

Puerto Rico

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 2026-09-05

Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

Required Documents

All international shipments (from outside the US):

Diplomats (A-1 visa holders):

Shipments from the US mainland:

- Copy of passport
- Copy of visa (non-US citizens / permanent residents) or copy of permanent resident card
- US Customs Form CF-3299 (Declaration for Free Entry of Unaccompanied Articles)
- US Customs Service Supplemental Declaration for Unaccompanied Personal and Household Effects
- Detailed inventory in English (do not use "packed by owner," "PBO," "miscellaneous," or "contents unknown"; all PBO boxes must have descriptive item listings)
- Original bill of lading (OBL) or air waybill (AWB)
- I-94 arrival record (non-US citizens; some ports require a copy of the card)
- Power of attorney (POA) for the customs broker
- Importer Security Filing (ISF) -- must be filed prior to vessel sailing from the last foreign port for all ocean shipments
- Government-issued photo ID
- Copy of Social Security card
- Signed Hacienda Declaration Letter (Puerto Rico Treasury Department clearance)
- All of the above plus DS-1504 form submitted to the US Department of State by the diplomat's consulate or embassy at least 10 days prior to shipment arrival
- Brokers may not clear customs on CF-3299 entries for A-1 visa diplomats
- Hacienda clearance documents (government-issued photo ID, Social Security card copy, signed Hacienda Declaration Letter)
- No US CBP customs entry required

Specific Information

Items owned less than 12 months are generally dutiable. These must be listed in detail on the reverse of CF-3299, including item description, quantity, material, value in USD, and country of origin.

ISF filing. For ocean shipments, the ISF must be filed before the vessel departs the last foreign port. Failure to file timely results in CBP penalties. Ensure the origin agent coordinates ISF filing with the destination broker well in advance.

Examinations. CBP and other government agencies may require physical or X-ray examination of shipments. Examination costs typically range from USD 200 to USD 1,700 or more for a full container load (FCL) and are for the importer's account.

Hacienda clearance. Unlike the US mainland, all shipments into Puerto Rico -- including those from the US -- require clearance from Hacienda (Puerto Rico's Department of the Treasury). The Hacienda Declaration Letter must be signed by the importer and submitted with the required ID documents.

ISPM 15. All wood packaging materials must comply with ISPM 15.

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions. Household goods must have been used in the owner's household for at least 12 months prior to shipment from the origin country. The owner must hold a valid long-term US visa (not a B-1/B-2 visitor's visa) to import household goods duty-free. Visitors on short-term visas may import personal effects only (clothing, toiletries, camping gear, etc.).

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia
- Tuna (certain restrictions apply under US law)
- Pornographic materials
- Haitian animal hide drums
- Cuban cigars (subject to current OFAC regulations; confirm current status with destination agent)
- Blank tapes and CDs of Iranian origin
- Absinthe
- Counterfeit items or goods improperly using a federally registered trademark
- Products made from dog or cat fur
- Flavored cigarettes including cloves
- Most turtles and monkeys
- Species prohibited under CITES without valid permits

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Puerto Rico follows US federal customs regulations. The following categories require particular attention:

Alcohol. The import of alcohol is governed by both federal and Puerto Rico local laws. Federal rules generally permit a reasonable quantity in a household goods shipment; excessive quantities may require a licensed alcohol importer to file a commercial entry. Puerto Rico's own regulations must also be consulted.

Food items. Import is strongly discouraged. Food products require a detailed inventory for FDA filings and appropriate duty payment.

Plants and seeds: import permit required from APHIS.

Soil: import permit required.

Meats and meat byproducts (including bouillon soups): restricted; inspection required.

Medications: personal-use quantities generally permitted with documentation; controlled substances require DEA authorisation.

Fruits and vegetables: subject to USDA/APHIS inspection; many items restricted.

Firearms and ammunition: ammunition should not be shipped (hazardous goods). Firearms previously owned and exported from the US can generally be imported with proof of US origin (prior registration with CBP before export is strongly recommended). Foreign-purchased firearms typically require an ATF permit filed at least 6 weeks before the shipment's arrival; the customs broker must be named on the ATF application from the outset. Consult the destination agent before shipping any weapons.

Antiques: items at least 100 years old are duty-free; the circa date must appear on the invoice.

Iranian-origin carpets used in the foreign household for at least 12 months are generally approvable, but note that the US maintains an embargo on Iranian-origin goods subject to change.

Fish and wildlife / CITES items: ivory, skins, feathers, shells, and other wildlife products are regulated by US Fish and Wildlife Service. Many require CITES permits that must be obtained before the shipment leaves the origin country. Provide the destination agent with the common name, scientific name, and country of origin for any such items well before shipment.

Goods from embargoed countries: require a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Textiles and clothing: subject to US textile import regulations; quantities beyond personal use may require formal entry.

Gold: must be declared.

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.

Puerto Rico is served by sea through the ports of San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez. The Port of San Juan handles the majority of household goods freight. Air freight moves through Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (SJU) in San Juan.

The ISF must be filed before the vessel departs the last foreign port. Coordinate with the destination broker as early as possible; late filing triggers CBP penalties.

The Hacienda Declaration Letter and supporting ID documents must be signed and ready before the shipment arrives. The destination agent should provide the Hacienda package to the importer well in advance.

Do not use "miscellaneous," "contents unknown," "PBO," or any vague descriptions on the inventory. CBP examiners will flag these and may require a full physical examination at the importer's cost.

CBP examinations are a routine risk in Puerto Rico. Budget for potential examination costs of USD 200 to USD 1,700+ for an FCL shipment. Examinations are more likely when inventories are vague or when shipments originate from flagged origins.

For shipments from the US mainland: no CBP customs entry is required, but Hacienda clearance is still mandatory. Ensure the destination agent is briefed on the domestic vs. international distinction so the correct documentation package is prepared.