

Kenya

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.

Returning Kenyan Residents

- Original passport (current passport plus the passport used for the previous 2 years; entry and exit stamps are used by Customs to verify compliance)
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Detailed packing list
- Valued and detailed inventory
- Form C-18 declaration (baggage claim form), signed by the owner
- Personal Identification Number (PIN) / taxpayer registration certificate

Expatriates (Work Permit Holders)

- Original valid passport
- OBL / AWB
- Original 2-year entry permit (work permit)
- Personal PIN certificate
- Detailed packing list
- Valued and detailed inventory

Diplomats

- Original valid passport
- OBL / AWB
- PRO-1B exemption form, approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (takes 2-3 weeks to obtain; requires OBL/AWB, packing list, and copy of passport)
- PRO-1A form (required if importing alcohol, must be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
- Personal PIN certificate

Specific Information

Owner presence required. The owner of the goods must be present for customs clearance. All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to 100% inspection by Customs.

KEBS (Kenya Bureau of Standards) inspection: KEBS officers inspect all used household goods and personal effects during clearance. They check all electronic items, seek to control dumping, and check for prohibited items. Without KEBS approval, the shipment cannot leave the port, and heavy penalties may apply.

Computers are not classified as personal effects and are subject to tax and duties.

Radioactive analysis: All cosmetics, toiletries, perfumes, alcohol, and foodstuffs are subject to radioactive analysis at KES 3,000 (approximately EUR 30) per sample per item. These items are

then dutiable at 100%.

Food, beverages, and cosmetics/chemicals cannot be imported duty-free under any category and are always subject to radioactive analysis, duties, and taxes.

Railway Development Levy (RDL): All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to RDL calculated at 1.5% of the CIF value of the shipment.

ISPM 15: All wooden crates must meet ISPM 15 (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15) requirements for wood packaging.

Temporary imports on special pass: Expatriates on a 3-month special pass can import used household goods not exceeding 150 kg gross weight duty-free, by providing the original passport, packing list, AWB, and personal PIN/tax registration.

Inland routing: All containers destined for inland Kenya must be taken by rail to Nairobi for clearance. Shipments should be consigned to ICD Embakasi/Nairobi Terminal to avoid excessive storage and demurrage charges.

Storage note: Due to short free storage periods at both the port and airport, storage and demurrage charges are common and often unavoidable.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions for returning residents: The owner must have lived abroad for more than 2 consecutive years and must not have visited Kenya for a total of more than 90 days from the last date of entry. The shipment must be imported within 3 months (90 days) of the owner's entry date. The owner must have owned the items for at least 12 months prior to import.

Duty-free conditions for expatriates: Goods must have been owned for more than 1 year. Goods must be imported within 90 days after approval of the work permit. The expatriate does not need to be in the country to submit the work permit application (processing takes 1-2 months), but must be in Kenya to have the passport endorsed with the work permit.

Diplomatic exemptions: Documents must be received by the agent 15 days prior to arrival to allow the employer to obtain the duty-free exemption certificate. The diplomat must be in the country both for the exemption certificate application and when the shipment arrives.

Diplomatic goods with an approved PRO-1B are not subject to physical inspection.

New items will be subjected to duties, taxes, and penalties. A Certificate of Conformity (COC) will also be required for any new item.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Drugs and narcotics
- Game trophies
- Fruit
- Explosives
- Counterfeit currency
- Gambling machines
- Pornographic or obscene literature, books, articles, and videos
- Animal traps
- Imitation firearms
- Alcohol and spirits (within non-diplomatic household goods shipments; treated as dutiable/restricted rather than truly prohibited, but subject to 100% duty plus radioactive analysis)
- Precious metals and stones
- Firearms and toy guns (without permit) [PERMIT REQUIRED]
- Drones (without special import permit) [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Weapons and firearms: A firearm certificate issued by the Kenyan Firearms Office is required. Toy/plastic guns and drones are strictly prohibited and require a special import permit before shipping. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Wild flora and fauna: Plant import permit required from KEPHIS. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Birds and their products: A sanitary import permit issued by the Director of Veterinary Services is required for birds from countries affected by bird flu. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Personal allowances (persons 16 years and older):

- Cigarettes: 200; Cigars: 50; Tobacco: 1/2 pound
- Alcoholic beverages: 1 bottle
- Perfume: 1 pint

Computers: Not classified as personal effects; subject to tax and duties even within household goods shipments.

New items: Subject to duties, taxes, and penalties. A Certificate of Conformity is also required for any new item.

Cosmetics, toiletries, perfumes, alcohol, foodstuffs: Subject to radioactive analysis (KES 3,000 per sample per item) and then dutiable at 100%.

Special Categories

Research Notes

Sources consulted: IAM Country Guide (November 2016), FIDI Import Customs Guide (January 2020, from FIDI Africa), PetTravel.com (Kenya pet import requirements), KEBS notices (November 2025), multiple Kenya vehicle import regulation sources (2025-2026), PWC Kenya tax summaries, KRA VAT rate confirmations.

Key updates since the IAM guide (2016):

- Vehicle age limit enforcement tightened: effective January 2026, only vehicles first registered from January 1, 2019, are allowed. The IAM guide's reference year examples are outdated.
- The FIDI guide (2020) references "cars manufactured/registered before 2013" as the cutoff for 2020, which would be the equivalent of 2019 for 2026.
- The IAM guide references JEVIC as the pre-inspection agency; KEBS now contracts Quality Inspection Services Inc. Japan (QISJ).
- Thailand has been added to the list of countries requiring pre-inspection CoR (not in IAM guide).
- The FIDI guide's inspection penalty is 20% of CIF, while the IAM guide states 15%. The FIDI figure of 20% appears to be more current and is used in this guide.
- Vehicle processing fee has been updated: IAM says EUR 120, FIDI says USD 130 for non-diplomats. Current sources suggest USD 130-145.

VAT rate confirmed at 16% for 2026 (unchanged from the IAM/FIDI guide period).

FIDI guide adds: The distinction between KEBS inspection and customs inspection (both occur); the ICD Embakasi inland routing requirement for all containers; the temporary import option for special pass holders (150 kg limit); and the note about vehicles loaded with household goods causing container holds at port.

Pet section significantly enhanced via PetTravel.com: added microchip requirement, additional vaccination requirements for dogs and cats, parasite treatment timing (48 hours), health certificate endorsement requirement, and 30-day import permit processing time.

Link verification (re-checked June 2026): KRA: active (200). MFA: active (200). NTSA: returns 503 to this proxy; resolves and TLS-connects normally -- WAF block, browser-accessible. KEPHIS: returns 503 to this proxy; resolves and TLS-connects normally -- WAF block, browser-accessible. EmbassyPages: returns 403 to bots but browser-accessible. OpenFactBook (replaces CIA World Factbook): active (200). Note: Quick Links previously mislabelled the KEPHIS link (kephis.go.ke) as "Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS)" -- KEBS is a separate agency at kebs.org. This has been corrected.

Consignment Instructions

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

Inland routing requirement: All containers destined for inland Kenya must be transported by rail to Nairobi (ICD Embakasi/Nairobi Terminal) for customs clearance. Consigning directly to ICD Embakasi is strongly recommended to avoid excessive storage and demurrage charges at Mombasa port.

Document lead time: All shipping documentation should reach the destination agent at least 1 month before the shipment's arrival (15 days minimum for diplomatic exemption processing).

Inventory requirements: A detailed and valued inventory is required. Each carton should have the number of items and gross weight listed. Electronics should include make, model, and serial numbers for KEBS inspection.

Timing: Returning residents must import within 90 days (3 months) of their entry date.

Expatriates must import within 90 days of work permit approval. Diplomats should allow 2-3 weeks for PRO-1B processing and must be in the country both for the application and when the shipment arrives.

Storage and demurrage: Due to short free storage periods at both Mombasa port and Nairobi airport, storage and demurrage charges are common and often significant. The vehicle registration process (which must be completed before release from port) adds to container dwell time when vehicles are loaded with household goods.

ISPM 15: All wooden crates and packaging must comply with ISPM 15 requirements.

KEBS inspection: All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to KEBS inspection of electronic items. Without KEBS approval, the shipment cannot leave the port. Ensure all electronics are clearly documented in the inventory.