



Laos

CAPITAL

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

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CURRENCY

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Last verified: June 2026 | **Guide version:** 1.0**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 import is limited to diplomats and NGO workers. Non-citizens may import used household goods and personal effects duty-free only if they hold diplomatic status or work for a registered non-governmental organization with a tax exemption letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

VAT rate: 10%. Applied to most imports.

Customs duty rates: Tariffs range from 0% to 40% depending on the commodity classification. Average tariff for non-agricultural goods from non-ASEAN countries is approximately 8.3%. ASEAN-origin goods benefit from reduced or zero tariffs under the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

Documents

Diplomats and NGO Workers

- Copy of passport
- Work visa
- Letter of employer
- Employer's investment licence
- ID working card in Laos
- Tax exemption letter issued from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Diplomatic ID card (diplomats)
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)

Non-Diplomat Foreign Workers (Private Companies)

- Copy of passport
- Work visa
- Letter of employer
- Employer's investment licence
- ID working card in Laos
- Business licence
- OBL / AWB

Returning Lao Nationals

- Copy of passport
- OBL / AWB
- Packing list

Household Goods — Specific Information

One sea and one air shipment only. Even for those qualifying for duty-free entry, only one sea shipment and one air shipment are permitted duty-free. The owner may import only one of each type of electrical appliance duty-free.

Private company employees must pay duty. Non-citizens employed by private companies in Laos will pay duty on personal effects.

Returning Lao nationals must pay duty on all personal effects.

Non-citizens not employed in Laos must pay duty on personal effects and are subject to cargo inspection by Customs officers.

Transit routing through Thailand: Laos is landlocked. Sea shipments first enter Thailand (typically through the port of Laem Chabang or Bangkok) before being transported in-bond overland to Vientiane. The original bill of lading must show "In-transit to Vientiane, Laos via Bangkok, Thailand" to ensure proper handling and avoid double clearance.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs and narcotics
- Explosives
- Chemicals and fertilizers
- Plants and plant products
- Pornographic materials
- Anti-communist publications and materials deemed contrary to the political order
- Counterfeit goods

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Weapons, firearms, and ammunition: Permission from relevant authorities required. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Receivers, transmitters, satellite equipment, internet/broadcasting equipment:

Permission from the Ministry of Information and Culture required. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Images of Buddha and religious figures made from copper, glass, wood, bone, ivory, stone, or other materials: Permission from the Ministry of Information and Culture required. [PERMIT REQUIRED]

Personal allowances:

- Cigarettes: 500; Cigars: 100; Tobacco: 500 g
- Wine: 2 bottles; Other alcohol: 1 bottle

Second-hand vehicles: Restricted to diplomats and NGO workers only.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- Title / registration
- Original bill of lading
- Letter of employment
- Import permission (must be obtained before the vehicle arrives)
- Tax exemption letter (if applicable; diplomats and NGOs)
- Vehicle specification: power number, engine number, colour, year, product/make, model

Specific Information

Only foreign diplomats may import a vehicle duty-free.

Second-hand vehicles cannot be imported into Laos, except by diplomats and NGO workers.

Vehicles are subject to duties assessed on the type, age, and engine size. Automobile importers must pay import tax, excise tax, VAT, and potentially a luxury goods tax.

Import permit and tax exemption letter must be obtained before importing the vehicle into Laos.

Pets

Requirements

- ISO 15-digit microchip (ISO 11784 / Annex A to ISO 11785)
- Rabies vaccination certificate (administered between 30 days and 12 months before entry)
- Veterinary health certificate issued shortly before travel, endorsed by the government veterinary authority in the origination country
- Pet passport (government-issued, if available)

- **Import permit from the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (takes at least 2 weeks to obtain)**

Specific Information

Microchip required. All dogs and cats imported to Laos must be identified with an ISO-compliant microchip. The microchip number must appear on all documentation.

Rabies vaccination: Required for all dogs and cats over 3 months of age. Must be administered between 30 days and 12 months before entry. Titer test results and veterinary exemption letters are not accepted as substitutes.

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

Rabies titer test: Not required from any country. However, Laos is classified by WOAHA as a high-rabies-risk country. A titer test may be required for return to the country of origin (particularly the US and EU). Pet owners planning temporary stays should arrange testing before departure.

Parasite treatment: Optional but strongly recommended. Brown tick disease is common in Laos, and all pet owners should protect their pets from external parasites.

Import permit: Must be secured from the Department of Livestock and Fisheries. Processing takes at least 2 weeks.

Quarantine: No quarantine for compliant pets. Non-compliant pets may be quarantined (if facilities are available), returned, or euthanized at the importer's expense.

Entry point: Pets should enter via Wattay International Airport in Vientiane.

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

Export from Laos: Requires the same documentation plus an export document from the Livestock Office, which takes at least 7 days to obtain.

Research Notes

Sources consulted: IAM Country Guide (November 2016), PetTravel.com (Laos pet import requirements), Trade.gov Laos Country Commercial Guide (January 2026), ASEAN Briefing import/export procedures guide, PWC Lao PDR tax summaries (February 2026), Trading Economics (VAT rate data).

No FIDI guide available. No FIDI Customs Guide was found for Laos at any standard URL pattern.

VAT reinstated at 10%. Laos temporarily reduced VAT to 7% during the COVID-19 period but reinstated the 10% rate. Confirmed at 10% for 2026.

Key IAM guide gaps: The IAM guide (2016) does not specify customs duty rates for household goods, does not mention the VAT rate, and provides minimal detail on the transit routing through Thailand. The one-of-each-electrical-appliance limit is a significant operational detail that needs to be communicated clearly at origin survey.

ASEAN membership context: Laos joined ASEAN in 1997 and is a member of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. Goods originating from ASEAN member states benefit from reduced or zero tariffs. This may affect duty calculations depending on where the household goods were manufactured (not where the owner lived).

Political sensitivity: Laos is a single-party communist state. Publications critical of the government or promoting political opposition are prohibited. This extends to printed materials, media, and potentially digital content within household goods shipments.

Link verification (re-checked June 2026): Customs.gov.la: now confirmed Active (200), title "Lao Customs" -- resolved from May 2026 403. MFA (mofa.gov.la): returns 503 to this proxy; resolves and TLS-connects normally -- WAF block, browser-accessible. Lao National Trade Portal: active (200). EmbassyPages: returns 403 to bots, browser-accessible. OpenFactBook (replaces CIA World Factbook): active (200). PetTravel.com Laos: active (200).

Consignment Instructions

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

Landlocked routing: All sea freight transits through Thailand. The bill of lading must clearly state "In-transit to Vientiane, Laos via Bangkok, Thailand." Failure to include this notation can result in the shipment being cleared (and duties assessed) in Thailand rather than being forwarded in-bond.

Import permit timing: The import permission and tax exemption letter (for those who qualify) must be obtained before the shipment arrives. Allow adequate lead time, particularly for vehicle imports.

Electrical appliance limits: Even qualifying importers (diplomats/NGOs) may only bring one of each type of electrical appliance duty-free. Additional units will be dutiable.

Language barriers: English-speaking customs officials may be limited. Working through the destination agent is essential for effective communication with customs authorities.

Inventory requirements: A detailed packing list is required for all shipments.

Cultural & Other Information

- [OpenFactBook -- Laos](#) (verified 200)
- [Wikipedia -- Laos](#) (verified 200)
- [Lao Customs Department](#) (verified 200 -- resolved from May 2026 403)
- [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (returns 503; WAF block, browser-accessible)
- [Lao National Trade Portal](#) (verified 200)

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers in Laos](#)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=Laos&lat=17.9757&lng=102.6331&range=50&assoc=800&fvw=c&ctry=Laos>
- [Foreign Embassies in Laos](#)
<https://www.embassypages.com/laos>
- [Laos's Embassies Abroad](#)
<https://www.mofa.gov.la/>
- [OpenFactBook \(replaces CIA World Factbook\)](#)
<https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/laos/>
- [Wikipedia](#)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laos>
- [Customs Authority](#)
<https://www.customs.gov.la/>