

TRAVELLING TO THE UK

Notice 1 December 2008

What you **can** bring in

What you **can't** bring in

What you **must** declare



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT THIS LEAFLET

This leaflet tells you about going through Customs when entering the United Kingdom (UK). It tells you what you are allowed and not allowed to bring in. It also tells you what you can bring in before you have to pay duty and/or tax on it.

What you can bring in will vary depending on where you are travelling from.

- See page 4 if you are travelling from a country within the European Union (EU).
- See page 7 if you are travelling from a country outside the European Union (EU).
- See pages 11, 12 and 13 to check goods that are banned or restricted regardless of where you are travelling from.

We have a duty to protect the UK from drugs, firearms and other harmful goods and to stop smugglers evading taxes. This also 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).

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 please speak to an officer in the red channel or on the red point phone.

GOING THROUGH CUSTOMS

Most UK ports and airports have three exits or 'channels': the red, green and blue channel.

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

If you let a coach, ferry 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)* with:

- no tobacco products that are over the limits for imports from that country (see page 6)
- no banned or restricted goods (see pages 11, 12 and 13).

GREEN CHANNEL

Use the green channel if you are travelling from a country *outside the European Union (EU)* with goods that:

- do not go over your allowances (see pages 7 and 8 for further information)
- are not banned or restricted (see pages 11, 12 and 13 for further information).

RED CHANNEL OR RED POINT PHONE

You must use the red channel or the red point phone if you:

- have goods or cash (page 10) to declare
- have commercial goods, see 'Notice 6 - Merchandise in baggage' available from our advice service (page 16) for more information
- have tobacco products from an EU country that are over the limits for imports from that country (page 6)
- are not sure about what you need to declare.

TRAVELLING WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)



You can bring an unlimited amount of most goods into the UK, for example, you can bring in any alcohol, meat and dairy products – as long as they are for your own use and transported by you. ‘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 our advice service (page 16) for more information.

However, some goods are still restricted, and there are tighter limits on tobacco from certain EU countries.

EU countries:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, 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, the UK (but not the Channel Islands).

Although Gibraltar is part of the EU, it is outside the Community Customs territory. The customs allowances for outside the EU therefore apply.

*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.

Alcohol and tobacco

For most EU countries, there are no limits on the amount of duty and/or tax paid alcohol and tobacco that you can bring into the UK as long as they are for your own use or gifts and are transported by you.

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:

- 3,200 cigarettes
- 200 cigars
- 400 cigarillos
- 3kg 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.

LIMITS ON TOBACCO FROM SOME EU COUNTRIES

From some EU countries there are limits on the amount of tobacco products you can bring back without paying duty and / or tax in the UK:

- 200 cigarettes from Bulgaria, Hungary*, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland*, Romania and Slovakia*
- 200 cigarettes or 250g smoking tobacco from Estonia

Please note that there is no limit on other types of tobacco products as long as they are for your own use.

*(*The limits on cigarettes from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia only apply until 31 December 2008)*

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

Within the EU, there are no restrictions on food and plant products – such as meat, fish, dairy products, fruits and vegetables – as long as they are free from pests or diseases, are for your own use, and have been grown in the EU. See leaflets *'Bringing food products into the UK'* and *'Bringing fruit, vegetable and plant products into the UK'* available from our advice service (page 16) for more detailed information.

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

Banned goods

There are certain goods that are banned or restricted in the UK regardless of what country you are travelling from. See pages 11, 12 and 13 for more information.

TRAVELLING FROM OUTSIDE THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)



When travelling from outside the European Union (including the Canary Islands, the Channel Islands, and Gibraltar) you can bring in goods up to the limits below without paying duty and/or tax in the UK. These goods must be for your own use or as gifts and transported by you.

If you intend to sell or accept any kind of payment for the goods you bring in then this is classed as commercial use. See *'Notice 6 - Merchandise in Baggage'* available from our advice service (page 16) for more information.

Details of your allowances follow.

If you have any goods over these limits, please speak to an officer in the red channel or on the red point phone.

Alcohol and tobacco

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

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) 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

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) 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.

If you are under 17 years of age, you cannot have the alcohol and tobacco allowances.

Bought alcohol or tobacco in an EU country?

If you are bringing back duty and tax paid alcohol or tobacco for your own use that you obtained in an EU country, these do not count as part of your allowance and you will not have to pay any more duty and/or tax on these. Just make sure you can prove that you bought them in an EU country, for example, by producing a receipt and please note that the limits from some EU countries set out on page 6 still apply.

Other goods (including gifts and souvenirs)

Most travellers can bring other goods into the UK worth up to £340* (e.g. perfume and electrical goods) without paying duty and / or tax in the UK.

However, passengers travelling by private plane or boat for pleasure purposes are only entitled to a lower allowance of £240*.

**From 1 December to 31 December 2008 inclusive, lower allowances of £300 and £210 will apply.*

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

You cannot group individual allowances together to bring in an item worth more than the limit.

Food and plants

From most countries outside the EU, you are not allowed to bring in any meat 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 more information see leaflet 'Bringing food products into the UK' available from our advice service (page 16). 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 the UK unless you have obtained the relevant official licence. For more information, see leaflet *'Bringing fruit, vegetable and plant products into the UK'* available from our advice service (page 16).

Declaring cash

If you are carrying cash equivalent to 10,000 euro or more you must declare it when you enter the UK from a country outside the EU. Please complete a cash declaration form at the UK port or airport. See leaflet *'Carrying Cash in and out of the United Kingdom'* for more information.



Air transfers

If you are transferring to another flight to another EU country or a UK domestic flight, you will usually only need to declare the goods in your hand luggage.

You normally do not need to declare your hold baggage until you collect it at your final destination.

Bringing your personal belongings or your car into the UK?

See *'Notice 3'* available from our advice service (page 16) for more information.

Banned goods

There are certain goods that are banned or restricted in the UK regardless of what country you are travelling from. Go to pages 11, 12 and 13 for more information.

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:

Drugs such as heroin, morphine, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, LSD and cannabis.

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.

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.

Counterfeit, pirated and patent-infringing goods such as CDs, sportswear and designer goods from non-EU countries falling outside the conditions of the other goods allowance.

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, self defence sprays and electric shock devices such as stun guns. Realistic imitation firearms can only be imported for an authorised purpose or function such as participating at an historical re-enactment.

For more information, call our advice service on 0845 010 9000

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 our advice service on 0845 010 9000

Live animals – these must normally have a British import (rabies) licence, and must be quarantined. However, dogs and cats that meet the conditions of the Pet Passport Scheme can be imported without quarantine. Live birds, including pets, must normally have a British health import licence.

For more information and advice, call Animal Health on 020 7904 6000

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.ukcites.gov.uk/default.asp or call the Global Wildlife Licensing and Registration Service on +44 (0)117 372 8749. 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 from outside the EU, you must have a valid Kimberley Process Certificate.

For more information and advice, call the Government Diamond Office at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 020 7008 6903

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 **Customs Hotline** to report suspicious activity in relation to smuggling, customs, excise and VAT fraud including:

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

Telephone

Free Phone (from UK landlines)
0800 595 000

If you're calling from abroad please telephone:

If calling from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Republic of Ireland, Netherlands:
00800 555 95000

If calling from mainland Spain: 900 988 922

Opening hours

24 hours a day, seven days a week

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 our secure online web form <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/customs-hotline>

Post

Write to the Customs Hotline Freepost address to report all types of smuggling, customs, excise and VAT fraud

Freepost SEA 939 PO Box 100
Gravesend, Kent
DA12 2BR

Fax

Free Fax number 0800 528 0506

Email

If you cannot use the online web form please email us to report suspicious activity in relation to smuggling, customs, excise and VAT fraud.
customs.hotline@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints

If you have a complaint our officers will try to resolve it at the time. If it cannot be resolved on the spot please contact one of our complaints managers or ask for a copy of our '*Complaints and putting things right*' factsheet which tells you what to do next, available at:

www.hmrc.gov.uk/factsheets/complaints-factsheet.pdf

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*'. If you would like more information about referring a case to an independent tribunal, see '*Notice 990*' available from our advice service (see opposite page).

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.

Standards of service

We have produced The Traveller's Charter, which describes the standards of service that you can expect from us. *If you would like a copy, phone our advice service on 0845 010 9000, or go to the Customs point at ports and airports.*

MORE INFORMATION AND ADVICE

If you have any questions about this leaflet, if you need more general information or if you would like copies of our other leaflets, call our advice service:

0845 010 9000 (in the UK)

+44 2920 501 261 (outside the UK)

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

Text phone 0845 000 0200

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 0845 010 0300

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

You can download any of the leaflets and notices mentioned from the HMRC website at www.hmrc.gov.uk