TRANSXPRESS



PRACTICAL GUIDE · INTERNATIONAL FREIGHT

Sea or air freight: how to choose for an import into Guinea

To bring goods into Guinea, you have two main routes: by ship to the port of Conakry or by air to Conakry airport. The freight price is only part of the answer. Urgency, the nature of the goods and the total landed cost matter just as much.

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01 Ship or aircraft: the short answer

Choose the ship for heavy, bulky or medium-value goods that can wait, and the aircraft for light, urgent or high-value shipments, when the time saved is worth more than the freight difference. In between, compare the total landed cost rather than the transport price alone.

In practice, most imports into Guinea (materials, machinery, containers of parts, food products) arrive by sea. Air freight is mainly used for urgent spare parts, electronic components, samples and documents.

02 Urgency: what does waiting cost?

The real question is not « how much does air freight cost » but « how much does waiting cost ». If a missing part stops a machine, a production line or a project, every extra day in transit has a price, often far higher than the freight difference.

- Machine or plant at a standstill: air freight is often justified, even for a heavy part.
- Planned replenishment: sea freight is enough if the order leaves early enough.
- Project start-up: the urgent part by air, the rest by sea.

> End-to-end time is not just transport: pickup at the supplier, waiting for departure, clearance in Conakry and delivery to site all count. Ask for a door-to-door estimate, not just port to port.

03 Weight, volume and dimensions

In air freight, the airline charges the higher of actual weight and volumetric weight, calculated from the package dimensions. Light but bulky goods (ducting, foam parts, furniture) are therefore

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expensive by air. Dense, compact goods (metal parts, bearings, tools) are better suited.

In sea freight, you pay either for a full container or for the volume or weight used in groupage. Out-of-gauge cargo (machines, structures, long parts) travels on open-top, flat rack or breakbulk, which is rarely possible by air beyond certain dimensions.

- Measure and weigh the packed items before asking for a quote.
- Better-designed packing reduces volumetric weight in air freight.
- For air freight, check that the dimensions fit through the door of the planned aircraft.

04 The value of the goods

The higher the value per kilo, the more attractive air freight becomes: freight weighs little in the total price, money tied up in transit is tied up for less time, and the risk of theft or breakage is often lower.

Also think about duties and taxes. In Guinea, they are generally calculated on the CIF value (cost, insurance and freight to the Guinean border). A higher air freight cost raises the CIF value, and therefore the duties and the 18 % VAT where it applies. Include this effect in your comparison.

05 Dangerous goods and special cases

Lithium batteries, gases, aerosols, paints, solvents, oils and some chemicals are subject to strict rules by air and by sea: classification, approved packaging, labelling and a shipper's declaration. Some products are banned on passenger aircraft, or on any aircraft, and can only travel by sea.

- Ask the supplier for the product's safety data sheet before choosing the mode.
- Always declare the true nature of the goods: undeclared dangerous goods may be refused, held or penalised.
- Some products require an authorisation or a specific document for import into Guinea: check with your customs broker.

06 Think in total landed cost

To compare the two options, add up every cost to your site, not just the freight:

1. Pickup at the supplier and origin charges.
2. Main freight and insurance.
3. Duties and taxes, calculated on the CIF value.
4. Arrival charges: port, terminal and shipping line, or the airport cargo warehouse.
5. Transport to site.
6. The cost of waiting: idle machinery, tied-up stock, late penalties under your own contract.

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A mixed solution is often best: the urgent items by air, the rest of the order by sea. On some routes, a combined sea-air option through a major hub can also be considered.

07 What we do for you

TransXpress organises pickup from your suppliers, ships by sea or air, clears goods at Conakry port or airport and delivers to your site. We compare the options on landed cost. Send us the packing list (weights, dimensions), the value, the pickup location and the date you need the goods.

? Frequently asked questions

Is air freight always more expensive than sea freight?

Per kilo, almost always. But for a light, urgent or high-value shipment, the total landed cost, including the cost of waiting, can favour air freight.

Does the transport mode change customs duties?

The rate does not change, but the calculation basis, the CIF value, includes freight and insurance. Higher freight therefore increases the amount of duties and taxes.

Can lithium batteries be flown to Conakry?

Depending on the battery type and packing, it is possible under strict conditions, or prohibited. The safety data sheet and the carrier's opinion are essential before shipping.

General information guide written by TransXpress. Customs rules and procedures change: every file is checked against the documents and the regulations in force. This guide is neither a quotation nor a commitment.

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Procurement, freight forwarding and customs, heavy transport and equipment rental in Guinea.

TransXpress supports mining, industrial and construction operators in Guinea and on the corridors to Mali and Sierra Leone. A name, a number and a few words are enough: we call you back within 24 business hours.

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