

Rwanda

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 All Importers (Employees / Transferring Residents)

- Copy of passport
- Original bill of lading (OBL) -- express/telex release is not accepted; original OBL required. For air shipments, copy of air waybill (AWB).
- Original valued inventory in English or French, dated and signed by the owner of the goods
- Detailed packing list
- Letter of employment
- Long-term visa or work permit
- Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) issued by the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) -- required even for categories that qualify for duty-free treatment

For NGO / Non-Profit Staff

- All documents listed above
- Non-governmental organization registration certificate or copy of work contract

Specific Information

Rwanda administers customs through the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA). All importers, including those qualifying for duty exemptions, must register for a TIN with the RRA before shipment arrives. The TIN registration process should be initiated as early as possible -- the destination agent can assist with this, but it requires the client's physical presence or a notarized power of attorney.

Used household goods and personal effects imported by persons transferring their residence to Rwanda may qualify for duty-free treatment, subject to eligibility criteria and documentation. Proof that the goods are genuinely used (not new) and belong to the transferring resident is required. Diplomatic and NGO staff may benefit from additional exemptions; confirm the applicable category with the destination agent and the relevant Rwandan ministry at the time of transfer.

The original valued inventory must be in English or French, signed and dated by the shipper. It should include item descriptions, quantities, and declared values. Items of significant value -- electronics, jewelry, artwork -- should be individually listed with accurate valuations.

Rwanda is a landlocked country. Most containerized freight arrives via the port of Mombasa (Kenya) or Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), then by road through Uganda or Tanzania. Transit times and documentation requirements for cross-border trucking should be factored into planning. Confirm current land border crossing procedures and any transit country documentation requirements with the destination agent.

All solid wood packing materials must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from import into Rwanda:

- Illegal drugs and controlled narcotics
- Pornographic materials
- Transmission and radio communication equipment (without authorization) [PERMIT REQUIRED]
- Items infringing on intellectual property rights or copyrights
- Live or dead animals and foodstuffs originating from countries where an epidemic has been declared a health risk by Rwandan authorities [CITES -- contact nearest Rwandan embassy for current country-specific restrictions]
- Counterfeit goods and currency
- Plastic bags (single-use plastic bags are banned in Rwanda)

Note: Rwanda has a comprehensive ban on single-use plastic bags. This includes packaging materials. Household goods shipments should not contain single-use plastic bags, and packing methods should conform to this requirement. Customs inspectors enforce this rule; non-compliant materials will be confiscated.

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Accompanied baggage allowances (duty-free, persons 16 years and older):

Cigarettes (2 cartons) and alcoholic beverages (2 litres) may be imported duty-free as accompanied personal baggage.

Alcohol in household goods shipments:

Only "Fond de Cave" (personal cellar stock) is acceptable within a household goods shipment, and is limited to fewer than 15 bottles. If the declared value of goods exceeds USD 5,000, the owner must apply for an import license and a pre-shipment inspection must be conducted at origin. Alcohol should be packed and shipped separately from the main household goods consignment.

Currency:

Local currency (Rwandan francs) may be imported up to a maximum of RWF 5,000. Foreign currency imports should be declared on arrival; large amounts may require documentation.

Firearms and ammunition:

Importation requires authorization from the relevant territorial administration authority. This must be arranged in advance of shipment. Members should advise clients to initiate this process as early as possible and to confirm current licensing procedures with the destination agent.

Consignment Instructions

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

Original bills of lading are required -- Rwanda Customs does not accept express or telex release for household goods. Ensure original documents are couriered separately and arrive before or simultaneously with the shipment.

Rwanda is landlocked. Most shipments transit through Mombasa (Kenya) via Mombasa-Kampala-Kigali road, or through Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) via the Central Corridor. Transit country documentation, cross-border permits, and road transit charges add time and cost to the move. Confirm current transit routes and procedures with the destination agent, as conditions along these corridors can change.

The client's TIN registration with the Rwanda Revenue Authority must be completed before the shipment arrives. Delays in TIN registration will result in shipment demurrage. The destination

agent should be engaged early to initiate this process.

Customs inspections are common. The inventory and packing list must be accurate and consistent with the actual contents. Discrepancies between declared and actual contents can result in significant delays and penalties.

Plastic single-use packaging should be avoided entirely in packing materials, as Rwandan customs will confiscate prohibited plastic items.