



Kenya

CAPITAL

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

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CURRENCY

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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

Customs Clearance

Airport shipments: 2-3 days. Mombasa or Nairobi Inland Container Depot (ICD): 7-12 working days.

Duty-Free Eligibility

Duty-free conditions for returning residents: The owner must have lived abroad for more than 2 consecutive years and must not have visited Kenya for a total of more than 90 days from the last date of entry. The shipment must be imported within 3 months (90 days) of the owner's entry date. The owner must have owned the items for at least 12 months prior to import.

Duty-free conditions for expatriates: Goods must have been owned for more than 1 year. Goods must be imported within 90 days after approval of the work permit. The expatriate does not need to be in the country to submit the work permit application (processing takes 1-2 months), but must be in Kenya to have the passport endorsed with the work permit.

Diplomatic exemptions: Documents must be received by the agent 15 days prior to arrival to allow the employer to obtain the duty-free exemption certificate. The diplomat must be in the country both for the exemption certificate application and when the shipment arrives. Diplomatic

goods with an approved PRO-1B are not subject to physical inspection.

New items will be subjected to duties, taxes, and penalties. A Certificate of Conformity (COC) will also be required for any new item.

Documents

Returning Kenyan Residents

- **Original passport (current passport plus the passport used for the previous 2 years; entry and exit stamps are used by Customs to verify compliance)**
- **Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)**
- **Detailed packing list**
- **Valued and detailed inventory**
- **Form C-18 declaration (baggage claim form), signed by the owner**
- **Personal Identification Number (PIN) / taxpayer registration certificate**

Expatriates (Work Permit Holders)

- **Original valid passport**
- **OBL / AWB**
- **Original 2-year entry permit (work permit)**
- **Personal PIN certificate**
- **Detailed packing list**
- **Valued and detailed inventory**

Diplomats

- **Original valid passport**
- **OBL / AWB**
- **PRO-1B exemption form, approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (takes 2-3 weeks to obtain; requires OBL/AWB, packing list, and copy of passport)**
- **PRO-1A form (required if importing alcohol, must be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**
- **Personal PIN certificate**

Household Goods — Specific Information

Owner presence required. The owner of the goods must be present for customs clearance. All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to 100% inspection by Customs.

KEBS (Kenya Bureau of Standards) inspection: KEBS officers inspect all used household goods and personal effects during clearance. They check all electronic items, seek to control dumping, and check for prohibited items. Without KEBS approval, the shipment cannot leave the port, and heavy penalties may apply.

Computers are not classified as personal effects and are subject to tax and duties.

Radioactive analysis: All cosmetics, toiletries, perfumes, alcohol, and foodstuffs are subject to radioactive analysis at KES 3,000 (approximately EUR 30) per sample per item. These items are then dutiable at 100%.

Food, beverages, and cosmetics/chemicals cannot be imported duty-free under any category and are always subject to radioactive analysis, duties, and taxes.

Railway Development Levy (RDL): All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to RDL calculated at 1.5% of the CIF value of the shipment.

ISPM 15: All wooden crates must meet ISPM 15 (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15) requirements for wood packaging.

Temporary imports on special pass: Expatriates on a 3-month special pass can import used household goods not exceeding 150 kg gross weight duty-free, by providing the original passport, packing list, AWB, and personal PIN/tax registration.

Inland routing: All containers destined for inland Kenya must be taken by rail to Nairobi for clearance. Shipments should be consigned to ICD Embakasi/Nairobi Terminal to avoid excessive storage and demurrage charges.

Storage note: Due to short free storage periods at both the port and airport, storage and demurrage charges are common and often unavoidable.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Drugs and narcotics
- Game trophies

- Fruit
- Explosives
- Counterfeit currency
- Gambling machines
- Pornographic or obscene literature, books, articles, and videos
- Animal traps
- Imitation firearms
- Alcohol and spirits (within non-diplomatic household goods shipments; treated as dutiable/restricted rather than truly prohibited, but subject to 100% duty plus radioactive analysis)
- Precious metals and stones
- Firearms and toy guns (without permit) [PERMIT REQUIRED]
- Drones (without special import permit) [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Weapons and firearms: A firearm certificate issued by the Kenyan Firearms Office is required. Toy/plastic guns and drones are strictly prohibited and require a special import permit before shipping. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Wild flora and fauna: Plant import permit required from KEPHIS. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Birds and their products: A sanitary import permit issued by the Director of Veterinary Services is required for birds from countries affected by bird flu. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Personal allowances (persons 16 years and older):

- Cigarettes: 200; Cigars: 50; Tobacco: 1/2 pound
- Alcoholic beverages: 1 bottle
- Perfume: 1 pint

Computers: Not classified as personal effects; subject to tax and duties even within household goods shipments.

New items: Subject to duties, taxes, and penalties. A Certificate of Conformity is also required for any new item.

Cosmetics, toiletries, perfumes, alcohol, foodstuffs: Subject to radioactive analysis (KES 3,000 per sample per item) and then dutiable at 100%.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- **Original passport**
- **Original work permit (expatriates) or passport showing 2+ years abroad (returning residents)**
- **Import Declaration Form (IDF), plus IDF charges (approximately EUR 50)**
- **Certificate of Conformity (COC) / Certificate of Roadworthiness (CoR)**
- **Personal Identification Number (PIN) certificate**
- **Original certificate of registration / logbook in English**
- **Purchase invoice in English (if paying duties)**
- **PRO-1B form approved by MFA (diplomats)**
- **OBL / AWB must show vehicle details: chassis number, engine number, make, model, colour, fuel type, transmission type, and year of manufacture**

Specific Information

Regulatory update (January 2026): KEBS has confirmed strict enforcement of the 8-year age limit from the Year of First Registration. Effective January 1, 2026, only right-hand-drive vehicles first registered from January 1, 2019, and later are allowed into Kenya. Vehicles registered in 2018 or earlier are permanently barred from entry. Rejection happens at the importer's expense with no appeal.

Left-hand-drive vehicles are prohibited. Kenya drives on the left. LHD vehicles cannot be imported except for specific exempt categories (ambulances, fire tenders, large construction vehicles imported for government projects). Returning residents from LHD countries may import a similar (size, engine capacity, and value) right-hand-drive vehicle from another country by providing proof of previous ownership and disposal of the LHD vehicle.

Pre-inspection requirement: Vehicles from Japan, UAE (Dubai), United Kingdom, Thailand, Singapore, and South Africa must have a Certificate of Roadworthiness issued by Quality Inspection Services Inc. Japan (QISJ), the official KEBS inspection contractor. Vehicles from other origins can be inspected in Kenya by KEBS for a fee of approximately USD 300. Without a CoR from these designated origins, a penalty of 20% of CIF value is charged.

Import Declaration Form (IDF): Required before arrival. If the IDF is not available, a penalty of 15% of the CIF value will be charged by KEBS.

Processing fee: Customs charges approximately USD 130-145 per motor vehicle for processing.

Duty-free vehicle import (returning residents): Only one duty-free car per returning resident in a lifetime. The owner must not have visited Kenya for a total of more than 90 days in the last 2 years prior to arrival. The vehicle must be imported within 90 days after the owner's last date of arrival. The owner must have owned and used the vehicle for at least 12 months before shipping. If the vehicle is older than 12 months and registered in the owner's name, no tax is charged. If the ownership requirement is not met, approximately 61-71% of taxes will be charged.

Vehicles imported duty-free are not transferable for 12 months.

Guarantee deposit: Customs may request a guarantee deposit equal to the value of the duties while waiting for confirmation of any exemption.

Tax rates for dutiable vehicles: Taxes are based on a percentage of the local value of a similar vehicle, approximately 55%. The vehicle must not have a seating capacity of more than 13 people.

Diplomats: Allowed to import 1 vehicle or motorcycle per shipment. Additional vehicles or motorcycles are subject to duties and taxes at 45% plus VAT at 16%. The vehicle must be accompanied by an approved PRO-1B form.

Registration: Cars and motorcycles must be registered before release from the port. If a motor vehicle is loaded in the same container as household goods, the entire container remains at port until vehicle registration is completed, generating additional storage charges.

All shipping documentation must be sent to the agent at least 1 month prior to shipment arrival to reduce the possibility of demurrage and storage charges.

Pets

Requirements

- **Approved import permit from the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (requires copies of vaccination card and health certificate to apply; takes approximately 30 days to obtain; can be applied for online; fee of KES 500 per animal)**
- **Vaccination record including current rabies certificate**
- **Veterinary health certificate issued in the country of origin, endorsed by the originating country's government veterinary authority**
- **ISO 15-digit microchip (ISO 11784 / Annex A to ISO 11785)**
- **Original passport of the owner**

Specific Information

Import permit is mandatory and must be obtained before the animal arrives. Application takes approximately 30 days, so planning well in advance is essential.

Microchip: Required. Must be implanted before vaccinations and recorded on all documentation.

Rabies vaccination: Required for all dogs and cats over 3 months of age. Must be administered between 21 days and 12 months prior to entry. Multi-year vaccinations are not recognized unless administered within 12 months.

Additional vaccinations: Dogs must be vaccinated against distemper, canine hepatitis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, and leptospirosis. Cats must be vaccinated against feline rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia.

Parasite treatment: Internal and external parasite treatments must be administered within 48 hours of entering Kenya.

Health certificate: Must be completed by a licensed veterinarian within 48 hours of transport. Must be endorsed by the government agency responsible for live animal imports/exports in the origination country.

Rabies titer test: Not required for entry into Kenya. However, Kenya is classified as a high-rabies-risk country by WOA, so a titer test may be required for return to the country of origin (particularly the US and EU).

Quarantine: No quarantine for accompanied pets meeting all requirements. Home quarantine required for unaccompanied pets arriving as air cargo. Non-compliant pets may be quarantined, returned, or euthanized at the importer's expense.

Customs charges on pets: Duty of 25% plus VAT of 16% is assessed upon arrival.

Breed restrictions: Kenya does not publish a list of banned breeds.

Common mistakes: Not applying for the import permit early enough (30-day processing time); not having the health certificate endorsed by the government veterinary authority; presenting multi-year vaccinations administered more than 12 months prior.

Research Notes

Sources consulted: IAM Country Guide (November 2016), FIDI Import Customs Guide (January 2020, from FIDI Africa), PetTravel.com (Kenya pet import requirements), KEBS notices (November 2025), multiple Kenya vehicle import regulation sources (2025-2026), PWC Kenya tax summaries, KRA VAT rate confirmations.

Key updates since the IAM guide (2016):

- Vehicle age limit enforcement tightened: effective January 2026, only vehicles first registered from January 1, 2019, are allowed. The IAM guide's reference year examples are outdated.
- The FIDI guide (2020) references "cars manufactured/registered before 2013" as the cutoff for 2020, which would be the equivalent of 2019 for 2026.
- The IAM guide references JEVIC as the pre-inspection agency; KEBS now contracts Quality Inspection Services Inc. Japan (QISJ).
- Thailand has been added to the list of countries requiring pre-inspection CoR (not in IAM guide).
- The FIDI guide's inspection penalty is 20% of CIF, while the IAM guide states 15%. The FIDI figure of 20% appears to be more current and is used in this guide.
- Vehicle processing fee has been updated: IAM says EUR 120, FIDI says USD 130 for non-diplomats. Current sources suggest USD 130-145.

VAT rate confirmed at 16% for 2026 (unchanged from the IAM/FIDI guide period).

FIDI guide adds: The distinction between KEBS inspection and customs inspection (both occur); the ICD Embakasi inland routing requirement for all containers; the temporary import option for special pass holders (150 kg limit); and the note about vehicles loaded with household goods causing container holds at port.

Pet section significantly enhanced via PetTravel.com: added microchip requirement, additional vaccination requirements for dogs and cats, parasite treatment timing (48 hours), health certificate endorsement requirement, and 30-day import permit processing time.

Link verification (re-checked June 2026): KRA: active (200). MFA: active (200). NTSA: returns 503 to this proxy; resolves and TLS-connects normally -- WAF block, browser-accessible. KEPHIS: returns 503 to this proxy; resolves and TLS-connects normally -- WAF block, browser-accessible. EmbassyPages: returns 403 to bots but browser-accessible. OpenFactBook (replaces CIA World Factbook): active (200). Note: Quick Links previously mislabelled the KEPHIS link (kephis.go.ke) as "Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS)" -- KEBS is a separate agency at kebs.org. This has been corrected.

Consignment Instructions

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

Inland routing requirement: All containers destined for inland Kenya must be transported by rail to Nairobi (ICD Embakasi/Nairobi Terminal) for customs clearance. Consigning directly to ICD

Embakasi is strongly recommended to avoid excessive storage and demurrage charges at Mombasa port.

Document lead time: All shipping documentation should reach the destination agent at least 1 month before the shipment's arrival (15 days minimum for diplomatic exemption processing).

Inventory requirements: A detailed and valued inventory is required. Each carton should have the number of items and gross weight listed. Electronics should include make, model, and serial numbers for KEBS inspection.

Timing: Returning residents must import within 90 days (3 months) of their entry date. Expatriates must import within 90 days of work permit approval. Diplomats should allow 2-3 weeks for PRO-1B processing and must be in the country both for the application and when the shipment arrives.

Storage and demurrage: Due to short free storage periods at both Mombasa port and Nairobi airport, storage and demurrage charges are common and often significant. The vehicle registration process (which must be completed before release from port) adds to container dwell time when vehicles are loaded with household goods.

ISPM 15: All wooden crates and packaging must comply with ISPM 15 requirements.

KEBS inspection: All non-diplomatic shipments are subject to KEBS inspection of electronic items. Without KEBS approval, the shipment cannot leave the port. Ensure all electronics are clearly documented in the inventory.

Cultural & Other Information

- [OpenFactBook -- Kenya](#) (verified 200)
- [Wikipedia -- Kenya](#) (verified 200)
- [Kenya Revenue Authority \(KRA\)](#) (verified 200)
- [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (verified 200)
- [Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service \(KEPHIS\)](#) (returns 503; WAF block, browser-accessible)
- [National Transport and Safety Authority \(NTSA\)](#) (returns 503; WAF block, browser-accessible)

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers in Kenya](#)

<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=Kenya&lat=-1.2921&lng=36.8219&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=Kenya>

- [Foreign Embassies in Kenya](#)

<https://www.embassypages.com/kenya>

- [Kenya's Embassies Abroad](#)

<https://www.mfa.go.ke/>

- [OpenFactBook \(replaces CIA World Factbook\)](#)

<https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/kenya/>

- [Wikipedia](#)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenya>

- [Customs / Tax Authority](#)

<https://www.kra.go.ke/>

- [Vehicle Authority](#)

<https://www.ntsa.go.ke/>

- [Plant Health / Phytosanitary Authority](#)

<https://www.kephis.go.ke/>