
Removals to South Africa

Making your move to South Africa a smooth journey

Moving to South Africa

Moving house is a big deal; it's even more daunting when you're moving overseas to a country such as South Africa. Finding the right removals team to manage your move means that you can relax and look forward to all the excitement of your new life in the South African sunshine. At Universal Removals we know the ropes and can help you with every step of your international removals to South Africa

What can I take into South Africa?

One of the peculiarities of the South African customs system is that the owner of the shipment must be in the country before clearance can begin, and if that's the case, your personal effects and household goods can be imported duty-free. The rules are different if you are a resident (but not South African national) returning to the country – you can only import goods free of tax and duty if you've been absent for a period of at least six months without a break and can prove that when you left South Africa you didn't plan on returning (for example, you shut all your South African bank accounts and sold your South African property, and you owned a home and obtained permanent residency status in the country of your origin.)

How long does it take to ship my belongings?

The transit time to South Africa depends on how you choose to ship your goods. If you use a Full Container Load service the door to door transit time is around 6-8 weeks. Groupage – where you share a container with other people – takes longer, around 10-12 weeks, but is normally cheaper.

Can I bring my car or motorbike?

To import a car into South Africa you need to obtain a Letter of Authority (LOA) from the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). So long as you have that approval, you can import a car free of duty if you are migrating to South Africa for the first time. When your consignment passes through clearance you need to hand in the LOA and an import permit, which is issued by the Department of Trade and Industry. Each family migrating to South Africa to the first time can import one car duty-free.

If this is not your first time entering South Africa, or you wish to import additional motor vehicles, you will need to pay duty and VAT. Customs will assess the value of your vehicle and add 10% - this total is known as the Customs Value. You will then pay duty at 58% of this customs value, and VAT is a further payment calculated as 14% of the combined total of the customs value and duty.

If you have previously lived in South Africa and wish to import a vehicle on your return, you can do so duty-free so long as you can prove that when you left the country you had no intention of returning. To do this you need to provide evidence that you closed any South African bank accounts and sold any property in the country. You will also need to have obtained permanent residency in the other country, and owned a property there.

The vehicle importing process does sound very complicated, but if you speak to an experienced international removals company early enough they will be able to advise you.

The Universal Advantage

Universal Removals are hugely experienced in helping people move overseas. Our dedicated international removals division is a team of specialists who are on hand to offer you advice and help every step of the way with everything from packing your possessions to filling in the documentation. You will also have your own Move Manager who will look after your move from start to finish, right to your new South African front door!

If we can give you one piece of advice now it would be to start looking for a removals company as soon as possible. Get two or three quotes at least and make sure you know exactly what each company's quote includes so you can compare them like for like. Make sure the volume and service you've been quoted on are correct and also double check the transit times you've been given. Whatever the circumstances of your move, rest assured that we have helped people in similar situations before. There are very few questions we have not been asked over the years so do contact us for any information or advice.

Some useful sources of information include:

Importing Cars into South Africa – www.regulatory.co.za or www.sabs.co.za

South African Department of Trade and Industry - www.thedti.gov.za

South African Customs - www.sars.gov.za