented BS-VI, equivalent to Euro VI, for new domestic vehicles in April 2020). The current requirement for imported used vehicles should be confirmed.
- The foodstuff allowance of INR 1,000,000 per year for foreign nationals (from the 2018 IAM guide) could not be independently verified.

Consignment Instructions

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

Customs interpretation varies by location: This is one of the most critical operational points for India. While regulations are nationally uniform, individual customs offices may interpret them differently. The destination agent's relationship with the local customs authority is essential.

Owner must be present: The owner must personally attend customs clearance with their original passport (except for diplomatic shipments). This is non-negotiable and unique among most countries.

Dispatch timing: Air shipments must be dispatched within 15 days of the owner's arrival. Sea shipments must be dispatched within 1 month of arrival. Missing these deadlines can result in the shipment being refused duty-free treatment.

Electronic items placement: Electronic items should be loaded at the front of the container for easy inspection access. A separate inventory of electronics is mandatory.

Ports of entry: Major seaports include Mumbai (Nhava Sheva/JNPT), Chennai, Kolkata, and Cochin. Air cargo clears through major international airports. Vehicle imports are restricted to the Mumbai customs port.

Unpredictable costs: Demurrage, detention, and handling charges in India can be substantial, especially at congested ports. Port congestion is common at Mumbai and other major terminals.

Food items: The permissibility of food imports varies by city. Always confirm with the specific destination agent before including food in the shipment.