

# Before you leave your non EU member state country

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Benjamin Franklin once wrote "If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail" & those words are as true today as they were then.

If you are shipping from inside the European Union Customs Union trading block then there are no trade barriers so you can simply pack your belongings into a van & drive it or have it driven into Portugal completely unhindered but if from outside of that trading block then you will need to obtain a Certificate of Baggage from the Portuguese Consulate in the country you are coming from & if you do not have that Certificate of Baggage then Customs can & almost certainly will charge you a very significant import tax fee on value of goods + cost of packaging +cost of shipping + 23% IVA/VAT.

NOTE that there are some companies in some countries (notably the UK) outside of the Customs Union that tell people there is no need to have the Certificate of Baggage as they have a different method of importing new immigrant's household goods if the customer pays an additional fee. However, they are using the 'incorrect import procedure' & Customs have now got wise to this & several people have been presented with import tax bills each in excess of €30k + 23% IVA/VAT & several more have been presented with bills of between €20k-30k & my advice is that if any company offers you such a proposition that you avoid them like the plague & find a different company lest you find yourself faced with a similar bill!

From this point it gets more complicated & variable.

If the importer has an EU member state passport & is shipping from a country outside of the Customs Union then they can request the Certificate of Baggage to be issued before they leave their non EU country of residence by declaring a definitive intent to migrate to Portugal & most Consulates will agree to issue the document on those terms but note that it is the decision of the individual issuing officer & if they decline then the applicant will have to register their residency in Portugal first & then apply for the Certificate of Baggage.

It should however be noted that if for any reason the EU member state passport holder does not obtain their CRUE registration of residency document before the shipment arrives at the EU border then the Certificate of Baggage can be declared invalid & then those obscenely expensive import taxes or equally expensive demurrage (storage) fees can be levied if Customs so choose. (and they very often do!)

If the importer only has a non EU member state passport then they are only entitled to the new immigrant tax free import concession of the Certificate of Baggage after they have residency in Portugal which (for example) is only granted when Stage 2 of the D7 National Visa residency is granted.

There are a VERY few Portuguese Consulates that will issue the Certificate of Baggage once Stage 1 of the D7 residency visa is issued & you can ask them if it is possible & if they decline then the applicant will have to be patient even if it means having to put their belongings into storage for a while.

It should be noted that each Portuguese Consulate has a slightly different application form & criteria for the Certificate of Baggage so you will need to look on the website of the appropriate Consulate to find the version you need & most Consulates now allow for online applications & you may or may not be required to sign a declaration stating that you have lived in that country for at least 6 or 12 months beforehand.

**Note** That many if not all Portuguese Embassies, High Commissions & Consulates now require the list of belongings to be translated into Portuguese and I leave it to the reader to decide whether to have that done by a translator or whether to use a translator app & if you decide the latter option then DeepL Translate is the best option & is even grammatically correct in most cases & certainly much better than Google Translate.

Also note that some but not all Portuguese Embassies, High Commissions & Consulates now require that larger electrical and/or electronic items & similar include make, model & serial number of each item & (for example) at the time of writing, it appears that the UK & US do require that additional information the South African one does not so you need to check on the appropriate website of the country you're coming from.

You need to provide them with an inventory of goods in the form of:

- 2 x boxes of books
- 3 x boxes kitchenware
- 4 x boxes clothes etc etc
- 5 x boxes personal tools

Before you start packing or allow any packing, be sure to ask your removals company to provide you with a complete, current list of what is not permitted to travel and/or enter Portugal & this list will include all hazardous materials such as paint & compressed gases etc & also items such as drugs & firearms (I'd suggest you don't even bring any air weapons as these need to be below a set power output limit & the only way Customs can know if the weapon is legal or not is to test it which means you will incur a search fee) etc but there will also be other materials such as flammables, medications, food & alcohol etc that you are not permitted to pack so you need to be VERY sure indeed that you don't even bend the rules on this because if Customs find so much as just one forbidden item in your consignment then the least they will do is go through everything with a fine toothed comb & then charge you the relevant search fee.

It's also advisable to number each wrapped item or box & record a manifest or list of numbers & contents as this will make it much easier for you come unpacking time.

If you're importing a motor vehicle & intend to get the new immigrant tax free concession then the Certificate of Baggage MUST be in the name of the registered owner of the vehicle. - If it's in the name of anyone else it will be difficult if not impossible to get the tax free matriculation on the vehicle & if bringing in more than one & hoping (for example) to get the new immigrant tax free concession then you must have separate CoBs in the name of each importer/owner.

At the time of writing you usually have a 12 months time window from the time you become resident to import your personal belongings on a tax free basis (as stipulated in the relevant Lei/Law) but bear in mind that some of the (Portuguese) Embassy, High Commission & Consulates in some countries are now stating you only have 6 months to import so again, you need to check on the relevant website for the country you are coming from & if in doubt, err on the side of caution & remember that in either case, if bringing a vehicle with you that you only have 20 days from permanent import into Portugal to inform Customs & complete the DAV form for the vehicle. (See Importing & Registering A Foreign Registered Vehicle In Portugal in the files section of this group)

Also be ultra cautious of items such as pianos or anything that might (even partly) consist of ivory or other CITES classified materials as (at least some) will either be forbidden or possibly require export and/or import permits of some kind or you may be required to prove the item predates the restriction.

The final step is for each person named on a Certificate of Baggage to attend the relevant Junta de Freguesia (Parish Council) office & request an Atestado de Residencia (Read Atestado de Residencia in the files section) & the word 'Atestado' means 'attest to' & it attests to you living where you say you do & it must be countersigned by 2 residents of Portugal who live in the same parish & are registered on the electoral roll of that parish & that Atestado needs to be sent to the receiving agent who is handling the import of your household belongings & is the final step of the new immigrant tax free import process for personal goods..... and note that term 'personal goods' very carefully indeed as the concession does not apply to professional goods. So be sure to mark tools etc or other items that could be either as personal belongings & if you do need to import commercial goods then you will need a Commercial Certificate Of Baggage & you need to consult the Consulate or Embassy you are applying to for details of that as each appears to have it's own criteria & processes for that & be especially cautious of the forbidden items as mentioned earlier in this piece.

## TOP TIP

If shipping your goods by sea you can keep track of the vessel carrying your freight on the link below & you can use that information to ensure your consignment will be cleared through Customs in a timely manner & ensure you don't incur any unnecessary dock or storage fees.

[MarineTraffic: Global Ship Tracking Intelligence | AIS Marine Traffic](#)

## NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH

It should be noted that the Portuguese Embassy and/or Consulate in the UK currently require proof that the applicant has given up residency in the UK before they issue the Certificate of baggage (see link below) & their website states:

"4 - Proof of cancellation of residence in the UK (e.g., cancelling GP registration, closing accounts for water/electricity/gas)"

However as some people will not sell their UK home as they want to use it as a holiday home this could cause problems so I reached out to the wonderfully efficient UK Embassy for guidance & asked if it were possible for them to offer an affidavit service similar to the one they offer for vehicle import & there reply was:

"We cannot issue a declaration for this purpose in the British Embassy. Our suggestion is for those wishing to move to Portugal, to explain their specific circumstances to the Portuguese Embassy in the UK and ask what documentation would be acceptable as proof that they are moving to Portugal but not giving up their UK homes. Perhaps the residency document from SEF – which proves they are in fact resident in Portugal – will be accepted." If the Portuguese Embassy accepts a declaration, then that should be taken in the UK before a UK solicitor.

[MergedFile \(portugalemlondres.org\)](http://portugalemlondres.org)

I'd also suggest you might like to read 'A Comprehensive List Of Ways To Dodge Portuguese Bureaucracy' in the files as it should be considered the first step of essential reading before you even begin your migration process.

It should be noted that some transport companies in the UK (at least) are currently suggesting they can import your personal goods without obtaining the Certificate Of Baggage if you pay a surcharge but they are not following the correct procedure & therefore someone, somewhere is presumably committing false information to an official document which is a serious criminal offence in Portugal (as is explained in Dispelling The Myths in the files section)

& Customs are now getting wise to this & there is currently more than one person facing an import tax bill that will be in the tens of thousands of Euros so my advice is not to try to cut corners & better to get the correct document especially as it is so easily available!

Article 348a of the Portuguese penal code states that:

1. Any person who falsely declares or attests to public authority or an official in the exercise of his or her identity, state or other capacity to which the law attributes legal effects, whether own or others, shall be punished with imprisonment for up to one year or with a fine if a more serious penalty does not fall under another legal provision.

2 - If the statements are intended to be recorded in an authentic document, the agent is punished with imprisonment for up to two years or with a fine.

Article 27

1 - It is punishable as an accomplice who intentionally and in any way give material or moral aid to the practice by another of a wilful act.

2 - It is applicable to the accomplice the penalty set for the author, especially attenuated.

Also note that other legislation relating to committing false information to an official document can bring additional prosecution with even more severe penalties of up to 5 years imprisonment (more in some cases) and also loss of residency & right to residency.

<https://www.safecommunitiesportugal.com/report-a-crime-online/aiding-illegal-immigration/>

Members are also encouraged to read A Comprehensive List Of Ways To Dodge Portuguese Bureaucracy which is also available in the files section of the group.

Good luck, & welcome to Portugal.