

Vietnam

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 (Sea and Air Shipments)

- Copy of passport (identification pages only) with entry stamp — certified true copies required in Ho Chi Minh City (certified at the People's Committee Office of Ho Chi Minh City)
- Packing list in English
- Bill of lading (telex release) or air waybill (AWB)
- Vietnam entry visa (valid for at least 3 months) or temporary residence card — certified true copies required in Ho Chi Minh City
- Original Vietnam arrival-departure card (3 copies per shipment) — in Ho Chi Minh City, must be signed and stamped (company seal) by the owner of the goods' registered local employer in Vietnam
- Letter of employment
- Copy of business license of the owner of the goods' Vietnam employer
- Application letter
- Owner of the goods' address in Vietnam

Additional Documents — Hanoi Only

- Copy of labor contract (required by Hanoi Customs in addition to all above)

For Sea and Air Shipments Over 300 kg (Gross)

- Copy of work permit

For Diplomats

- Diplomatic documentation as applicable; diplomatic shipments are exempt from physical Customs inspection

Specific Information

3 Copies Required: 3 copies of each document are required per shipment. If there are multiple shipments, a separate full set of 3 copies is required for each.

Document Signing and Stamping: All documents must be signed and stamped (with the company seal) by the owner of the goods' registered local employer in Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh City, certified true copies are required for the passport and entry visa/temporary residence card; these are obtained from the People's Committee Office of Ho Chi Minh City.

Cultural Inspection: All shipments are subject to a cultural inspection conducted by the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism. This process takes approximately 3 to 4 days and may cover books, artwork, DVDs, CDs, antiques, and similar cultural items. Antiques must be clearly photographed and well documented; they are inspected and registered upon entry (an additional 2 to 3 days). Antique descriptions must be clearly noted on the packing list and on

individual cartons.

Clearance Complexity: The Vietnamese customs environment involves multiple agencies (Customs, Culture, Agriculture/veterinary for shipments with food or plant products) and is known for inconsistency across ports. The destination agent must be deeply experienced with local clearance requirements.

ISPM 15: All wooden packing materials must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Weapons of all kinds
- Ammunition
- Explosives
- Military equipment
- Radio transmitters and receivers
- Satellite dishes
- Poisonous chemicals
- Cultural products that contravene Vietnamese law or national sovereignty
- Articles of anti-government or anti-state nature
- Fireworks
- Toys and games that negatively affect public moral education or security
- Pornographic or subversive materials
- Motorbikes (for private import outside diplomatic status)

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Alcohol — Import Duty Rates:

- Spirits with alcohol content below 30% ABV (measured at 20°C): 125%–150% duty
- Spirits with alcohol content above 30% ABV (measured at 20°C): 125%–150% duty
- Wine: 10 to 20 bottles duty-free; excess subject to 125%–150% duty

Tobacco — Import Duty Rates:

- More than 100 cigars: 150%
- More than 400 cigarettes: 150%
- Prepared tobacco (more than 50 grams): 45%
- Other manufactured tobacco products: 45%

Electronics:

- Personal computers: 15% import duty
- Personal printers: 10% import duty

Food: Non-perishable food items and canned/durably packaged goods can be imported in small quantities for personal use.

Special Categories

Documents Required (Dogs and Cats Traveling With Owner — 2 or Fewer)

- Dogs: distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza, parvovirus
- Cats: viral rhinotracheitis, panleukopenia, leukemia

For Pets Traveling as Cargo (Separate from Owner)

All of the above plus:

- Original Vietnam arrival-departure card (3 copies per shipment)

- Vietnam employer's company license copy
- Application letter and Power of Attorney
- Air waybill
- Flight arrival details

Consignment Instructions

Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences between air and sea shipments, and between Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

Three-Copy Rule: Three copies of every document are required for each shipment. Multiple shipments require separate full document sets of 3 copies each.

City-Specific Requirements: Hanoi requires a labor contract copy in addition to all other documents. Ho Chi Minh City requires certified true copies of the passport and entry visa/ temporary residence card, obtainable from the People's Committee Office. Document signing and stamping requirements differ between the two cities. Always confirm with the destination agent which city will handle clearance.

Work Permit — Over 300 kg: Shipments over 300 kg gross weight (sea or air) require a copy of the owner's work permit. Advise clients to have their work permit finalized before the shipment arrives if the weight threshold will be exceeded.

Cultural Inspection — Plan for It. The cultural inspection by the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism adds 3 to 4 days to every clearance timeline. Antiques add a further 2 to 3 days. Advise clients that Vietnam clearance timelines are longer than most regional peers due to this mandatory step.

Antiques. Antiques must be clearly photographed before packing, well documented, individually described on the packing list, and marked on the carton. They will be inspected and registered on arrival — an additional 2 to 3 days. Undocumented antiques cause significant delays.

No Vehicles for Private Importers. Private expatriates cannot import motor vehicles. Advise clients before the move so they can plan for local vehicle acquisition.

Visa Duration. The entry visa must be valid for at least 3 months at the time the shipment arrives. Monitor visa renewal dates carefully — expired visas block clearance.

ISPM 15. All wooden packing materials (pallets, crates, lift vans) must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.