

Moving to Colombia: Your Relocation Guide



By Appointment To
Her Majesty The Queen
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

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THE ART OF MOVING

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ELECTRICITY:	110v , 60 Hz American style two-pin plugs
INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS:	Hepatitis A + B, Typhoid, Malaria, Rabies, Yellow Fever, Tetanus
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BANK HOURS:	0900 – 1500 Mon – Fri. On the last business day of each month banks close at 1200
EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	119
BRITISH EMBASSY IN COLOMBIA:	Carrera 9, No 76-49, Piso 8 Edificio ING Barings, Bogotá, D.C. Tel: (57) (1) 326 8300 Fax: (57) (1) 326 8302 Web: http://ukincolombia.fco.gov.uk/en/
COLOMBIAN EMBASSY IN LONDON:	3 Hans Crescent London SW1X 0LN Tel: (0) 20 7589 9177 Fax: (0) 20 7581 1829 Email: elondres@cancilleria.gov.co Web: www.colombianembassy.co.uk
COLOMBIAN TOURIST OFFICE:	Proexport Colombia Vice Presidency of Tourism Calle 28A, N° 13A-15 Piso 35 Tel: + 57 (1) 427 9000 E-mail: info@colombia.travel

Customs

To the best of our knowledge, the following documentation is required to import household and personal effects into Colombia. However, it is advisable to check with the authorities that documentation is in order, prior to despatch.

REMOVAL GOODS FOREIGN & COLOMBIAN CITIZENS NOT DIPLOMATS

Documents required:

- Original airway bill or two original bill of lading
- A typewritten inventory in Spanish without values with brands, serial numbers, models and references of electronic items
- Notarised photocopy of your passport with visa valid at least for one year for each family member
- Colombian returning citizens must prove that they lived abroad for a minimum of two years (a maximum of 30 days vacation is allowed per year)
- “Registro unico de Retornados” for Colombian returning citizens that lived abroad for a minimum three years (It is optional if the customer wants to apply the duties / taxes exception)

All these shipments pay Customs duties and taxes.

If you don't have the “registro de retornados” you must pay duties and taxes of 15% on the Cost, Insurance and freight (CIF) value.

The Customs Inspector decides the value of each item of the household goods.

Partial Customs clearance is not permitted and it must be done at the airport or port of arrival.

Time limit for arrival of household goods is 30 calendar days before or 120 calendar days after arrival of owner.

Only one shipment of household goods can be imported per family each five years.

Only one bedroom per family member.

One unit of each electrical domestic appliance is allowed except for TV's. The shipper cannot bring more than 3 TV's. It is very important and mandatory that the inventory list indicates make and serial number of each electrical appliance. The packing list HAS to be typewritten. Please check the list of items allowed.

Shipper must be in Colombia for Customs clearance as passport is required. There is no exception.

Firearms, collection weapons, import prohibited unless an approved authorisation from the Colombian Ministry of Defence is given BEFORE shipping.

Liquor and foodstuffs are prohibited to be imported with the shipment. Customs do not consider them as part of a shipment.

People less than 18 years old are not allowed to import household goods.

Once the physical customs inspections are done, the Customs officer will calculate the value of the goods on which duties and taxes are charged.

The Customs officer will immediately apply the Customs penal code (confiscation of goods in the following cases:

- Excess of the allowance authorised (more than one electric appliance)
- Destined for different purposes to those for which goods were imported
- Arrival outside the established period of time (120 days after or 30 days before)

Never send a vehicle or a motorcycle along with household goods before consulting the agent in Colombia.

No commercial quantities are allowed.

If citizens did not live two years abroad should make “re-importation” attaching export household documents.

“Re-importation” process: the items to import must be the same items exported from Colombia, the weight, volume and packages number must match.

Unaccompanied Baggage of Foreign and Colombian Citizens NOT DIPLOMATS.

Documents required:

- Original Airway Bill or two original Bill of Lading
- A typewritten inventory in Spanish without values, with brands, serial numbers, models and references of electronic items
- Notarised photocopy of passport with visa valid at least for one year for each family member
- Foreign and Colombian citizens must prove that they were out of Colombia for a minimum of five days
- A Customs format called “Declaracion De Equipajes No Acompañados, form 530 ” is required. Shipper must complete this form upon their arrival at airport and the same stamped by the Customs authorities at that moment not the next day. This form must be completed and sent to clearance agent together with original passport and other documents if this document is not completed the clearance can be delayed or denied

The customer must pay duties and taxes of 15% on the Cost Insurance and Freight value.

The Customs Inspector decides the value of each item of the household goods.

Partial customs clearance is not permitted and it must be done at the airport or port of arrival.

The time limit for arrival of an unaccompanied baggage is 30 calendar days before or 90 calendar days after arrival of owner.

Shipper must be here in Colombia at the time of customs clearance, because original passport is required.

Firearms, collection weapons, import prohibited unless an approved authorisation from Colombian Ministry of Defence is given BEFORE shipping.

Liquor and foodstuffs are prohibited to import into the shipment. Customs does not consider them as part of a shipment.

It is allowed to include into this shipment personal effects like clothes, books, paintings, some electric appliances, etc, but cannot include furniture's, kitchen items, mattresses or rugs.

The cost of this shipment cannot exceed the amount of US\$ 1.500.

People under 18 years old are not allowed to import household goods. Which depends on special student permission that the importer has. (Please consult your agent BEFORE SHIPPING).

Once the physical customs inspections are done, the customs officer will calculate the value of the goods on which duties and taxes are charged.

The customs officer will immediately apply the customs penal code (confiscation of goods) in the following cases:

Excess of the allowance authorised in electronical items (Please consult your agent BEFORE SHIPPING).

Destined for different purposes to those for which goods were imported.

Arrival outside the established period of time 90 days after or 30 days before).

No commercial quantities are allowed

Removal Goods and Unaccompanied Baggage of Foreign and Colombian Citizens Diplomats

Documents required:

- Original Airway Bill or two original Bill of Ladings
- A typewritten inventory in Spanish without values, with brands, serial numbers, models and references of electronic items
- Photocopy of the diplomatic passport with seal of the Embassy and is valid
- Foreign and Colombian diplomats need a Diplomatic Permit
- Colombian returning diplomats have to obtain a permit issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs

These shipments do not pay Customs duties and taxes.

Customs clearance without physical inspection must be done at the airport or port of arrival.

Time limit for arrival of these shipments depends on each case. Please contact your agent at destination.

Firearms, collection weapons, import prohibited unless approved authorisation from the Colombian Ministry of Defence is given BEFORE shipping.

Liquor and foodstuffs are prohibited to import into the shipment. Customs does not consider them as part of a shipment.

You are allowed to include into this shipment personal effects like clothes, books, paintings, some electric appliances, etc., But cannot include furniture, kitchen items, mattresses or rugs.

This applies to Consular personnel, Persons protected by special regulations due to the contracts established between the Colombian Government and Foreign countries or entities. All members of technical missions and International Organisations.

Household goods shipments (only Diplomatic shipments are excluded), will be inspected physically. This new rule will create additional cost at port and longer clearance process.

For electronic / electrical devices include: serial number or reference, model and year.

Motor vehicles, motorcycles

Documents required:

- Original invoice detailed and preferably in US dollar
- A list of contents with all characteristics and specifications of the vehicle or motorcycle
- Original of Airway Bill or two original Bill of Ladings
- For no diplomatic shipments of used vehicles or motorcycles, a certificate called "PRUEBA DINAMICA" (DYNAMICS TEXT) is required. For this we need "test report" with translation in Spanish, Coolant certification system, specifying that does not deplete the ozone layer with translation in Spanish

Customs duties and taxes for new cars are approximately 70% on the Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) value. Except for foreign diplomats, because Colombian returning diplomats do not pay Customs duties, but they have to pay a special tax called IVA which can be from 16% to 54% on the Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) value, depending on the model of the car and consumption tax can be 8% or 16% depending on the value of the car.

In case the importer wants to bring the car along with household goods shipment, please consult the agent in Colombia before shipping.

Time limit for arrival of cars and motorcycles into Colombia for foreign and non-diplomat Colombian citizens as well as diplomats, is as soon as the import license is approved by Colombian Customs.

Never send a vehicle or motorcycle without consulting the agent in Colombia.

Only new cars or new motorcycles (0 km only) can be imported by foreign and returning diplomats.

Pets (dogs & cats)

Documents required:

- Original Veterinary Health Certificate which must be issued a maximum of ten days before the arrival of your shipment
- Vaccination certificate, specifying the age and species
- Original of Airway Bill, if the animal comes as unaccompanied baggage
- Invoice for non-commercial purposes

The owner, upon their arrival, must proceed with Customs import formalities if the pet comes along with him as an accompanied baggage.

If the pet comes as accompanied baggage, the owner must proceed with customs import formalities upon their arrival at the airport.

If the pet comes as unaccompanied baggage, the Air Way Bill must read “ALIVE ANIMAL” (ANIMAL VIVO) “DESCARGUE DIRECTO”. In this case, an import licence is required, which is made by an agent in Colombia and the Customs clearance cannot be done before the following business day.

It is very important that when the pet comes as unaccompanied baggage, the owner sends all documents along with the AWB two days prior to the pets arrival.

The owner must pay directly at the airport for a special permit called “PERMISO ZOOSANITARIO” and it costs between US\$30 and US\$35 approximately. It must be paid in Colombian Pesos.

The Health Certificate must state that the animal is free of infectious and parasitic diseases, without the presence of fresh wounds or healing process, has a current vaccination plan, received internal and external ant parasitic treatment and must have pet identification, species, breed, sex, age, coat colour and deworming date.

For any other kind of pets, please contact your agent at destination.

Food

We strongly recommend that shippers be advised not to ship any commercially prepared and purchased food product with your unaccompanied personal goods.

This includes: wines, spirits, beer, cider, spices, herbs, canned packed or wrapped foods, pet food, pastas, rice, food supplements, vitamins, fruit juices, carbonated / non carbonated drinks, milk, perishable foods, dry foods and any other item intended for human or animal consumption.

If the shipper insists on shipping food items, the specified information below must be gathered and provided for each food item imported. If the information is not provided, the food items may face refusal of entry, requiring segregation / manipulation of the shipment under customs supervision at a bonded facility, at substantial additional cost. Costs could be

in the thousands of dollars and can not be anticipated. These costs will be the responsibility of the client.

- Product brand name
- Product classification
- Country of production
- Country of packaging
- Type of product (canned, bottled, packaged)
- Quantity

Ask for **Abels form QF565** for completing.

Fumigation of imported and exported wooden crates

The Colombian Government adopted ISPM-15 (International standards for Phytosanitary Measures Publication 15) Guidelines for Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade (aka NIFM-15) to standardize the treatment of wood packing materials used for the transport of goods.

Shipments into or out of Colombia in wooden packaging, will have to have a Seal, which certifies that the shipment has received the required treatment (HT = heat treated a minimum wood core temperature of 56°C for a minimum of 30 minutes or Methyl Bromide Treatment the minimum temperature should not be less than 10°C and the minimum exposure time should not fall below 16 hours).

This does not apply to wood packing materials manufactured of:

- Raw wood of 6mm thickness or less
- Processed wood produced by glue, heat and pressure or a combination thereof
- Plywood sheets and agglomerated sawdust sheet
- Oriented wooden fibre sheets
- Sawdust and wooden fibre

General Information on the Republic of Colombia

Background

Colombia was one of the three countries that emerged from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830 (the others are Ecuador and Venezuela). A four-decade long conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups, principally the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) heavily funded by the drug trade, escalated during the 1990s. The insurgents lack the military or popular support necessary to overthrow the government, and violence has been decreasing since about 2002. However, insurgents continue attacks against civilians and large areas of the countryside are under guerrilla influence or are contested by security forces. More than 31,000 former paramilitaries had demobilized by the end of 2006 and the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) as a formal organization had ceased to function. In the wake of the paramilitary demobilization, emerging criminal groups arose, whose members include some former

paramilitaries. The Colombian Government has stepped up efforts to reassert government control throughout the country, and now has a presence in every one of its administrative departments. However, neighbouring countries worry about the violence spilling over their borders. In January 2011, Colombia assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2011-12 term.

Geography

With an area greater than four times that of the United Kingdom and a population which is two thirds, Colombia's most striking feature is its extra ordinary variety. Covering 1,138,910 square-kilometers, Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America.

Colombia's coastline extends for 1,600 kilometers along the Caribbean Sea and 1,280Km along the Pacific Ocean.

Colombia possesses several islands, the most important being the Archipelago of San Andres and Providencia in the Caribbean and Gorgona, Gorgonilla and Malpelo in the Pacific.

The Andean mountain range splits into three "cordilleras" – Western, Central and Eastern – and constitutes the Andean Region where most of the main cities are located: Santafe de Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Popayan, Pasto, Tunja, Manizales, Pereria, Armenia, Cucuta, Bucaramanga, Nevia and Ibague.

The Caribbean Region, in the North, includes the following cities: Cartagena, Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Riohacha, Valledupar, Sincelejo, Monteria; and the majestic range of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

The low lying Pacific Region in the West includes cities such as Quibdo, Buenaventura and Tumaco.

The Amazon-Orinoco Region in the East, has Villavicencio, Florencia and Leticia as its main centers. It includes the tropical rainforests and plains of the Orinoco basin.

Only 5% of land can be cultivated but a range of crops are grown. Coffee (Colombia is the world's second largest producer), sugar, bananas, cotton and flowers are exported. Coal, nickel, gold, silver, platinum and emeralds (Colombia is the world's largest producer) are mined. Oil and its products are the main export. Industry involves processing minerals, agriculture produce. The main trade partner is the USA. In spite of government efforts to stop the drugs trade, coca growing and cocaine smuggling are rife.

International disputes – in December 2007, ICJ allocates San Andres, Providencia, and Santa Catalina islands to Colombia under 1928 Treaty but does not rule on 82°W meridian as maritime boundary with Nicaragua; managed dispute with Venezuela over maritime boundary and Venezuelan-administered Los Monjes Islands near the Gulf of Venezuela; Colombian-organized illegal narcotics, guerrilla, and paramilitary activities penetrate all neighboring borders and have caused Colombian citizens to flee mostly into neighboring countries; Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and the US assert various claims to Bajo Nuevo and Serranilla Bank.

Climate

Colombia is located in the Equatorial zone, where climate depends mainly on altitude. The Andean mountains give rise to a great variety of climates ranging from those found in rainforests and tropical plains to tundra regions and perpetual snow peaks. Temperature at sea level is 22-36 degrees Celsius. At medium altitude is 17-23 degrees Celsius and at high altitude is 6-14 degrees Celsius. There are slight variations in temperature depending on whether it is the "dry season" (Summer-December to January and July to August) or the "wet season" (Winter-April to May and October to November).

Population

Approximately 45 million. It increased at an annual rate of 1.4%. Three quarters of the population live in cities in the Andean Region. 21% on the Caribbean coast and 4% on the Pacific Coast and the vast regions of the Orinoco and Amazon basins.

Language

Spanish is the national language, although English is widely used in business.

Currency

The unit of currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso (COP). The following denominations are in circulation:

- Notes: 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000
- Coins: 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000

Economy

The SANTOS administration has highlighted five "locomotives" to stimulate economic growth: extractive industries; agriculture; infrastructure; housing; and innovation. Colombia is third largest exporter of oil to the United States. President SANTOS, inaugurated in August 2010, introduced unprecedented legislation to better distribute extractive industry royalties and compensate Colombians who lost their land due to decades of violence. He also seeks to build on improvements in domestic security and on President URIBE's pro-market economic policies. Foreign direct investment reached a record \$10 billion in 2008, but dropped to \$7.2 billion in 2009, before beginning to recover in 2010, notably in the oil sector. Pro-business reforms in the oil and gas sectors and export-led growth, fuelled mainly by the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act, have enhanced Colombia's investment climate. Inequality, underemployment, and narcotrafficking remain significant challenges, and Colombia's infrastructure requires major improvements to sustain economic expansion. Because of the global financial crisis and weakening demand for Colombia's exports, Colombia's economy grew only 2.7% in 2008, and 0.8% in 2009 but rebounded to around 4.4% in 2010. In late 2010, Colombia experienced its most severe flooding in decades, with damages estimated to exceed \$6 billion. The government has encouraged exporters

to diversify their customer base beyond the United States and Venezuela, traditionally Colombia's largest trading partners; the SANTOS administration continues to pursue free trade agreements with Asian and South American partners and a trade accord with Canada is expected to go into effect in 2011, while a negotiated trade agreement with the EU has yet to be approved by the EU parliament. Improved relations with Venezuela have eased worries about restrictions on bilateral trade, but the business sector remains concerned about the pending US Congressional approval of the US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

Religion

Mainly Roman Catholic. Many other faiths are also practiced.

Education

The Colombian educational system has its roots in the 16th and 17th centuries when the Dominican, Franciscan and Jesuit orders established the colonies first schools and universities in their religious convents. In the 1930's public education became a major concern and a comprehensive programme to modernize the nations entire educational system began.

The ministry of Education, Departments and Municipalities are jointly responsible for financing and supervising state education. Secondary schools and universities are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which also supports many primary schools and direct technical education. Primary education is free and consists of two years of pre-school or kindergarten and five years of primary education, beginning at 6 years of age. Admission to secondary school requires successful completion of the five year primary programme.

A student may be admitted to an institution of higher education upon successful completion of 6 years of secondary school, the first four years of which cover general education. In their final two years, pupils can opt for a Commercial, Technical or Classical (Humanities and Scientific) course. Colombia has a literacy rate of over 90%. Secondary school pupils in their 5th and 6th years are expected to help in literacy programmes.

Colombia has 235 institutions of higher learning, including 13 state universities.

There are over 8 million students at the primary, secondary and higher education level.

English speaking schools in the city of SantaFe de Bogota:

Anglo Americano School
Calle 170 No 21-50
Tel: 677 7828

Anglo Colombiano School
Avenida 19 No 152-48
Tel: 216 9200

Los Nogales School,
Calle 202 No 52-05
Tel: 676 1023

Nuenva Granada School
Carrera 2E No 70-20
Tel: 212 3511

Health and Health Care

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness with travellers. Travellers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria or parasites, which are found universally throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (E coli, Salmonella, cholera and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis) or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe.

Wash hands frequently with soap and water.

Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (fizzy) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes. If this is not possible make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1 micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1 micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.

Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. **Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.**

If you will be visiting an area where there is risk from malaria take as directed your malaria prevention medication before, during and after travel.

Protect yourself from mosquito bites, by paying special attention to mosquito protection between dusk and dawn. This is when the type of mosquito whose bite transmits malaria is active.

Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and hats.

Use insect repellants that contain DEET.

In Colombia there is a social security system in charge of integral health services. However, it is recommended using private medical services.

Food

Colombian food is as heterogeneous as its landscape and as varied as the peoples habits. Typical dishes according to the regions are ajiaco, cuchuco, sobrecarriga, red beans, mondongo, coconut rice, sancocho, fish, fried bananas or patacones. Tamales and arepas are proper of the whole Colombian territory.

There are excellent typical restaurants through all the country.

Business Etiquette

Business people are expected to dress smartly, English is widely understood in many business circles, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an official translation service, and there are a number of commercial interpreter services. A command of Spanish is always appreciated. The best months for business visits are March to November. The business community generally takes holidays from September

to February, the driest months. It is advisable to avoid Barranquilla in June and July.

Travel Summary

You should be aware that the security situation in Colombia is constantly changing, and that you could be at serious risk in all parts of the country. If it is essential for you to travel, you should make arrangements for your security throughout your visit. There is a high threat of terrorism in Colombia and serious risk of kidnapping in many parts of the country, including major cities.

In 2005, more people were killed or injured in Colombia by landmines than in any other country in the world. There is a risk of crime throughout most of the country.

We strongly recommend that you obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling. We recommend you read the foreign and commonwealth office website on travel to Colombia, www.fco.gov.uk

Illicit Drugs

Illicit producer of coca, opium poppy, and cannabis. The worlds leading coca cultivator with 144,000 hectares in coca cultivation, producing a potential of 545 metres of pure cocaine, the worlds largest producer of coca derivatives, supplies cocaine to most of the US market and the great majority of other international drug markets.

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in the Abels Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date Abels cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy.