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TRAVEL WISELY

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS



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PREFACE

You are traveling abroad and you want to bring back souvenirs for your family and friends ?

Within certain limits, you can enjoy partial or full exemption from duties and taxes at import when you bring goods from abroad.

However,when you travel, you should bear in mind that there are restrictions on the amount of cash you are allowed to carry when traveling.

Furthermore, under certain conditions, it is allowed to take your pet.

There are souvenirs that may be harmful to endangered animal or plant species (like ivory statues and jewelry, handbags and shoes made of reptile skin or jewelry and decorations made of coral, etc.).

Last point, some souvenirs can be hazardous to your health, your safety or the economy : counterfeit goods.

We are pleased to inform you about the 'do's' and 'don'ts' in this brochure.

CHAPTER 1

EXEMPTION FROM IMPORT DUTIES AND TAXES



I WILL RETURN FROM A NON-EU MEMBER STATE

1. WHAT CAN I BRING INTO BELGIUM FROM A NON-EU MEMBER STATE ⁽¹⁾?

Goods having no commercial character contained in your personal luggage are **exempted** from import duties and taxes within certain limits (see table 1).

You will be granted an exemption in the following cases :

- You purchased goods in these countries all taxes included ;
- You purchased goods in these countries with reimbursement or relief from taxes based on their export (for instance: purchases in a duty-free shop of an airport) ;
- You were offered goods as a gift.

(1) The Member States of the EU are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

The territories with special tax status include the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Tenerife, etc.), the overseas departments (French Guiana, Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique), the Aland Islands and Mount Athos... Exemptions for imports from a territory with special tax status for the EU are limited to those granted to travellers coming from non-EU countries.

TABLE 1

GOODS OF A NON-COMMERCIAL CHARACTER	
Tobacco products*	Allowed quantities **
Cigarettes	200 pieces or
Cigarillos	100 pieces or
Cigars	50 pieces or
Smoking tobacco	250 grams
Alcohol and alcoholic beverages*	Allowed quantities
Still wines	4 litres and
Beers	16 litres and
Distilled and spirituous beverages with an alcoholic strength exceeding 22 % vol. Non-denatured ethyl alcohol of 80 % and more vol.	1 litres or
Distilled and spirituous beverages, wine- or alcohol-based aperitifs, tafia, sake or similar drinks with an alcoholic strength of up to 22 %	2 litres
Other goods***	Total maximum amount **** by person
Air and sea travelers	430 euros
Other travelers (by land or by private aircraft or boat)	300 euros

* The exemptions for "tobacco products" and "alcohol and alcoholic beverages" are only granted to travelers who are at least 17 years old.

** These quantities are applicable to import in Belgium. Each EU Member State can decide to apply smaller allowed quantities.

*** This exemption is lowered to 175 euros for travelers under fifteen years old.

**** These amounts can be reconsidered. Updated information is available at the telephone numbers mentioned at the end of this brochure.

2. WHICH EXIT DO I TAKE WHEN RETURNING FROM A NON-EU MEMBER STATE ?

When you return home from a country – that is not a member of the European Union ⁽¹⁾ or from a territory with a special tax status ⁽²⁾ you can **always be submitted to a Customs check**.

If you have something to declare :

- choose the red lane (or “Goods to declare”) in order to leave the airport.
- use only the green lane (or “Nothing to declare”) when you are sure that you have nothing to declare or that the quantity of goods that you bring back does not exceed the threshold of the exemptions mentioned in the first table.

The choice of which exit you take constitutes a declaration. When customs notices that you are importing forbidden goods or quantities exceeding the exemptions, you will not only have to pay the due duties and taxes at import, but also a fine.

Remark :

If you come to Belgium by air from a third country via **an airport located in another Member state of the European Union**, you must declare only the goods contained in your hand luggage to the Customs of this first **airport where the transfer takes place inside the EU**.

3. WHICH GOODS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE EXEMPTION ?

The exemption does not include :

- goods needed for professional purposes ;
- goods intended for resale ;
- goods imported in far greater quantities than those commonly acquired at once by private individuals.

You must **declare** these goods because the import duties and taxes are due.

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(2) *The territories with a special tax status are the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Tenerife, etc.), the DOM (French overseas departments that is to say French Guiana, the Reunion island, Guadeloupe and Martinique), the land islands and the Mount Athos, etc. The travelers coming back from the territories with a special tax status of the EU only enjoy the exemptions applicable to the non-EU Member countries.*

4. WHAT IF I IMPORT GOODS IN GREATER QUANTITIES ?

If you **import goods in greater quantities than those for which exemption is granted**, you must **declare them to Customs** in order to avoid the payment of a **fine** in addition to the taxes due.

- Customs will only tax those quantities that exceed the maximum (quantities) of tobacco products and/or alcoholic beverages allowed by the exemption.
- Customs will collect taxes on the total value of the imported object from the category 'other goods' (see table 1).

I WILL RETURN FROM AN EU MEMBER STATE

1. WHAT CAN I BRING INTO BELGIUM FROM A EUROPEAN MEMBER STATE ⁽¹⁾ ?

You will not pay any excise duties in Belgium on the excise goods which you purchased as a private person and for your own use in another Member State of the EU if you transport these goods by yourself. This applies only to goods for which the excise duties have already been paid in the Member State of purchase. "For your own use" means that the good will be used or consumed by you or your household.

In all other cases the Customs will consider these goods as moved into Belgium for commercial purposes, which means that the excise duties are due in Belgium.

To decide whether the goods are actually intended for the own use of the private person who introduced them into Belgium, the European Union has established the following criteria available to the Administration :

- the commercial status and the reasons for travelling ;
- the place of storage ;
- the mode of transport ;
- any document related to the products ;
- the nature of those products and their quantities according to the following guide levels (table 2).

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The territories with special tax status include the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Tenerife, etc.), the overseas departments (French Guiana, Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique), the Aland Islands and Mount Athos... Exemptions for imports from a territory with special tax status for the EU are limited to those granted to travellers coming from non-EU countries.

TABLE 2

	Guide levels
Tabacco products	
Cigarettes	800 pieces
Cigarillos (cigars weighing maximum 3g/piece)	400 pieces
Cigars	200 pieces
Smoking tobacco	1 kg
Alcoholic beverages	
Spirit drinks	10 litres
Intermediate products (e.g. port wine, Pineau des Charentes, etc.)	20 litres
Wine	90 litres (of which maximum 60 litres of sparkling wine)
Beers	110 litres

These criteria are only indicative levels that draw the attention of the General Administration of Customs and Excise to the fact that excise goods transported by private person could have a commercial character. In that case, excise duties would have to be paid in Belgium.

The Customs will decide whether the goods are used for commercial purpose or not based only on tangible elements (that corroborate its decision).

WHAT CAN I PURCHASE IN DUTY-FREE SHOPS ?

- You travel **within the European Union** ⁽¹⁾:
 - When you buy in duty-free shops in an EU airport, your purchases always include excise duties and VAT. Therefore your purchases are not at all tax-free.
 - When you travel to a territory with a special tax status, when you buy in duty-free shops in an EU airport, the rules for non-EU Member States (see below) are applicable : your purchases are tax-free.

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- You travel **outside the European Union** :
- Your purchases in duty-free shops in an EU airport are exempted from any tax (and are unlimited) if you travel from an EU Member State to a non-EU country by means of a non-stop flight or by a stop flight in a Member State of EU (but with any possibility to get your hold luggage back at this stop over).

As a general rule, those purchases are intended to be used or consumed only in the non-EU country and are not intended to be re-imported into the EU.

- When returning to the EU however, you will only enjoy the exemptions mentioned in the first table. You must pay the import duties and taxes on your purchases exceeding the exemption.

WHAT TO DO WHEN TRAVELING WITH VALUABLES ?

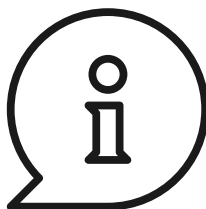
When you travel to non-EU Member States and take valuables in your luggage, please ask for information from Customs in order to know formalities to be able to re-import these goods duty-free when **returning to EU journey**.

DO YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION ?

You can obtain additional information on the exemptions :

- on our website (https://finances.belgium.be/fr/douanes_accises/particuliers) or
- via the information desks of the regional directorates that can be reached by telephone :

Antwerp	02 577 58 70
Brussels	02 576 24 50
Ghent	02 578 56 00
Hasselt	02 576 17 50
Liège	02 576 56 59
Louvain	02 573 86 60
Mons	02 578 00 01



CHAPTER 2

CONTROLS ON THE MOVEMENT OF CASH



THE OBLIGATION TO DECLARE CASH MONEY ?

If you plan to enter or leave the European Union with 10,000 euros or more in cash, you must declare it to Customs spontaneously ⁽¹⁾.

When you are travelling within the European Union, you don't have to declare spontaneously. During a control by Customs while you are travelling within the European Union, you may be asked about any large sums of cash money that you are holding. When you are travelling with 10,000 euros or more, you are required to submit a declaration. ⁽²⁾

This declaration of large sums of cash money contributes to the efforts made to enhance security by cracking down on money laundering, terrorism and criminality.

HOW AND WHERE SHALL IT BE DECLARED ?

The declaration shall be submitted at the place where you leave or enter the European Union. Belgians travelling to South America via Madrid must submit the document at that last-mentioned place. The Belgian document is available at the customs services. As is the case for documents of the other EU Member States, it can also be found on the website <http://ec.europa.eu/eucashcontrols>.

ABSENCE OF THE DECLARATION AND PENALTIES ?

If you are responsible for the import or export of 10,000 euros in cash without having submitted any declaration, you committed a customs offence for which fines can be imposed.

In any case, the customs services will draw up a report of findings for the Public Prosecutor's Department. On that basis, the Prosecutor can decide to open a money laundering investigation.

WHO MUST SUBMIT THE DECLARATION ?

Any person entering or leaving the European Union with 10,000 euros or more in cash, must submit a declaration. That also applies when you are carrying cash money from or for any other person or legal person (e.g. the company for which you are working). When you are travelling in group or with children, the rule applies individually.

WHAT COMES UNDER THE NOTION "CASH MONEY" ?

- Banknotes and coins (Foreign currencies will be converted into euro) ;
- Traveller's cheques and other bearer cheques ;
- Letters of credit and cash bonds ;
- Gold (Regulation (EU) 2018/1672).

All means of payment mentioned above will be added up in order to determine whether the limit of 10,000 euros is reached.

(1) Council Regulation (EC) 1889/2005.

(2) Belgian Royal Decree of 26 January 2014 on supervisory measures for the physical cross-border transportation of currency.

CHAPTER 3

ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND PLANTS



Think twice before buying nice souvenirs for your family. Each year, many protected animals and plants as well as their derivatives such as fur, caviar and ivory works of art **are brought into Belgium illegally**. At times, we can even talk of organised crime.

However, it is very often tourists – unaware of doing any wrong – who take these objects home as souvenirs.

Such an ill-considered purchase may have far-reaching consequences :

- First of all, the trade of these objects is pernicious to many protected animals and endangered plants.
- You can be sure that Customs will confiscate such a souvenir.
- Sometimes, it implies a considerable fine and imprisonment.

Below you will find some examples of souvenirs that are sold to tourists. The fact that these objects are publicly exposed on the market does not imply that they are legal ! Here are some things that you can certainly **not** take home.

- **Skins and clothing from felines** : coats and bags made of leopards, snow leopards, clouded leopards, tigers, lions, pumas, jaguars, ocelots or cheetahs ;
- **Ivory** : carvings made of elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn : statues, figurines, seals, bracelets, necklaces, chess pieces, chopsticks and complete tusks ;
- **Land turtle products (« Bekko »)** : jewels, plates, spectacles, hair clips, combs ;
- **Shawls made from wool of Tibetan antelopes** (Shahtoosh wool) ;
- **Skulls of crocodiles, tigers, bears** ;
- **Whale bone carvings** ;
- Guitars and luxury accessories made from *palissandre de Rio*.

Certain souvenirs can be taken home provided that you have an **export permit** (issued by the country of origin) AND an **import permit** issued by the Belgian management authority :

- **Reptile skins** : handbags, briefcases, belts, shoes and wallets made from snake, lizard or crocodile leather ;
- **Coral and jewellery made from coral** : all black, blue or hard corals ; jewellery made from red corals from Japan and China also require documents ;
- **Certain shellfish** and giant clams, queen conches and their flesh ;
- **Key rings containing seahorses** ;
- **Stuffed animals** : birds, crocodiles (including teeth), monitors, snakes, etc. ;
- **Snake wine** : alcohol in which specimens of protected species, such as snakes and lizards, are immersed. It is necessary to inquire about the species in the bottle !

Some souvenirs can be taken home **without permits** provided that the **quantity falls within the indicated range** :

- Rain sticks of cactaceae, up to 3 per person ;
- Some specific shellfish :
 - up to 3 queen conch shells (*Strombus Gigas*) per person ;
 - up to 3 giant clam shells (*Tridacnidae*) per person, where each specimen may be an intact shell or two matching halves, not exceeding 3 kg in total ;
- Up to 125 gr of sturgeon caviar per person in containers that are individually marked : sealed with CITES labels, if more : permits required ;
- Up to four products produced from crocodiles per person (bags, belts, etc., with the exception of meat and hunting trophies) ;
- Up to four dried seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) per person ;

- Specimens of agarwood (*Aquilaria* spp. and *Gyrinops* spp.) - up to 1 kg woodchips, 24 ml oil, and two sets of beads or prayer beads (or two necklaces or bracelets) per person.

If you wish to obtain more information on endangered animals and plants (CITES legislation) ?

Please visit the website of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Security and Environment : <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/animals-and-plants/plants/what-cites>.

Or contact via :

E-mail : cites@milieu.belgie.be

or by telephone : +32 2 524 97 97

CHAPTER 4

BRINGING COUNTERFEITED GOODS



WHAT ARE COUNTERFEIT AND PIRATED GOODS ?

Counterfeit goods are imitations and reproductions of branded products. Pirated goods are one or more copies which have been made without the consent of the holder of the property right.

Counterfeit and pirated goods constitute an infringement of the intellectual property right.

The goods involved are :

- counterfeit goods (fake designer clothes) ;
- pirated goods (copies of CDs, DVDs, etc.) ;
- goods that infringe a patent (medicine) or a designation of origin (wine) ;
- trade names in so far as they are protected as exclusive property rights under national law ;
- topographies of semiconductor products ;
- utility models and devices which are primarily designed, produced or adapted for the purpose of enabling or facilitating circumvention of technological measures.

ARE COUNTERFEIT GOODS DANGEROUS ?

Both counterfeit and pirated goods **constitute a danger to your health and your everyday life.**

Imagine for one moment :

- taking medicine that does not contain the active principle and is therefore ineffective ;
- having a terrible allergic reaction to a cosmetic face cream ;
- being involved in a car accident because your brake pads refuse to work ;



- traveling on a plane whose windows are three times less resistant than the standard ;
- our mobile phone exploding when charging its battery ;
- when smoking your cigarettes, you would inhale two or three times more nicotine and tar than indicated on the packet.

Moreover, counterfeit and pirated goods are a real plague for the national economies and an actual threat to employment within the European Union.

WHICH SECTORS ARE MOST AFFECTED BY COUNTERFEIT AND PIRATED GOODS ?

All sectors are affected by these goods. However, the following sectors stand out :

- medicine ;
- cosmetics ;
- cigarettes ;
- toys ;
- drinks ;
- food ;
- mechanical and electronic parts ;
- CD's ;
- software ;
- mobile phones ;
- clothes ;
- ...

HOW CAN COUNTERFEIT AND PIRATED GOODS BE TRACED ?

The following tips and tricks will facilitate the tracing and recognition of counterfeit and pirated goods :

- abnormally low prices.
- inferior quality and finish of the product.
- unusual place of sale, black market sale.
- spelling mistakes on the packaging or in the instructions.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION ?

The Customs Administration plays an important role in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy pursuant to a European regulation applicable to all Member States of the European Union. The Customs Administration is entitled to take action if counterfeit and pirated goods are imported, exported or re-exported, and is also authorized to intervene on the national territory.

HOW IS COUNTERFEITING/PIRACY PUNISHED ?

Any offence with regard to counterfeit and pirated goods can be punished by :

- the confiscation and destruction of the seized goods, as well as the payment of the related handling and destruction costs ;
- a claim for damages by the trademark right holder, whether or not by means of judicial proceedings ;
- in certain cases even :
 - a prison sentence
 - a fine

One piece of advice : always buy goods via the official sales channels !

CHAPTER 5

TRAVELLING WITH YOUR PET



Regulations about traveling with your dog, cat or ferret have been standardized throughout the European Union.

Additional conditions may still exist for certain Member States.

For countries outside the European Union, regulations depend on the country of destination.

Whatever country you plan to take your pet to, it is very important to read the useful information on the website of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment : <https://www.health.belgium.be/fr/voyager-avec-des-animaux>.

At all times, Customs can check the passport and the mandatory vaccinations of your pets.



Belgian Customs wishes you a pleasant journey !

This brochure can be downloaded or ordered via the following website :

www.financien.belgium.be > Publicaties

or at the following address :

Federal Public Service Finance
Strategic Coordination and Communication Department - North Galaxy
Koning Albert II-laan 33 box 70 – 1030 Brussels

N.B. : The information provided is purely indicative. The regulations, laws, decrees and other provisions having the force of law, have precedence over this information which under no circumstances can be levelled against the administration in the event of a dispute.





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