



Border Force

# UK customs information

What you **can** bring in

What you **can't** bring in

What you **must** declare





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This leaflet tells you about going through Customs when entering Northern Ireland (NI) in the United Kingdom (UK). There are different rules for travellers entering Great Britain (GB) (England, Scotland and Wales), these can be found on [gov.uk/government/publications/travelling-to-the-uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/travelling-to-the-uk). If you are travelling from Great Britain, you should check the rules on **bringing goods in and out of Northern Ireland**.

This leaflet details what you are and are not allowed to bring in, and your allowances on different types of goods before you have to pay duty and/or tax. What you can bring into the UK will vary depending on where you are travelling to and from.

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We have a duty to protect the UK from drugs, firearms and other harmful goods and to stop smugglers evading taxes. This includes goods that travellers should pay UK tax and duty on. To do this, we need your help and co-operation. If we stop you and ask you about your baggage, please co-operate. We may stop you to ask questions, make checks and if you break the rules, seize your goods (including any vehicle you use to transport them).

## **Don't Risk It All**

If you get caught smuggling goods or selling goods you did not declare, you could face prosecution and imprisonment. If we are satisfied that the goods are for a commercial purpose, we may seize them and any vehicle used to transport them, and may not return them to you. If you are unsure about the goods you are carrying you can find more information and make an online declaration from 72 hours in advance of arrival using the HMRC Online Service for Passengers at **[gov.uk/duty-free-goods](https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods)**.

If you are carrying commercial goods, please visit **[gov.uk/hmrc/goods-in-baggage](https://www.gov.uk/hmrc/goods-in-baggage)**.

If you need assisted digital support to make your declaration call HMRC from 72 hours in advance of arrival on **0300 322 9434 (Mon–Fri 8am–6pm)**. Make your declaration ahead of arrival where possible, however, outside these hours of service, please use the red point phone or red channel.

## Going through Customs

Some of our ports have three exits: the red, green and blue channels. Where a port has three exits, you will need to use the appropriate exit (see table below).

Some ports and airports only have one exit and a red point phone where you declare goods.

If you let a coach, ferry, train or aircraft store your goods while travelling to the UK, you must make sure you collect the exact goods obtained by you and go through the correct channel.

### Blue Channel

Use the blue channel if you are travelling from a country **within the European Union (EU)** directly to the UK with no banned or restricted goods.

### Green channel

Use the green channel if you are travelling to the UK from a non-EU country with goods that:

- do not go over your allowances
- are not banned or restricted
- have been declared using the Online Service for Passengers
- have been declared using the Merchandise in Baggage Online Declaration Service, or
- cash that has been declared using the online form

## Red Channel or Red Point Phone

You must use the red channel or the red point phone if you are travelling to the UK from anywhere in the world and you:

- have personal goods or cash to declare
- have commercial goods to declare
- are not sure about what you need to declare

## Travelling from non-EU countries



When travelling to the UK from a non-EU country you can bring in goods up to the limits below without paying duty and/or tax in the UK (non-EU countries includes the Canary Islands, the Channel Islands, and Gibraltar). These goods must be for your own use or intended as gifts and carried in your luggage. If you intend to sell or accept any kind of payment for the goods you bring in then this is classed as commercial use.

**Details of your allowances ([gov.uk/duty-free-goods](https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods))** are set out in the following pages.

If you have any goods that exceed these allowances, you will need to make a declaration and pay tax and duties due on the full amounts of goods in the category or categories exceeded. You can check allowance details, make a declaration, and pay any tax and duty due from 72 hours in advance of arrival using the HMRC Online Service for Passengers at **[gov.uk/duty-free-goods](https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods)**.

If you need assisted digital support to make your declaration call HMRC from 72 hours in advance of arrival on **0300 322 9434 (Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm)**. Make your declaration ahead of arrival where possible, however, outside these hours of service, please use the red point phone or red channel.

If you have made a declaration at **gov.uk/duty-free-goods**, and have nothing further to declare, you can use the Green Channel when going through customs. You should retain the reference number and your email receipt for your declaration as Border Force officers may ask to see this.

If you do not declare goods exceeding these limits, then we may seize all the goods you are carrying within that allowance category, not just those that exceed the allowance.

Passengers transferring at a UK airport should check the security rules on the carriage of liquids (including duty free) purchased at airports outside the UK as these items may not be permitted through the security search point on transfer.

Further information can be found on the GOV.UK website:

**[www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions](http://www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions)**



## Alcohol and tobacco



When arriving into the UK from a non-EU country you are allowed to bring in the following without paying duty and/or tax in the UK

### Alcohol

1 litre of spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22% Alcohol by Volume [ABV]), **or**

2 litres of fortified wine (such as port or sherry), sparkling wine or any other alcoholic beverage of less than 22% ABV

You may combine these allowances, provided that you do not exceed your total alcohol allowance. For example, if you only bring back 1 litre of fortified wine (50% of your full allowance of 2 litres), you may also bring back half a litre of spirits (50% of the full allowance of 1 litre) to make up your 100% alcohol allowance. Please note, this is only an example and other combinations are also allowed.

In addition, you may also bring back:

16 litres of beer, **and**

4 litres of still wine

## Tobacco

200 cigarettes, **or** 100 cigarillos, **or** 50 cigars, **or** 250g of tobacco\* (including shisha tobacco) **or** 200 sticks of tobacco for heating.

You can combine these allowances, provided that you do not exceed your total tobacco allowance. For example, if you only bring back 100 cigarettes (50% of your full allowance of 200), you may also bring back 25 cigars (50% of the full allowance of 50) to make up your 100% tobacco allowance. Please note, this is only an example and other combinations are also allowed

**Please note that you cannot combine your alcohol and tobacco allowances. For example: you cannot bring more alcohol back if you do not bring any tobacco.**

**Alcohol and tobacco allowances are only available to those aged 17 and over. This means if you are under 17 and bring back any of these goods you must pay tax and duty on the full amount.**

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\* All references to tobacco products include herbal smoking products. The allowance on cigarettes includes all types of cigarettes – normal, herbal or a combination of both. These rules apply whether you are travelling within or from outside the European Union.

## Other goods (including gifts and souvenirs)



Most travellers from non-EU countries can bring other goods worth up to £390 (e.g. perfume and electrical goods) without paying duty and / or tax in the UK.

However, passengers from non-EU countries travelling by private plane or boat are only entitled to an allowance of £270 worth of goods.

If you bring in goods worth more than your allowance, you must pay duty and / or tax on all of the goods in that category, not just the value above the allowance.

You cannot share your personal allowances with other passengers.

If you have any goods over these limits, you can pay any tax and duty due from 72 hours in advance of arrival using the HMRC online service for passengers at **[gov.uk/duty-free-goods](https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods)**.

If you have made a declaration at **[gov.uk/duty-free-goods](https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods)** and have nothing further to declare, you can use the Green Channel when going through customs. You should retain the reference number and your email receipt for your declaration as Border Force officers may ask to check it.

## Food and plants



If travelling to NI from most countries outside the EU, you are not allowed to bring in any meat, honey or dairy products. This is because they can carry diseases, which can devastate our environment and economy.

Other animal products may also be banned although you may bring in a small quantity of some products from certain countries for your own use.

Most fruits, vegetables, seeds and bulbs are also subject to weight or quantity restrictions. Some plants and plant products (including potatoes) and loose soil may not be brought into NI unless you have obtained the relevant official licence.

For more information, see leaflets 'If in Doubt Leave It Out' food products of animal origin' and 'Fruit, vegetable and plant products into the NI'.

**<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/food/personal-food-imports>**.

## Declaring cash



If you are carrying cash equivalent to 10,000 euros or more when you enter or leave Northern Ireland, to or from any country outside the EU, you must declare it. A declaration form can be found on line at GOV.UK 'declare cash you carry into or out of the EU'. You may make the declaration online any time from 72hours before the time of arrival. Alternatively, at ports where there is a red channel you may obtain a form BOR 9011 (NI) from a Border Force Officer.

## Commercial goods

If you are carrying commercial goods which are below the £873 (€1000) threshold and not weighing more than 1000kg, or are not restricted or excise goods, you will need to make an oral declaration where there is a red channel or red point phone at the port of entry. If you are carrying goods over the £873 (€1000) threshold, weighing more than 1000kg or carrying restricted or excise goods you must make a full customs declaration. You or your agent can submit a declaration into HMRC's Customs Declaration Service or if you do not have specialist software to submit the data to HMRC then you can do so through the Northern Ireland Trader Support Service.

## **Air transfers**

If you are transferring to a UK domestic flight, you will need to clear immigration and customs when you first arrive in the UK before continuing your journey on your domestic flight.

## **Bringing your personal belongings or your car into the UK?**

See 'Notice 3' available on **GOV.UK**.

## Travelling directly to NI from within the European Union (EU)

### Alcohol and tobacco



You can bring an unlimited amount of most goods directly into NI from the EU, for example, you can bring in any alcohol, tobacco, meat and dairy products – as long as they are for your own use and carried in your luggage. ‘Own use’ means for your own consumption or gifts. If you intend to sell or accept any kind of payment for alcohol or tobacco products you bring in then this is classed as commercial use. Please contact the Helpline for more information.

#### **EU countries:**

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus\*, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland (Republic of), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain (but not the Canary Islands), Sweden,

Gibraltar is outside the Community Customs territory. The allowances for outside the EU therefore apply.

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\* Though the whole of Cyprus is part of the EU, goods from any area of Cyprus not under effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus are treated as non-EU imports

There are no limits on the amount of duty and/or tax paid alcohol and tobacco that you can bring directly into NI from the EU as long as the goods are for your own use or gifts and are carried in your luggage.

If you are bringing in alcohol or tobacco goods and we have reason to suspect they may be for a commercial purpose, an officer may ask you questions and make checks. For example, about:

- the type and quantity of goods you have bought
- why you bought them
- how you paid for them
- whether all your goods are openly displayed or concealed
- how often you travel
- how much you normally smoke or drink
- any other relevant circumstances.



We are more likely to ask you questions if you have more than:

- 800 cigarettes
- 200 cigars
- 400 cigarillos
- 1kg tobacco
- 110 litres of beer
- 90 litres of wine
- 10 litres of spirits
- 20 litres of fortified wine (for example, port or sherry).

Please note that the country where you buy tobacco may have its own laws on how much tobacco you can buy or keep. If you are not sure, please check with that country's authorities before you buy.

## Fuel



In addition to fuel held in the standard tank of a vehicle, tourist travellers to the UK may carry reserve fuel for use in that vehicle in an appropriate canister. It should be noted that for safety reasons ferry and train companies impose strict limits on the amount of fuel carried outside the fuel tank.

## Food and plants



If you are travelling to NI from a country within the EU, you may bring in any meat, dairy or other animal products if free from pest and disease. You may also bring in any fruit, vegetables or plant products other than plants and seeds of *Fraxinus* (Ash) intended for planting as long as they are, grown in an EU Member State, free from pests and diseases and are for your own use or consumption.

See 'If in Doubt Leave it Out' leaflets, available from <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/food/personal-food-imports>

For animal products, EU countries also include: Andorra, the Canary Islands, Liechtenstein, Norway, San Marino and Switzerland. For fruit, vegetable and plant purposes, EU countries also include: Andorra, Switzerland and San Marino.

## Banned goods



**There are certain goods you are not allowed to bring into the UK regardless of what country you are travelling from – this is to protect society, animal and public health and the environment.**

**If you are not sure about any of the goods you bring into the UK, speak to an officer in the red channel or on the red point phone.**

Please note that this is not a full list, but it includes the most important examples.

## The following goods are banned completely:



**Controlled Drugs** such as cocaine, heroin, MDMA (Ecstasy), cannabis, barbiturates, amphetamine and methamphetamine.



**Offensive weapons** such as flick and gravity knives, butterfly knives, push daggers, belt-buckle knives, death stars, swordsticks, stealth (non-metallic) knives, knives disguised as everyday objects, knuckledusters, blowpipes, truncheons, and some martial arts equipment.



### **Other weapons**



Self-defence sprays and electric shock devices such as stun guns.

**Indecent and obscene material** such as books, magazines, films, videos, DVDs and software.

This includes:

- material featuring children;
- material containing extreme violence; and
- any other pornography that cannot be legally bought in the UK.

**The following goods may be detained and you may be prosecuted by the intellectual property right holder:**



**Counterfeit, pirated and patent infringing goods** such as CDs, DVDs, clothing, footwear and designer goods from non-EU countries.

**The following are also banned but in certain cases may be brought into the UK if you have obtained the relevant licence or permit:**



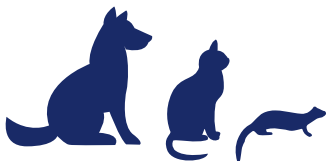
**Firearms, explosives and ammunition** including blank firing or replica firearms that can be converted to fire bullets.

Realistic imitation firearms can only be imported for an authorised purpose or function such as participating at an historical re-enactment.



**Samurai Swords** with a curved blade exceeding 50cms in length can only be imported for an authorised purpose or function such as participation in martial arts events or religious ceremonies.

**For more information, call the Helpline on 0300 200 3700**



**Travelling with pets** – Pet animals (such as dogs, cats and ferrets) may only be brought into Northern Ireland if they comply with the Pet Travel Scheme. If they are not Pet Travel Scheme compliant travel into Northern Ireland may be refused. Should non Pet Travel Scheme compliant animals be discovered on arrival into Northern Ireland, they may be quarantined by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is important to note that from 1 January 2021, this also applies to pets travelling from Great Britain, which will be a Part II listed country for the purposes of pet travel.

**For other pets and further information, visit [www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/travelling-pets](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/travelling-pets) or email [tradeadminpost@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:tradeadminpost@daera-ni.gov.uk).**



Pet birds from non-EU countries may only be imported at specific ports if they are licensed by DAERA and are checked by them on arrival. It is important to note that from 1 January 2021, this also applies to pet birds travelling from Great Britain, which will be a Part II listed country.

Horses, farm animals and productive poultry may not be imported as “pets”.

**For further information and advice on importing birds or farm animals, visit the DAERA website or contact DAERA by email at [tradeadminpost@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:tradeadminpost@daera-ni.gov.uk) or by telephone on 02877 442096.**



**Endangered animals or plants** including live animals, birds and plants, or goods made from them, such as jewellery, shoes, bags and belts, even if they were openly on sale in the countries where you bought them, unless you have a valid CITES permit. This also includes caviar, ivory, coral, shells and crocodile, alligator and snake skin taken from endangered animals.

**For more information and advice, go to [www.gov.uk/guidance/cites-imports-and-exports](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/cites-imports-and-exports) or, contact APHA at the Centre for International Trade, Bristol +44 (0)1173 723700. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.**





**Certain radio transmitters** such as CB radios and cordless phones that are not approved for use in the UK.

**For more information and advice, call Ofcom on 020 7981 3000.**



**Rough diamonds** If you are bringing in rough (i.e. uncut or unpolished) diamonds you must have a valid Kimberley Process Certificate.

## Bringing illegal goods into the UK



Carrying goods that are banned, or for which you don't have the necessary licence or permit, is illegal – if you get caught smuggling there are severe penalties including imprisonment.

It is important that you follow the advice below.

- Never bring banned goods into the UK
- Never carry anything into the UK for someone else
- If you are driving, make sure all your passengers know what goods are banned and restricted
- If you are using a vehicle for smuggling goods, we may also seize your vehicle
- Never smuggle an animal into the UK. Even though a pet may be tame, it can carry rabies, which could have disastrous consequences.

## Contacting us about smuggling

Call the Fraud Hotline to report suspicious activity in relation to smuggling, customs, excise and VAT fraud including:

- alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco, drugs and oils
- missing Trader Intra Community (Carousel) Fraud
- money laundering
- other banned or restricted goods and weapons

**Telephone:** 0800 788 887

**Outside UK:** 0203 080 0871

**Opening times:** 8am to 8pm everyday

Find out about call charges:

**[www.gov.uk/call-charges](http://www.gov.uk/call-charges)**

**Online:** Any information you may have regarding suspicious activity in relation to smuggling, customs, excise and VAT fraud can be passed to HMRC by using their secure online web form:

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/report-fraud-to-hmrc>**

## Feedback

We welcome your feedback as it can help us improve our service to you. If you want to make a complaint or compliment:

Email: **complaints&compliments@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk**

Or write to us at:

Complaints & Compliments,  
Long Corridor, 11th Floor, Lunar House,  
Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR9 2BY

For full details on how to make a complaint or compliment or to see how we have been acting on feedback visit.

**[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force/about/complaints-procedure](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force/about/complaints-procedure)**

## **Your rights**

As a traveller, you have the right to expect our officers to be courteous, impartial and behave with integrity.

If you break the rules we may seize your goods and any vehicle used to transport them. We will give you information that details the seized items and why we seized them. It will also include details on how you can appeal if you think the seizure was unlawful and how to ask for your goods or vehicle back.

For more information about the appeals process, see 'Notice 12A'.

## **Our rights**

Our officers expect to do their job with the co-operation and support from the travelling public. We have the right to stop, question and check travellers for banned or restricted goods, and seize any smuggled goods, or vehicles used for smuggling.

## More information and advice

Further information and copies of the other leaflets and notices mentioned are available at GOV.UK

If you cannot find what you are looking for on the website, then you can phone the helpline:

0300 200 3700 (in the UK)  
+44 2920 501 261 (outside the UK) Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Text phone 0300 200 3719

If English is not your first language and you need a translator to help with your enquiry, let one of our advisers know when you call us.

If you would like to speak to someone in Welsh, call 0300 200 3705

Lines are open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

Visit: **[www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad)**



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