

# U.S. Virgin Islands Country Guide

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## Country Guide: U.S. Virgin Islands

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***Due to the current coronavirus/COVID-19 situation and restrictions in various countries, the below information may not be accurate. This pandemic is a fluid situation. Check with authorities for local laws and restrictions concerning movements.***

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Updated: November 20, 2015

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***Find U.S. Virgin Islands's embassies in other countries***

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## Used Household Goods and Personal Effects

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**Note:** American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Baker Island, Howland Islands, Jarvis Island, Johnston Island, Kingman Reef, Midway Islands, Palmyra, and Wake Island are all territories / possessions of the United States and as such are subject to the importation rules of the United States. They may have additional requirements to import into each territory as each one has a delicate ecosystem they are trying to protect.

*An individual is generally considered a bona fide resident of a territory / possession if he or she is physically present in the territory for 183 days during the taxable year, does not have a tax home outside the territory during the tax year, and does not have a closer connection to the U.S. or a foreign country. However, U.S. citizens and resident aliens are permitted certain exceptions to the 183-day rule.*

## **Documents Required**

- Copy of passport (some ports require passports for all family members listed on the 3299)
- Form CF-3299
- Supplemental declaration (required by most ports)
- Detailed inventory in English
- Copy of visa (if non-US citizen / permanent resident) / copy of permanent resident card
- I-94 stamp / card
- Copy of bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Form DS-1504 (diplomats)
- A-1 visa (diplomats)
- Importers Security Filing (ISF)

## **Specific Information**

- Do not indicate “packed by owner” (PBO) or miscellaneous descriptions on the detailed inventory.
- The I-94 is an arrival stamp / card in the passport of all foreigners that indicates the length of time they have been admitted into the USA (some ports require a copy of the card).
- All foreign diplomats (A-1 visa types) are required to be processed via the Department of State on a DS-1504 form, which is submitted to the Department of State by the consulate / embassy of the diplomat at least 10 days prior to arrival of the shipment.
- Brokers are not allowed to clear Customs on CF-3299 entries for foreign diplomats holding an A-1 visa.
- For duty-free clearance, the household goods must have been used at least 12 months in the foreign household prior to shipment from the origin country.
- The owner of the goods must hold the proper long-term visa (non-B1 / B2 visitor’s visa) to import household goods duty free.
- The owner of the goods can only import personal effects, e.g., clothing, camping gear, toiletries, etc. on a short-term visitor’s visa.

It is important for agents in the origin country to make sure the ISF is timely filed prior to the sailing of the vessel from the last foreign port for all ocean shipments to avoid penalties.

- Customs and other government agencies can require a variety of different types of examinations that result in costs from USD 200-1700 or more on a full container load (FCL) shipment.
- Most household items used less than 12 months will require duty to be paid.
- It is important for the owner of the goods to list those items in detail on the back side of the Customs Form 3299.
- The owner of the goods should list the item, quantity, what material it is made out of, the value paid for the items in US dollars and the country of origin of the items.

## Motor Vehicles

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### Documents Required

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) form EPA-3520-21, if applicable
- OBL (foreign purchased vehicles)
- Bill of sale / pro-forma invoice with statement of value (foreign purchased vehicles)
- Title of ownership translated into English (foreign purchased vehicles)
- Department of Transportation (DOT) form HS-7
- Proof of conformity by either:
  - USA title / registration
  - Letter of conformity from the manufacturer
  - Foreign military sales contract that indicates vehicle meets USA-EPA / DOT regulations
  - Exemption as a 25 model year old vehicle as proven by the title
- Copy of USA title or registration when previously registered in the USA (vehicles previously owned and shipped from the USA by the returning owner of the goods)
- Completed EPA-3520-1, DOT, HS-7 and Customs 7501 forms (vehicles previously owned and shipped from the USA by the returning owner of the goods)
- Letter of permission from the EPA (non-residents importing vehicles as a tourist)

### Specific Information

- For vehicles previously owned and shipped from the USA by the returning owner of the goods, the ownership names must match with the owner of the goods of the shipment on the vehicle title and registration.
- A non-USA resident can import a vehicle for a period of up to 12 months as a tourist, but no extension will be allowed.
  - The owner of the goods is required to obtain a permission letter prior to shipping the vehicle from the EPA.
  - Vehicles imported by non-residents for tourism may not sell or offer for vehicle for sale and it must be exported prior to the 12 month period or is subject to seizure and penalties by Customs.
- Some ports of entry (POE) require a bond for up to three times the value of the vehicle to ensure the timely export of the vehicle.

Additional port specific declarations may be required for this temporary importation
- A bill of sale or pro-forma invoice with the statement of value must include the vehicle's description, vehicle identification number (VIN), model, and year of manufacture.
- In general vehicles that are 25 model years old and with the original drive train are exempt from EPA / DOT regulations.
- Vehicles less than 25 model years old that were not previously titled in the USA must comply with EPA / DOT regulations.
- The cost and time to bring a vehicle into compliance by an ICI (certified conversion shop) make the process an unwise economic decision in most cases.
- It is strongly recommended not to import non-complying vehicles.

In the event an owner of the goods elects to attempt to import a vehicle it should be sent separately from household goods and personal effects shipments to avoid delays in the receipt of the shipment.
- The owner of the goods must make arrangements with an ICI shop in the USA prior to shipping the vehicle in order to get an estimate and to determine if the vehicle can be brought into compliance.
- Marine engines and gas-powered generators are also subject to EPA requirements and form EPA-3520-21 is normally required for those items.

## Pets

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### Documents Required

- Rabies vaccination certificate
- Veterinary health record

## Specific Information

- The importation of pets is subject to health, quarantine, agriculture or wildlife requirements and prohibitions.
- The veterinary health certificate must be issued by an accredited veterinarian within 14 days of arrival.
- Pets are subject to examination at the first port of arrival for any evidence of disease.
- A valid rabies (rage) vaccination certificate must accompany dogs arriving from areas not free from rabies.
- There is no requirement for a rabies certificate for domestic cats.
- Check with the USA agent for any special certificates and admission requirements required, providing the common and scientific name of the animal along with the country of origin that it is being shipped to ensure all appropriate government agencies can be contacted.
- Most turtles and monkeys are not allowed entry into the USA.

## Antiques, Artifacts, Carpets, Paintings

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### Documents Required

- Purchase invoice
- Detailed inventory

### Specific Information

- US Customs requires items to be at least 100 years old be classified as antiques.
- A recently purchased antique should indicate the circa date on the invoice.
- Antiques are duty free.
- Carpets of Iranian origin that have been used in the foreign household for at least 12 months and being imported with the owner of the goods' household goods and personal effects are generally approved for import.

It is recommended that if you have a large number of carpets or they

- are new that you do not ship as the USA currently has an embargo on Iranian origin goods, subject to change at any time.
- Paintings of nominal value can be shipped with household goods shipments.

- Artifacts of any type should not be shipped without first checking with the USA agent and the country of export, as different regulations may apply depending on the country of origin, type of artifact and circa date.

Additionally, many countries are parties to CITES Treaties or Acts that don't allow the import or export of certain types of artifacts or require permits that must be issued prior to export.

## Restricted/Dutiable Items

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- Plants and seeds (an import permit is required)
- Soil (an import permit is required)
- Meats and meat byproducts (e.g., bouillon soups)
- Medications
- Fruits and vegetables
- Game and hunting trophies
- Gold
- Merchandise from embargoed countries (a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control is required)
- Pets
- Textiles and clothing
- Alcohol
  - The importation of alcohol is governed by both Federal and state laws.
    - In general the Federal Government allows a reasonable amount of alcohol to be imported in a household goods shipment.
    - If Customs feels the amount is excessive they will require the owner of the goods to hire a licensed alcohol importer to file a commercial entry.
  - Only persons 21 years and older may enter with alcohol.
  - Domestic importers should comply with the residence state laws which vary from state to state.
    - Some states allow no alcohol imports while others require the owner of the goods to obtain a permit and pay a fee and still others allow a reasonable amount.
    - Each state has regulations and must be consulted before making a shipment.
    - A detailed inventory must be made at the time of packing in order for food and drug filings to be performed and proper duties and taxes to be paid on the shipment.
- Food Items
  - In general it is better not to ship food items.
  - Food products also require a detailed inventory for food and drug filings and duty payment.
- Fish / Wildlife

- Ivory items, skins, feathers and shells are regulated by Fish and Wildlife.
- Many of these items require special CITES Permits or may be prohibited from being imported.
- It is critical for the origin agent to consult with the USA agent to determine if an item requires a permit or can be legally imported.
  - The permits cannot be issued once the shipment has left the origin country.
- The destination agent will need to know the common, scientific names and country of origin to determine if a permit is required.
- Weapons
  - Guns (ammunition should not be shipped as it is a hazardous good) previously owned and shipped from the USA can normally be imported if military, government personnel can establish to the satisfaction of Customs that the items were sent from the USA.
  - The best method is for the owner of the goods to register the weapons with Customs prior to export from the USA.
    - If the owner of the goods does not have a registration then a copy of sales receipts, the export OBL, inventory and a declaration will sometimes satisfy Customs.
    - Weapons purchased overseas are normally required to be imported using a Federal Firearms permit holder but some exceptions do apply to allow non-resident individuals to apply for a permit directly with Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF).
  - The ATF permit filing should be applied for at least 6 weeks in advance of the arrival of the shipment.
    - The application requires that the Customs broker who will handle the entry be named on the ATF application, so it is important that the application is filed properly
    - from the start to avoid delays on arrival.
  - The owner of the goods should consult with the USA agent when considering shipping any weapons and provide all the facts regarding how and where the weapons were acquired.
  - It should be noted that not all types of weapons can be imported.

## Prohibited Items

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- Tuna
- Drug paraphernalia
- Haitian animal hide drums
- Cuban cigars
- Blank tapes and CDs from Iran
- Absinthe

- Counterfeit items or items inappropriately using a federally registered trademark
- Products made from dog and cat fur
- Flavored cigarettes, including cloves

## Consignment Instructions

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

## Cultural and Other Information

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CIA World Factbook

Wikipedia Entry for U.S. Virgin Islands

**Special Notes:** Because U.S. Virgin Islands is politically part of the United States of America, the CIA lists its information as part of that country's Factbook page.