

Malawi

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

Required Documents

Requirements differ depending on the importer's status. In all cases, the consignee must have arrived in the country before the goods arrive and must be physically present at customs to sign for duty-free forms. The consignee and consignor on the shipping documents must be the same person.

For Diplomats (New Residents)

For Non-Diplomat Foreign Citizens (New Residents)

For Returning Malawian Residents

Returning residents who have been abroad for less than one year are not eligible for duty-free import. They must instead provide: passport copy, invoices/receipts for goods being imported, certificate of origin, bill of lading or airway bill, and an inventory/packing list. Full duties and taxes will apply.

For Deceased Estates

Specific Information

Non-household items: Building materials and similar non-household goods are dutiable even when shipped as part of a household removal.

Alcohol within shipments: Diplomats and returning residents (absent more than one year) may import up to 5 litres of alcohol, of which no more than 2 litres may be spirits. Non-diplomat new residents may import a maximum of 1 litre of alcohol. Quantities above these limits incur duty and tax.

Office equipment: Duties are required on office equipment including computers, cash registers, and fax machines. Duty is assessed on the value including freight.

Consignee/consignor match: The consignee on the import documentation must be the same as the consignor on the shipping documents. Mismatches will cause delays or denial of duty-free entry.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Goods may be imported duty-free provided the consignee has arrived in Malawi before the goods, goods are imported within 6 months of the resident's arrival or within 6 months of the work/resident permit being granted, and goods have been used for more than 6 months. New furniture and household goods are dutiable regardless of the importer's status; invoices are required.

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior

to import, especially for differences regarding air / sea / road shipments.

Port of entry: Malawi is landlocked. The best sea port for shipments into Malawi is Beira (Mozambique), with the bill of lading addressed to the Blantyre or Lilongwe inland container terminals. Major shipping lines operating in Malawi include Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), CMA-CGM, and Maersk.

Airports of entry: Kamuzu International Airport (LLW) in Lilongwe and Chileka International Airport (BLZ) in Blantyre. Major airlines serving Malawi include Malawian Airlines, South African Airways, Kenya Airways, and Ethiopian Airlines.

Clearance time: Shipments are typically cleared within 3 working days from the time of arrival at either Blantyre or Lilongwe terminals.

Owner presence: The consignee must arrive in Malawi before the goods and must be physically present at customs to sign duty-free forms. Proxy arrangements are not commonly available; confirm with the destination agent.

Timing: Goods must be imported within 6 months of the returning resident's arrival or within 6 months of the work or resident permit being granted.

Physical inspection: Customs officials may demand physical examination of household effects.

Land borders: Malawi's primary land border crossing with Mozambique is the Mwanza border, which is the busiest entry point. Cargo also enters through border crossings with Zambia and Tanzania. Inland clearance can be arranged in Blantyre (Southern Region), Lilongwe (Central Region), or Mzuzu (Northern Region) through the Malawi Revenue Authority.

Visa note: As of January 2026, Malawi has implemented a new reciprocal visa regime. Citizens of countries that previously enjoyed visa-free access (including the US, UK, France, Belgium, and Canada) may now require a visa. Electronic visas can be applied for at <http://www.evisa.gov.mw>. Confirm current visa requirements before travel.