



São Tomé and Príncipe

CAPITAL

—

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

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CURRENCY

—

Guide version: V2 draft

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.

Important Note

Note: São Tomé and Príncipe has very limited publicly accessible customs documentation. The government portal and customs authority website are not reliably accessible from outside the country. The information in this guide is drawn from the IAM baseline guide and cross-referenced with available secondary sources. Members are strongly advised to engage a local destination agent for current requirements before any shipment.

Documents

Required Documents

- **Original bill of lading (OBL) or air waybill (AWB)**
- **Copy of valid passport**
- **Copy of residence permit**
- **São Tomean tax card (*cartão de contribuinte*) from the owner of the goods, or from their company or organization**

- **Original valued inventory list in Portuguese, dated and signed by the owner of the goods, with values declared in Euros or USD**
- **Packing list in Portuguese, French, or English**
- **Letter of employment in Portuguese, stamped by the company or organization in São Tomé**
- **Original certificate of change of residence (*certificado de mudança de residência*)**
- **Letter of exemption (returning citizens)**
- **Diplomatic exemption stamped by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (diplomats only)**

Household Goods — Specific Information

Portuguese is the official language and all primary documents must be in Portuguese. The valued inventory must be in Portuguese and signed by the shipper.

The *cartão de contribuinte* (taxpayer identification card) is required for all importers, including those qualifying for exemptions. If the owner does not yet have one, it must be obtained from the relevant São Tomean authority -- the destination agent can assist with this process, but it should be initiated before shipment arrives.

A certificate of change of residence is required as proof of genuine transfer. Returning citizens must additionally provide a letter of exemption from the relevant authority.

Extra charges, including port fees, storage rent, and demurrage, cannot be avoided at destination and should be budgeted for. Shipments that arrive before documentation is complete will begin accruing storage charges immediately.

All solid wood packing materials must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from import into São Tomé and Príncipe:

- Illegal drugs, narcotics, and controlled substances
- Weapons, ammunition, and explosives (without authorization) **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**
- Pornographic photographs, films, drawings, and other media

- Distilled beverages containing harmful essences such as wormwood, ethers, benzyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol, and similar substances
- Counterfeit copies of literary and artistic works (intellectual property infringement)
- Medicines and food products harmful to public health
- Lottery tickets
- Foodstuffs containing saccharin
- Endangered animals, plants, and their derivative products protected under CITES **[CITES]**

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Accompanied baggage allowances:

Tobacco: 250 g, or 200 cigarettes, or 50 cigars. Alcohol: 1 litre of spirits, or 2 litres of wine.

Perfume: 50 ml; eau de toilette: 250 ml. Pharmaceutical products are permitted in reasonable personal-use quantities.

Plants and agricultural products:

Animal and vegetable products require a certificate of origin and are subject to inspection on arrival. Roots, tubers, bulbs, and cuttings require a license from the Ministry of Agriculture.

[PERMIT REQUIRED]

Medicines:

Pharmaceutical products require permission from the Ministry of Health for quantities beyond personal use. **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Alcohol distilling equipment:

Devices for creating alcohol require an import permit from the Ministry of Commerce. Denatured or undenatured alcohol (beyond personal allowance) can only be imported with special permission.

[PERMIT REQUIRED]

Firearms and ammunition:

Subject to authorization requirements. Contact the destination agent for current procedures.

[PERMIT REQUIRED]

Currency:

Foreign currency may be imported in the amount declared upon entry. A declaration is required on arrival; the amount permitted for export is limited to the declared amount on entry.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- **Vehicle registration document (from country of origin)**
- **Attestation of non-resale (*attestation de non-cession*)**
- **Declaration of value**
- **Copy of vehicle purchase invoice**
- **Descriptive inventory of the vehicle (make, model, year, chassis number, engine number, etc.)**
- **Diplomatic exemption or customs concession authorization, if applicable**

Specific Information

São Tomé and Príncipe offers a temporary duty suspension regime for imported vehicles rather than a permanent duty-free exemption. Under this regime, import duties and taxes are fully or partially suspended for the duration of the owner's stay, subject to the following terms:

- The concession is granted for 12 months and is renewable, up to a maximum of 4 years.
- At the end of the concession period, the owner must either definitively import the vehicle (paying the remaining duties and taxes) or re-export it free of duties and taxes.
- In all cases, general customs fees are payable.
- In all cases, a port levy (*taxa do porto*) of 3% of the CIF (cost, insurance, freight) value is payable.
- A bank guarantee or guarantee deposit is required. The amount of the security equals the total customs duties and charges that would otherwise be owed.

Foreign companies domiciled in São Tomé and Príncipe are excluded from duty-free or duty-suspension arrangements for vehicles.

Given the complexity of the guarantee and concession process, members should engage the destination agent well in advance of shipping a vehicle.

Pets

Requirements

- **Veterinary health certificate (issued by an accredited veterinarian in the country of origin)**
- **Rabies vaccination certificate**
- **Certificate of good health**

Specific Information

Pets require a valid health certificate and proof of current rabies vaccination. São Tomé and Príncipe does not publish detailed pet import regulations through accessible official channels. Contact the local destination agent and the nearest São Tomé and Príncipe embassy or consulate for current requirements before shipping any animals.

Animal and vegetable products require a certificate of origin and are subject to inspection on arrival. Live animals other than common domestic pets may require additional authorization from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Endangered species and their derivative products are subject to CITES restrictions. **[CITES]**

Consignment Instructions

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

São Tomé and Príncipe is a small island nation in the Gulf of Guinea with limited port infrastructure at the Port of Ana Chaves in the capital, São Tomé. Most freight arrives by sea, with connections typically via Portugal, Angola, or other West African hubs. Air freight is handled at São Tomé International Airport. Limited shipping frequency and port capacity mean that planning well in advance is essential.

All documents must be in Portuguese or accompanied by certified Portuguese translations. Inventory and packing lists should be prepared meticulously, as customs inspection is routine and discrepancies will cause delays.

Demurrage and storage charges begin accruing immediately upon the shipment's arrival. Members should ensure documentation is complete and submitted before the vessel arrives to avoid costly storage fees.

The *cartão de contribuinte* (tax ID) must be in hand before clearance can proceed. The destination agent should be engaged early to initiate this registration if the client does not already have one.

Cultural & Other Information

São Tomé and Príncipe is a small island nation in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western coast of Central Africa, consisting of two main islands: São Tomé and Príncipe. The capital is São Tomé. Portuguese is the official language, reflecting the country's history as a former Portuguese colony; independence was gained in 1975. The currency is the São Tomé and Príncipe dobra (STN), pegged to the Euro. The country is one of Africa's smallest and least populous states, with a population of approximately 224,000.

The economy depends heavily on cocoa production and international aid, with growing interest in tourism and recently discovered offshore oil reserves. São Tomé and Príncipe is known for its biodiversity, colonial-era *roças* (plantation estates), and its position as one of the world's most remote island countries. Health precautions are important: malaria is endemic, and travelers should consult a physician before travel.

Reference links:

- [OpenFactBook -- São Tomé and Príncipe](#)
- [Wikipedia -- São Tomé and Príncipe](#)
- [Government of São Tomé and Príncipe](#)
- Customs Authority (*Direcção das Alfândegas*): Ministério do Plano e Finanças, Largo das Alfândegas, São Tomé -- Tel: +239 222 2896

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers in São Tomé and Príncipe](#)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=Sao+Tome+and+Principe&lat=0.1864&lng=6.6131&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=Sao+Tome+and+Principe>
- [Foreign Embassies in São Tomé and Príncipe](#)
<https://www.embassypages.com/saotomeandprincipe>
- [São Tomé and Príncipe's Embassies Abroad](#)
<https://www.gov.st/>