



United Kingdom

CAPITAL London	OFFICIAL LANGUAGE English	CURRENCY pound sterling
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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

POST-BREXIT NOTICE: The United Kingdom left the European Union on 31 January 2020. Customs arrangements changed significantly on 1 January 2021. The Transfer of Residence (ToR) system applies when moving from any country.

NORTHERN IRELAND NOTE: Northern Ireland has a distinct customs status under the Windsor Framework. For moves into Northern Ireland specifically, some EU-aligned rules still apply. The guidance below covers Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales) as the primary destination. Agents handling Northern Ireland moves should verify current requirements directly with HMRC.

Overview

Process Steps

1. Complete the ToR1 form online at gov.uk before the shipment is packed. Approval must be obtained before import — not retrospectively.

2. Receive a Unique Reference Number (URN) from HMRC, which is passed to the UK customs agent in place of any legacy form (the old C3 form became obsolete on 31 March 2017 and is no longer accepted).
3. Submit the ToR1 application within 12 months of first arriving in the UK.

Duty-Free Eligibility

Transfer of Residence (ToR) Relief

Transfer of Residence relief allows qualifying individuals to import personal and household effects into the UK free of customs duty and import VAT. The relief is administered online by HMRC.

To claim ToR relief, the owner of the goods must:

1. Complete the **ToR1 form** online at gov.uk before the shipment is packed. Approval must be obtained before import — not retrospectively.
2. Receive a **Unique Reference Number (URN)** from HMRC, which is passed to the UK customs agent in place of any legacy form (the old C3 form became obsolete on 31 March 2017 and is no longer accepted).
3. Submit the ToR1 application within 12 months of first arriving in the UK.

Eligibility Conditions: To qualify for ToR relief, all of the following must be true:

- The owner of the goods has been resident outside the UK for at least 12 consecutive months immediately before moving
- The goods are imported within 12 months of the owner's arrival in the UK
- The owner intends to use the goods in the UK for the same purpose as they were used before moving
- The goods have been in the owner's possession and use for at least 6 months before moving (this condition does not apply to goods imported in connection with marriage/civil partnership or for full-time students)
- The goods are not lent, used as security, hired out, or transferred to another person within 12 months of import

Anyone who has been living in France, Germany, Spain, or any other EU country for 12+ months qualifies on the same basis as someone moving from the USA or Australia.

Consignments in Multiple Shipments: Goods may be imported in more than one consignment under a single ToR approval.

Resale Restriction: Goods imported under ToR relief cannot be sold or disposed of within 12 months of the date of moving. If they are sold within this period, import duty and VAT become

payable.

Students: Full-time students moving to the UK for study do not need to complete the ToR1 form. The agent should declare the goods to Customs Procedure Code (CPC) 40 00 C06 with evidence of the period of study.

Marriage/Civil Partnership: Persons moving to the UK in connection with marriage or civil partnership do not need the ToR1 form. Goods must be imported no earlier than 2 months before, and no later than 4 months after, the wedding date. Individual gifts must not exceed £900 in value.

Exceptional Circumstances: HMRC may waive certain conditions (e.g., less than 12 months residence abroad, less than 6 months possession of goods) for applicants facing exceptional political or personal circumstances, such as those fleeing conflict or seeking asylum.

Excluded from ToR Relief: Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and tobacco products are excluded from ToR relief and attract import duty regardless.

ISPM 15: All wooden packing materials must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.

Documents

For All Importers (Great Britain)

- Legible copy of passport
- Detailed inventory in English, dated and signed by the owner of the goods
- Transfer of Residence (ToR) approval — Unique Reference Number (URN) from HMRC (see below)
- Copy of bill of lading / air waybill

For Diplomats

- C426 form with cover letter from the respective embassy

For Inherited Goods

- C1421 form
- Copy of death certificate
- Copy of the will or grant of probate

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Controlled drugs (Class A, B, and C under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971)
- Firearms (without a valid firearms certificate and, where required, Home Office authorization)
- Flick knives, gravity knives, and certain other prohibited bladed weapons
- Knuckledusters, brass knuckles, and similar offensive weapons
- Self-defense sprays (e.g., CS gas, pepper spray)
- Stun guns and electric shock devices
- Indecent and obscene material, including child abuse material
- Counterfeit goods, pirated goods, and patent-infringing goods
- Endangered species and their products without valid CITES documentation **[CITES]**
- Certain animal products from non-EU countries (meat, dairy, eggs, honey in passenger baggage — with limited personal-use exceptions from certain listed countries)
- Products made from certain endangered animals (ivory, rhino horn, certain furs)
- Rough diamonds without a Kimberley Process Certificate

Restricted / Dutiable Items

The following personal allowances apply to travelers arriving in **Great Britain** (England, Scotland, Wales) from any country outside the UK. Allowances may be split across categories but cannot be shared between travelers.

Alcohol (travelers aged 17 and over):

- Beer: 42 liters
- Still wine: 18 liters
- Spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22% ABV): 4 liters
- Fortified wine, sparkling wine, or other drinks under 22% ABV: 9 liters

The spirits/fortified wine allowance may be split — for example, 2 liters of spirits and 4.5 liters of fortified wine.

Tobacco (travelers aged 17 and over) — one category only:

- Cigarettes: 200, or

- Cigarillos: 100, or
- Cigars: 50, or
- Tobacco: 250 g, or
- Heated tobacco sticks: 200

The tobacco allowance may be split proportionally across categories.

Other goods: Up to £390 in value (£270 if arriving by private plane or boat). There is no UK VAT refund scheme for overseas visitors shopping in UK stores (this was abolished on 1 January 2021).

Northern Ireland: There are no limits on alcohol or tobacco brought into Northern Ireland from EU countries if the goods are for personal use and have been duty-paid in the EU.

Firearms, explosives, and ammunition: Strictly controlled; require firearms certificates and Home Office authorization. **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Radio transmitters: Require authorization from Ofcom. **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Rough diamonds: Must be accompanied by a Kimberley Process Certificate. **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Endangered species and products (CITES): Require valid CITES permits. **[CITES]**

Fur products: Seal products are banned; other fur skins are subject to restrictions.

Imitation firearms: Require declaration.

Offensive weapons: Subject to restriction and possible prohibition.

Live animals: Require specific import documentation (separate from the standard pet travel rules for dogs/cats/ferrets).

Animal food products and plant products: Subject to biosecurity controls; many products of animal origin from non-EU countries cannot be brought into Great Britain.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- **ToR1 approval (URN) — vehicles are eligible for ToR relief under the same conditions as household goods**
- **Original bill of lading / air waybill**
- **Copy of vehicle registration documents proving ownership**

- **Insurance policy documentation (from country of origin, proving use during the period of ownership)**
- **Evidence that the owner's normal place of residence was outside the UK for at least 12 months (e.g., utility bills, bank statements)**
- **Declaration form C384 if the vehicle is less than 6 months old**

Specific Information

Duty-Free Eligibility: A vehicle may be imported duty-free if the owner:

- Has possessed and used the vehicle for at least 6 months outside the UK
- Will not sell or dispose of the vehicle within 12 months of importation

NOVA Declaration: When a vehicle is permanently imported into the UK, a Notification of Vehicle Arrival (NOVA) declaration must be submitted to DVLA in addition to the ToR customs declaration. This is required to register the vehicle and obtain UK number plates. Confirm the NOVA process with the destination agent.

Vehicle Registration: Imported vehicles must comply with UK type approval requirements before they can be registered and driven on UK roads. Right-hand-drive vehicles from countries such as Australia, Japan, South Africa, and others are generally straightforward to register. Left-hand-drive vehicles require additional assessment.

Driving on Import: A vehicle may be driven on UK roads using its foreign registration and plates for up to 6 months from the date it was first brought into the UK, provided the owner is not a UK resident. Once ToR relief is claimed and the owner takes up UK residence, the vehicle must be registered and taxed in the UK without undue delay.

Pets

Requirements

- **ISO 11784/11785-compliant microchip (implanted before rabies vaccination)**

From EU countries, Northern Ireland, and listed non-EU countries (including the USA, Australia, Canada, and most Western nations)

- **Rabies vaccination — at least 21 full days before travel (or completion of the first course of vaccinations); pet must be at least 12 weeks old at vaccination**

From EU countries, Northern Ireland, and listed non-EU countries (including the USA, Australia, Canada, and most Western nations)

- **An AHC (Animal Health Certificate) issued by an official vet in the country of origin within 10 days of travel, or an EU Pet Passport (for pets already holding one from the EU)**

From EU countries, Northern Ireland, and listed non-EU countries (including the USA, Australia, Canada, and most Western nations)

- **For dogs: tapeworm treatment (Praziquantel) administered by a vet no less than 24 hours and no more than 5 days before arrival in Great Britain**

From EU countries, Northern Ireland, and listed non-EU countries (including the USA, Australia, Canada, and most Western nations)

- **All of the above, plus a rabies antibody titer test showing at least 0.5 IU/ml, conducted at least 30 days after vaccination and at least 3 months before travel; additionally, a mandatory waiting period may apply**

From unlisted countries (where rabies is not considered controlled)

- **Additional Declaration: The owner (or an authorized representative) must complete a declaration that they are not selling or transferring ownership of the pet.**

Specific Information

Great Britain pet travel rules changed significantly on 1 January 2021 following Brexit. There is no longer a Form C5 or a "PETS" scheme as such; the process is now governed by APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) rules.

The required documentation depends on the country of origin:

Quarantine: Quarantine is not imposed if all rules are followed. Pets that do not meet entry requirements may be put into quarantine for up to 4 months at the owner's expense, or refused entry.

Banned Breeds: The following dog breeds cannot be brought into Great Britain unless they already hold a valid Certificate of Exemption: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro. Owners should verify the current list before travel.

More Than 5 Pets: If bringing more than 5 dogs, cats, or ferrets (and not attending a competition or show), commercial ("Balai") rules apply and additional permits are required.

Approved Routes: Travel to Great Britain with a pet must use an approved route. Check the current list of approved routes at gov.uk/bring-pet-to-great-britain.

Northern Ireland: Pet travel rules for Northern Ireland differ from Great Britain. Pets entering Northern Ireland from EU countries follow EU-aligned rules. Consult the current DAERA guidance for Northern Ireland-specific requirements.

CITES: Import of exotic or endangered species requires CITES permits. **[CITES]**

Consignment Instructions

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

ToR1 Application — Submit Before Packing. The ToR1 form must be completed and approved by HMRC before the shipment is packed. The URN must be provided to the UK agent before the shipment arrives. Applications submitted after the shipment arrives cannot be backdated and will not achieve relief. Apply online at: gov.uk/guidance/transfer-of-residence-to-great-britain.

Documents Before Arrival. All documents — passport copy, detailed inventory, ToR URN, and BL/AWB — must be received by the UK agent before the shipment arrives. Agents may charge fees for incomplete or late documentation.

Detailed Inventory. A detailed, valued inventory in English, dated and signed by the owner, is required. Cursory inventories cause delays.

Alcohol and Tobacco. These items are excluded from ToR relief and will attract UK import duty and excise regardless of the ToR approval. Agents should advise clients to either declare and pay duty on these items or leave them behind.

New Items. New items in a household goods shipment are still eligible for ToR relief provided the other conditions are met (12-month ownership does not apply to all new goods — only that they have been imported as part of a genuine household removal). However, new commercial-quantity goods will be scrutinised and may attract duty.

Northern Ireland Distinction. The UK's Windsor Framework means Northern Ireland has a different customs status from Great Britain. Goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland may require specific customs declarations. Agents handling moves into Northern Ireland should contact HMRC directly for current guidance.

Vehicle NOVA. For vehicle imports, the NOVA (Notification of Vehicle Arrival) declaration must be made to the DVLA in addition to the customs ToR declaration. Failure to notify DVLA can result in the vehicle being unable to be registered or taxed.

Cultural & Other Information

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland comprises four constituent countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It is located off the northwestern coast of continental Europe, bordered by the North Sea, the English Channel, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Irish Sea. The capital is London. The UK has a population of approximately 68 million. The official

language is English; Welsh is co-official in Wales and Scottish Gaelic has official status in Scotland. The currency is the pound sterling (GBP, £).

The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020 and completed its transition out of the EU single market and customs union on 31 December 2020. It is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a member of NATO, the G7, and the Commonwealth of Nations.

Time Zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), UTC+0 in winter; British Summer Time (BST), UTC+1 from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

Useful Links:

- [OpenFactBook — United Kingdom](#)
- [Wikipedia — United Kingdom](#)
- [HMRC — Transfer of Residence to the UK \(ToR1\)](#)
- [GOV.UK — Bringing Your Pet Dog, Cat or Ferret to Great Britain](#)
- [GOV.UK — Bringing Goods into the UK for Personal Use \(Allowances\)](#)
- [GOV.UK — Vehicle Approval \(Import\)](#)
- [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#)

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers](#)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=United+Kingdom&lat=52.36&lng=-1.17&range=50&assocs=800&fw=c&ctry=United+Kingdom>
- [Foreign Embassies in UK](#)
<https://www.embassypages.com/unitedkingdom>
- [UK's Embassies Abroad](#)
<https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>