



Belize

CAPITAL

Belmopan

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

English (the only English-speaking country in Central America)

CURRENCY

the Belize dollar (BZD),
pegged to the US dollar at
approximately 2:1

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Disclaimer

This Country Guide reflects information believed to be correct at the time of publication. Regulations, procedures and charges are subject to change. IAM does not accept liability for errors, omissions, inaccuracies or misinterpretations in this guide. The information provided should not be considered as having been provided or sanctioned by the customs authorities of the country or territory concerned.

Overview

Duty-Free Eligibility

Duty-free conditions: Per the Belize Customs Department (customs.gov.bz), personal and household effects may be imported free from customs duties provided they are used and have been in the owner's possession for at least 1 year, and are not intended for any other person or for sale. The duty-free concession applies to goods arriving within 3 months before or after the passenger's arrival, or within such further period as the Comptroller of Customs deems reasonable.

Documents

Required Documents

- Import permit

- **Commercial invoice**
- **Bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)**
- **Packing list**
- **Health and sanitary certificates (if applicable)**
- **Fumigation certificate (if applicable)**
- **Certificate of origin (if applicable, particularly for CARICOM goods)**

Household Goods — Specific Information

Shipment arrival deadline: Items must arrive within 6 months of the owner's arrival in Belize (per industry sources; the official customs language references 3 months with discretionary extension).

CIF value exceeding BZD 20,000: Customs duties are applicable on the CIF value in excess of BZD 20,000 (approximately USD 10,000) based on rates set out in the Belize Customs Tariff. This is a significant limitation on the duty-free concession.

General Sales Tax (GST): 12.5% GST applies to most imported goods. New household effects within shipments are subject to GST based on CIF value.

Belize nationals returning: Must have been out of the country for at least 1 year to be entitled to duty-free entry of household goods and personal effects.

Used tools of trade: Used implements, instruments, and tools of profession, trade, occupation, or employment may be imported duty-free if approved by the Ministry of Finance and admitted by the Comptroller of Customs. They must have been in the owner's possession and use for a reasonable period.

Deceased persons' effects: Used personal effects (not merchandise) of Belizean citizens or persons ordinarily domiciled in Belize who have died abroad may be imported duty-free, as approved by the Comptroller of Customs.

Client presence: The owner must be present at customs clearance.

All shipments inspected: Every shipment is subject to physical inspection.

Wood items (CRITICAL): New wood items, including furniture, require an import permit from the Ministry of Trade prior to importation. Check with the destination agent before importing ANY items made of wood. Belize has an extensive import licensing regime for wood products to protect domestic forestry.

ISPM 15: At the time of the IAM guide, Belize did not require ISPM 15 fumigation of wood packing materials. Confirm current requirements with the destination agent.

Belizean duty-free allowances for returning Belizeans: In addition to personal effects, Belizean citizens may claim duty exemption on accompanied goods acquired abroad for personal or household use, souvenirs, or gifts up to BZD 200 per person (twice per year through an international airport, once per month through other ports). Family maximum: BZD 600 per family at airports, BZD 150 per family at other ports.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- **Narcotics and illegal drugs** — Strictly prohibited; penalties are very severe and jail sentences are long
- **Firearms and ammunition** without licence — Prohibited
- **Military, naval, or aerial warfare weapons** without written permission — Prohibited
- **Knives and deadly weapons** — Prohibited
- **Goods containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine** — Prohibited
- **Animals prohibited by the Minister** under the Animals (Disease & Importation) Act — Prohibited
- **Goods bearing imitation currency designs** (without Central Bank permission) — Prohibited
- **Flavouring essences** that could be mixed with brandy, whisky, or gin (except for bonded warehouse use) — Prohibited
- **Counterfeit money and goods** — Prohibited
- **Pornographic material** — Prohibited
- **Hazardous materials** — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances

Tobacco (18+, one of the following):

- 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250g tobacco

Alcohol (18+):

- 1 litre of spirits over 22% ABV, or 2 litres of dessert wine under 22% ABV, or 2 litres of wine

Perfume:

- 250ml eau de toilette and 60cc perfume

Restricted Items (extensive licensing regime)

Per trade.gov, the following require import licences or permits:

- **Products made of wood** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Import licence from the Ministry of Trade required; this is strictly enforced and applies to new wood furniture
- **Peanut butter, jam, jellies, pasta, wheat flour, rice** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Import licensing to protect domestic production
- **Peppers and pepper sauces** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Domestic production protection
- **Beer, alcohol, spirits, carbonated beverages, cigarettes** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Import licensing
- **Pharmaceutical medicines** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Licensing required
- **Pesticides** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Licensing required
- **Telecommunication equipment** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Licensing required
- **Ozone-depleting gases** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Licence from the Department of the Environment
- **Beans and rice** — May not be imported if there is a surplus on the domestic market
- **Hams** — 35% additional import duty
- **Turkeys** — 40% additional import duty
- **Live plants, fruits, vegetables, lumber, animal feed** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Permits from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
- **Firearms and ammunition** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Licence from the Commissioner of Police
- **Military weapons** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Written permission from the Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Defence
- **Gaming machines** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Permit from the Minister
- **Bees, honey, or bee-keepers stock** `PERMIT REQUIRED` — Prior written permission from the Chief Agricultural Officer
- **Currency:** No restrictions on import. Amounts over BZD 10,000 must be declared via a Report of Currency Importation.

CARICOM Preferential Treatment

Imports from CARICOM member states are exempt from import duty provided a Certificate of Origin from the originating CARICOM country is produced certifying the goods were produced

within the Common Market region.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- **Bill of lading (OBL)**
- **Vehicle title / registration**
- **Purchase invoice / proof of value**
- **US Customs "Investigation for Theft" stamp (if imported from the US)**

Specific Information

Valuation: The Belize Customs Department uses the U.S. National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) publication ("Blue Book") to value vehicles and automobiles being imported. Duties are charged on the CIF value.

Duties on vehicles: Subject to customs duty, which varies by vehicle type, age, and value. Rates are published in the Belize Customs Tariff. Vehicles are examined by customs officers for valuation.

Diplomats: No restrictions apply and vehicles are free of duty.

US driver's licences: Valid US or international driver's permits are accepted in Belize for 3 months after entry.

Stolen vehicle check: Vehicles imported from the US must have a US Customs "Investigation for Theft" stamp on the title.

Driving: Driving is on the RIGHT-hand side of the road.

Pets

Requirements

- **Import permit from the Agriculture Department in Belmopan (must be obtained before arrival)**

Per the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and customs regulations:

- **Certificate of vaccination, including rabies, issued no more than 6 months prior to departure**

Per the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and customs regulations:

- **Health certificate issued not more than 48 hours prior to departure**

Per the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and customs regulations:

- **Rabies vaccination certificate issued no less than 1 month before arrival**

Per the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and customs regulations:

Specific Information

No quarantine: Dogs and cats can be brought into Belize without quarantine. However, they must be inspected for health by a quarantine officer upon arrival.

Import permit required: A special import permit from the Agriculture Department in Belmopan is required for all cats and dogs. This must be obtained before the pet arrives.

Vaccination timing: The rabies vaccination must be administered at least 1 month before arrival. The vaccination certificate must be issued no more than 6 months before departure.

Health certificate timing: Must be issued no more than 48 hours before departure. This is one of the tightest health certificate windows of any country.

Vaccine requirements: If vaccines are required for your pets, they must be noted on the import permit. Consult with the Agriculture Department for current vaccination requirements beyond rabies.

Official authority: Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprises (MAFSE).

Common mistakes: Not obtaining the import permit from Belmopan before arrival. Not meeting the 48-hour health certificate deadline (most countries allow 10-14 days).

Consignment Instructions

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

Client presence: Mandatory for customs clearance.

Inspection: All shipments are subject to physical inspection.

Wood items: Check with the destination agent before importing ANY items made of wood. New wood furniture requires an import licence from the Ministry of Trade.

Routing / port of entry: Belize City (Port of Belize / Fort Point) is the primary sea freight entry. Philip Goldson International Airport (Belize City) for air freight. Belize also has land border crossings with Mexico (Corozal) and Guatemala (Benque Viejo del Carmen / Cayo). Belize is located on the Caribbean coast of Central America, bordered by Mexico and Guatemala.

Vehicle valuation: Belize Customs uses the US NADA "Blue Book" for vehicle valuation. This is distinctive and worth noting to customers importing vehicles.

Currency: The Belize dollar (BZD) is pegged to the US dollar at BZD 2.0175 = USD 1.00. US dollars are widely accepted.

Penalties: Penalties for possession of prohibited items are very severe. Jail sentences are long. Review the complete list of prohibited/restricted items on the Belize Customs website before shipping.

Cultural & Other Information

- **OpenFactBook (replaces CIA World Factbook):** <https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/belize/>
- **Wikipedia:** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belize>
- **Belize Customs & Excise:** <https://www.customs.gov.bz/>
- **Belize Customs — Personal & Household Effects:** https://www.customs.gov.bz/personal_household.html
- **trade.gov — Belize Customs Regulations:** <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-customs-regulations>
- **trade.gov — Belize Prohibited and Restricted:** <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-prohibited-and-restricted-imports>

Key country facts: Belize is located on the Caribbean coast of Central America, bordered by Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the west and south. The capital is Belmopan; the largest city is Belize City. The official language is English (the only English-speaking country in Central America). The currency is the Belize dollar (BZD), pegged to the US dollar at approximately 2:1. Belize is a member of CARICOM and the Commonwealth of Nations. The economy relies on tourism, agriculture (sugar, citrus, bananas), and offshore financial services. Driving is on the right-hand side.

Important notes for movers: The BZD 20,000 (approximately USD 10,000) CIF value cap on the duty-free concession is the most significant practical limitation. Shipments exceeding this value will incur duties on the excess. The wood import licensing requirement is strictly enforced and

catches many movers off guard: new wood furniture requires an import licence from the Ministry of Trade. The 48-hour health certificate window for pets is exceptionally tight and requires precise coordination. The extensive import licensing regime (covering everything from peanut butter to telecommunications equipment) means the destination agent should review the packing list carefully before shipping.

Regulatory Updates

- **2020:** Customs Regulation Act revised edition published, consolidating multiple amendments.
- **2024:** trade.gov updated Belize customs information confirming the licensing and permit regime.
- **Ongoing:** GST rate is 12.5%. CARICOM preferential treatment continues for goods with Certificate of Origin.

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers in Belize](https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=Belize&lat=17.1899&lng=-88.4976&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=Belize)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=Belize&lat=17.1899&lng=-88.4976&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=Belize>
- [Foreign Embassies in Belize](https://www.embassypages.com/belize)
<https://www.embassypages.com/belize>
- [Belize's Embassies Abroad](https://www.belizeembassyusa.mfa.gov.bz/)
<https://www.belizeembassyusa.mfa.gov.bz/>
- [OpenFactBook \(replaces CIA World Factbook\)](https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/belize/)
<https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/belize/>
- [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belize)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belize>
- [Belize Customs & Excise Department](https://www.customs.gov.bz/)
<https://www.customs.gov.bz/>
- [Belize Customs — Personal & Household Effects](https://www.customs.gov.bz/personal_household.html)
https://www.customs.gov.bz/personal_household.html
- [trade.gov — Belize Customs Regulations](https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-customs-regulations)
<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-customs-regulations>
- [trade.gov — Belize Prohibited and Restricted Imports](https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-prohibited-and-restricted-imports)
<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-prohibited-and-restricted-imports>

