

PRACTICAL GUIDE · FREETOWN-CONAKRY CORRIDOR

Importing through the port of Freetown for Guinea or Sierra Leone: when and how

For most Guinean imports, the port of Conakry remains the natural gateway. But some goods arrive in Freetown, Sierra Leone: because the final destination is in Sierra Leone, because a shipping line calls there, or because the project is closer to the border. Here is how this corridor works and what to prepare.

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01 How does an import through Freetown work?

To import through the port of Freetown, the goods are discharged in Sierra Leone and then, depending on their destination, either cleared for Sierra Leone with the Sierra Leone customs, or placed under transit and taken by road to the Guinean border, where Guinean customs take charge of them for declaration in Guinea. In the second case, two customs administrations act one after the other, and every document must show Guinea as the destination from shipment.

02 When does Freetown make sense?

- The goods are bound for Sierra Leone: Freetown is then the normal port of arrival.
- The project or customer is in an area of Guinea close to the Sierra Leone border.
- The shipping line or sailing schedule available at origin serves Freetown rather than Conakry for the shipment concerned.
- A single operation delivers to both Sierra Leone and Guinea.

> The choice is not made on ocean freight alone: compare the total delivered cost to site, including port charges in Freetown, road transport, transit formalities and clearance in Guinea. Ask for a costed comparison of both options before booking.

03 Documents to prepare

- The bill of lading (B/L), the sea transport document issued by the shipping line, with Freetown as port of discharge and, for Guinea, the final destination in transit.
- The commercial invoice, packing list and certificate of origin, with the same description, weight and number of packages.

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- Documents in English are the rule in Sierra Leone; a translation may be useful on the Guinean side depending on the case.
- The transit and road documents required by both countries (transit document, guarantee, consignment note), under the regulation in force.
- Goods-specific certificates (phytosanitary, conformity) where required, valid for the country of destination.

> A bill of lading that does not mention transit to Guinea can lead to the goods being treated as an import into Sierra Leone. Correcting it after arrival takes time.

04 Road transit to Guinea

1. Vessel arrival in Freetown, shipping line and terminal formalities.
2. Transit declaration with the Sierra Leone customs and the required guarantee put in place, under the rules in force.
3. Loading on the truck, seals checked, road documents handed to the driver.
4. Road journey to the border post, with the checks set along the way.
5. Discharge of the transit on the Sierra Leone side and acceptance by Guinean customs at the border.
6. Declaration in Guinea, at the border office or the destination office depending on the case, payment of Guinean duties and taxes, and delivery.

Guinean duties and taxes are calculated under the ECOWAS CET as for an import through Conakry, with a customs duty band of 0, 5, 10, 20 or 35% depending on the goods, plus the set levies and 18% VAT where applicable. The exact amount is the one on the assessment.

05 Two customs administrations, one coordination

- Each customs administration applies its own rules, systems and hours: the file must satisfy both.
- The transit guarantee on the Sierra Leone side is released only after discharge at exit: keep the proof of border crossing.
- Containers remain under the shipping line's terms: plan the empty return to Freetown from the start to limit detention.
- A single contact on both sides of the border avoids information being lost between stages.

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06 What we do for you

TransXpress receives your containers at the port of Freetown, organises the transit and road transport to Guinea, then customs clearance and delivery to site, with a single contact. Send us the bill of lading or booking, the nature of the goods, the number of containers and the final destination.

? Frequently asked questions

Do you pay duties in Sierra Leone on goods bound for Guinea?

No, goods under proper transit do not pay Sierra Leone import duties. Port, transit and road charges apply, and Guinean duties are paid in Guinea.

Is Freetown cheaper than Conakry?

It depends on the goods, the shipping line and the final destination. Only a comparison of the total delivered cost to site can decide.

Can goods be cleared for Sierra Leone and Guinea in the same operation?

Yes, part of the goods can be cleared in Sierra Leone and the rest placed under transit to Guinea, provided the documents clearly separate the two lots.

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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ONE POINT OF CONTACT, FROM THE PORT TO YOUR SITE

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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