

Shipping your personal effects to South Africa & Zimbabwe

Excess Baggage Company has compiled this information sheet to help you understand what happens when you ship your goods to South Africa or Zimbabwe, and to inform you of procedures once your goods arrive. The sheet describes how you can help with the smooth clearance of your goods through Customs, so please try and take time to read the information. Do call us or our agents in South Africa if you require further clarification of any of the points outlined below - we are all available to help you.

General

Please mark your shipment clearly with your name and overseas address. Give us as many accurate destination contact details as possible. The South African postal system can sometimes be a bit unreliable, and our agents have found in the past that some of their correspondence to clients has been returned to them undelivered. If you have a separate mailing address such as a PO Box number or a business address where you have better mail service than to your home address, please give this to us to pass on to our agent. Where possible, please give us a home telephone number, work or daytime telephone number and if you have one, a fax number where you can be reached.

Loading and transit

Your goods will be shipped by what is known as a 'groupage' service. This is a shipping container that is loaded with other personal effects shipments such as your own. When there are sufficient goods to fill the container, it is then booked on a vessel. This consolidation of shipments usually takes between one and four weeks depending on how much cargo is already available, and will vary during busy or quiet periods throughout the year. Occasionally, to avoid consolidation delays we may elect to load Cape Town cargo in a Durban container, and vice versa, but when this happens, we cover the overland transport charges to the destination port. The actual vessel sailing time to the entry ports Cape Town and Durban is about three and four weeks respectively. This means your goods will usually arrive at the port some time between five and nine weeks after collection. This transit time is subject to sailing dates that may sometimes be changed by the shipping lines without prior notification; or to port congestion or other delays which also occasionally occur. Please take this into account if you require your goods by a particular date. On arrival at the port, the container will be hauled to our agent's depot where it will be unloaded and the shipments will await Customs clearance. Deliveries to Cape Town and Durban and their suburbs will normally take place about 8 to 12 days after vessel arrival, assuming you have supplied all the necessary documents to clear Customs. Deliveries to other inland destinations will take a bit longer; but our agents will keep in touch with you and will make arrangements for a suitable delivery date.

Freight charges

It is to your advantage to ship your goods on a door to door basis. This means you do not have to pay again in South Africa for container uplift; haulage, unloading, handling, Customs clearance, and the final delivery to your residence. If you have paid to 'arrival port' only, you will have to pay these charges to the destination agent. We are a bulk buyer of destination services and we obtain these services at rates lower than a member of the public will pay. Consequently, in most cases you will find that it can be more expensive to ship to 'arrival port' and then pay destination charges, than it is to pay initially for door to door shipment. The term 'arrival port' is a shipping term which refers to the payment of freight charges and does not mean you can collect your goods directly at the port to do your own Customs clearance. The whole container is consigned to our agent who will unload at their own bond store. Shipments paid to 'arrival port' East London or Port Elizabeth or to 'arrival depot' Johannesburg will be routed through either Cape Town or Durban. The transport charge to move the goods to these destination ports or depots from the entry port will be met by us, but unless you have paid for door to door shipment, all other destination charges will apply. If you have paid for a door to door shipment, the costs of container uplift from the wharf, haulage to depot, unloading, notification; 'Customs' clearance, and delivery to your residence are covered. Other possible charges which are not covered are detailed in the following section.

Destination charges

For all shipments whether prepaid to residence or not, you will have to pay the SA Wharfage charge known as 'Ad Valorem' which is a port charge currently levied at 2.03% of the declared value or Customs assessed market value of the shipment. Some shipments (approximately 50% of all shipment) are examined by Customs, and a charge is raised for this to cover the costs of the Customs officers' time and attendance, and the expenses incurred by our agents in arranging examination; their handling costs, and also their attendance during examination. As we cannot tell in advance if a particular shipment will be examined by Customs, we cannot include possible examination charges in any shipping invoice which you will have paid in the UK. In Durban all Personal effects(°) shipments are subject to Customs examination; shipments which are classed as Household effects(*) may be examined at Customs' discretion. In Cape Town examination is at Customs discretion irrespective of how the shipment is classed, but in any case you will only be billed if examination has taken place. The charge for Customs examination is currently approximately £20 to £25 and must be paid in local currency to the agent prior to delivery. Please note that this charge if levied, is not covered by any payments already made in the UK.

(*) Note - 'Personal effects' shipments are those which consist solely of items of a personal nature, i.e. clothes, shoes, books, CD's, cassettes, videos, letters, photos, etc. Any other shipments which exclude furniture, hi-Pt, television; or items which cannot be seen as purely 'personal' items are classed as 'Household effects.'

On Arrival

The container carrying your goods will be consigned to our appointed Cape Town or Durban agent, who will collect it from the port and unload all the shipments into their bonded store where Customs clearance will take place (see section overleaf). As soon as we load a container, we send our agent a 'pre-alert' advice so that they know which consignments are on the way. If you call the agent for information, they will be able to let you know when your goods are due at the port, as well as being able to help you with any queries which you may have. Before the vessel arrives, an arrival notification will be sent by our agent to your destination address, together with a request for any documents which you have not already supplied which may be required to clear your goods. If you have paid freight charges to 'arrival port' only, you will also receive an invoice for destination services as described in an earlier paragraph.

All information on this sheet is given for guidance only, and although we believe it to be correct at the time of writing, we do not accept any liability for errors, omissions, inaccuracies or misinterpretation. All charges, regulations and procedures are liable to change without notice.

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Customs Clearance

For your goods to clear South African Customs, certain documents are required. We would advise you to complete these and give them to us so we can send them to our agent in advance of the shipment arriving, so that there will be no delay in clearing the goods. To clear personal or household effects we require a packing list or inventory, a clearing mandate, form DA304 (* see note below) and form P.1.160. If you have not been supplied by us with any of these forms, please call us and we will send you some. Otherwise, our agent will send you the forms with their arrival notification. A certified photocopy of your passport is also required, but please note that this is only valid for clearance if copied after you have arrived in South Africa when it will include your entry stamp. Copies of passports given to us here in the UK (which naturally will not have your SA entry details) will not be accepted for clearance purposes. When you get to South Africa you should copy the page with your personal details and all pages with stamps, have them certified at a police station or post office, and send them to the agent together with your immigration permit (if applicable) when you receive your arrival notification. Alternatively if you wish, you can visit your nearest Customs office with all your completed original documents. This means you can personally answer any queries Customs may have which the agent might not be able to answer for you. Please note that failure to complete the necessary forms will cause delay in Customs clearance. If your goods cannot be cleared due to lack of required documents, they will be held in Customs bonded store until they can be cleared. This will mean that you may be charged for Customs bond storage while you complete the documents.

(* Note: Form DA304 is not required if your shipment consists solely of ' personal effects' (see earlier section), but we advise you to complete it anyway. Our agent will then assess your packing list or inventory to ascertain whether the form needs to be presented to Customs or not.

Duty and Customs regulations

It is your own responsibility to ensure that you are aware of how current regulations affect the status of your shipment with regard to whether or not your shipment or certain items in it are liable to duty. However, at the time of writing, returning South African residents must have been absent from South Africa for an unbroken period of more than six months to qualify for duty free entry of personal and household effects. Immigrants must have a work or residence permit to qualify for duty free entry; temporary residents should be in possession of a valid temporary work permit, and foreign diplomats will be required to present a diplomatic clearance certificate. In all cases, goods which are brand new or have not been owned for more than one year are subject to duty. There is no duty free allowance for alcohol, and as an Import Permit will be required from Pretoria, it is best not to ship alcohol unless perhaps you have a valuable wine collection for which it would be worth the extra trouble in getting the permit and the expense of paying the duty. Antiques or works of art may be imported duty free if as part of a bona fide household removal or if the articles are over 100 years of age and have been in the use and possession of the owner for more than a year and are not for sale or other disposal. To import antiques a certificate of antiquity will be required. Firearms may be imported duty free, but an Import Permit is required from Pretoria, and form SAP311 must be completed and presented to Customs. Inherited goods may be imported duty free, but a certified copy of the will of the deceased showing the inventoried goods as being bequeathed to the consignee/ legatee must be presented to Customs together with an Import Permit and a declaration from the consignee/legatee that he/she is a permanent resident in South Africa. *Please note that this information is given for guidance only, and is not presented as authoritative or complete. You should check with South African Customs for further information, or for advice on local interpretation of Customs procedures and regulations.*

If you will not be present when your goods arrive

As is the case in most countries, personal effects are viewed by Customs as being the personal possessions of one person who is usually both shipper and consignee. If you are shipping goods from yourself to another person, they may be viewed by Customs as being dutiable goods. This is because it could be understood by Customs that the ownership of the goods is being transferred from one person - you the shipper, to another person - the consignee, who may not have fulfilled the duty free entry requirement of having been absent from South Africa for the qualifying period. It may be that you have consigned your shipment to "care of" a person other than yourself, say a family member, because you will not be present in South Africa until after the goods arrive. This can cause difficulties in clearing the goods through Customs, and to alleviate this we suggest you send a full certified copy of your passport, either to the agent or to your family or friend to whom you consigned the shipment.

Shipments to Zimbabwe

Sea-freight shipments to Zimbabwe are routed through South Africa, so much of what you have already read regarding loading, transit, freight charges and procedures applies to your shipment as well. Goods bound for Zimbabwe require ' transit clearance from SA Customs. Final entry / clearance into Zimbabwe requires a personal meeting with the Zimbabwean Customs authorities to permit entry of your effects which is granted on a similar basis to that in South Africa. Arrival notification will be mailed to you from South Africa and you will be advised of the local agent appointed by our South Africa agent to handle the carriage of your goods across the border. Upon receipt of the arrival notification which will advise you of the steps you need to take, you must send a copy of your passport to our South African agent, visit your local Customs office for import permission, and then contact the local agent. Our South African agent, having received your Ad Valorem payment and any other fees due, will arrange for your goods to be forwarded to Johannesburg where, once the Zimbabwe authorities have granted permission, they will be collected by the Zimbabwe carrier for final clearance and delivery. For further advice on Zimbabwe Customs regulations, duty free allowances or rates of duty, you should contact the Zimbabwe Customs authorities.

Our agents

Our carefully selected South African agents are experienced reputable companies who are members of the same Overseas Removals Associations as ourselves. Please call our London offices for their full contact addresses, telephone numbers and other details.

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