

Japan

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.

For Returning Japanese Citizens (including Diplomats returning from service)

- Original Customs Declaration Form C-5360 (two copies, stamped by customs at airport of entry)
- Descriptive and detailed packing list/inventory in English or Japanese
- Passport copies including: picture/information page, visa of the country where the shipment originates, most recent entry stamp into Japan (date must match the C-5360 stamp and be within 6 months of shipment arrival), departure stamp from Japan to origin country, entry stamp into origin country, departure stamp from origin country
- Ocean bill of lading (OBL) or air waybill (AWB)
- Keys/combinations to any locked baggage

For Foreign Residents (New Residents)

- Original Customs Declaration Form C-5360-B (two copies, stamped at airport)
- Descriptive and detailed packing list/inventory in English or Japanese
- Passport copies including: picture/information page, working visa page (valid for more than 1 year), visa of origin country (if nationality differs from origin), most recent entry stamp into Japan, departure stamp from origin country
- Copy of residence card (front and back)
- OBL or AWB

For Diplomats

- Clear copy of diplomatic passport picture/information page
- Simplified customs clearance request form for diplomats issued by the Foreign Ministry. If unavailable, follows the same procedure as foreign residents.
- Import declaration form

Specific Information

C-5360 form is critical. Two copies must be completed in duplicate and submitted to customs officials at the accompanied baggage inspection area upon arrival in Japan. One copy is stamped and returned to the shipper. This certified duplicate is required for clearance of all unaccompanied shipments. If the form is not completed and certified upon entry, all brand-new items (including food) will be taxable, and a petition letter to customs will be required.

The C-5360 can be obtained on the flight to Japan (request two copies from the flight attendant) or at the airport upon arrival. Japanese citizens use form C-5360; foreign nationals use form C-5360-B.

Air shipments: The packing list requires detailed values of all items.

Physical size constraints: Japanese houses and apartments are generally smaller than Western

homes. Oversized furniture (e.g., large sofas, king-size mattresses) may not fit through entrance doors, staircases, or other access areas. This is a frequent operational issue that should be discussed with the customer before packing.

Container access: Due to road conditions and traffic regulations, full-size ocean containers cannot typically be delivered directly to residences. All shipments must be transferred from the container to a smaller van at a bonded warehouse on the day of delivery. This adds cost and handling.

Customs inspections: Customs may inspect all shipments physically.

Advance Filing Rules (since March 2014): Shipping companies or NVOCCs must electronically submit cargo information for maritime container cargoes to Japanese Customs no later than 24 hours before departure of the vessel from the port of loading. Penalties apply for failure to file or filing false information.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Used household goods and personal effects that have been in the owner's use are duty-free, provided: all required documents are completed, the shipment consists of used goods for continued personal use, and clearance occurs within 6 months of entry (as stamped on the C-5360). Persons living in Japan for more than 1 year may import used items duty-free within specified timeframes.

New items: Newly purchased items are duty-free up to JPY 200,000 total market value per person, excluding an 8% consumption tax on the invoice. Items individually valued under JPY 10,000 are excluded from the total calculation. Keep receipts with English translations for all new items.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Opium, heroin, cocaine, MDMA, cannabis, stimulants, psychotropic substances, narcotic drugs, and related utensils (notably, this includes Vicks Inhalers and Sudafed, which contain pseudoephedrine/methamphetamine precursors)
- Counterfeit or imitated currency, banknotes, or securities
- Obscene or immoral materials, pornography
- Articles infringing patents, trademarks, copyrights, or design rights
- Firearms (pistols, rifles, machine guns) and ammunition/parts thereof
- Weapons: swords, daggers, bows with blades longer than 15 cm (exception: Japanese antique swords may be imported under certain regulations)
- Straw (in packing materials)
- Explosives
- Stuffed animals (prohibited)

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Traveller Duty-Free Allowances (per person aged 20+)

- 3 bottles of alcohol (approximately 760ml each)
- 400 cigarettes OR 100 cigars OR 500g other tobacco
- 2 ounces of perfume
- Other articles with a total overseas market value under JPY 200,000 (items individually under JPY 10,000 excluded from calculation)

Alcohol Duties (when exceeding allowance)

- Whisky/brandy: JPY 600 per litre
- Gin/liqueur: JPY 400 per litre

- Wine: JPY 200 per litre
- A liquor list must be prepared for smooth customs clearance.

Other Restricted Items

- Plants with or without soil, fresh fruits, and vegetables: quarantine certificate required before customs examination
- Fresh meat, sausage, ham, bacon, and all meat products: animal health certificate from origin country required. Meat products including beef jerky are prohibited.
- Animal products (bones, eggs, fat, blood, skins, hides, pelts, fur, hair, feathers, horns, antlers, hooves): subject to animal quarantine inspection
- Medicines and cosmetics: limited quantities (pharmaceutical products for 2 months of use; quasi-drugs for 2 months; cosmetics 24 applications)
- Firearms: permit required
- Two-way radios and communications equipment: restricted

Food in Shipments

Customs is strict with food imports, particularly in air shipments. If food is included in a shipment, it triggers inspection and extra handling fees. Strongly discouraged.

Special Categories

Unverified Items

- The current Category 1 (rabies-free) country list could not be independently verified against a current Japanese government source in English. The MAFF AQS page was accessible but the specific country list page was not fetched. PetTravel's 2026 list should be considered current but confirmation with the destination agent is recommended.
- Whether the KANGI form is still required and how to obtain it could not be verified independently. The IAM guide says it's obtained from the Foreign Ministry in Japan.
- Current SHAKEN inspection costs and pass rates for imported vehicles could not be determined. These are widely reported to be very expensive.

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.

C-5360 form: The single most important document. Must be completed and stamped at the airport upon arrival. Without it, duty-free clearance is not possible and all new items become taxable.

Pet advance notification: Must be filed at least 40 days before arrival. AQS may request changes to date or port of entry.

Vehicle coordination: Must be arranged with the destination agent before shipping. SHAKEN compliance testing and modifications can be prohibitively expensive.

Oversized furniture: Discuss Japanese apartment dimensions with the customer before packing. King-size beds, large sofas, and oversized armoires frequently cannot fit through Japanese doorways.

Container transfer: Budget for the mandatory warehouse-to-van transfer at the port. Full-size containers cannot reach most residential addresses.

Advance Filing Rules: Shipping companies/NVOCCs must file cargo information electronically at least 24 hours before vessel departure from the loading port.

ISPM 15: Japan enforces ISPM 15 strictly. Wood packaging without the mark will be inspected. Detection of quarantine pests results in disinfestation, incineration, or re-shipping at the consignee's choice and expense.