

The Kenya Import Playbook

Rules, ports, duties, timelines and paperwork — the complete guide to importing a vehicle into Kenya.

Country	Kenya
Capital	Nairobi
Drive side	Left (RHD)
Currency	Kenyan Shilling (KES)
Main port	Mombasa
Sea transit	18–35 days
Customs authority	Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA)

Import Rules

Drive configuration	Right-hand drive required.
Vehicle age limit	Maximum 8 years from first registration at time of import.
Condition	Roadworthy. Pre-shipment inspection verifies KEBS-approved requirements.
Customs authority	Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA).
Tax & VAT	Import duty (25%), excise duty, and VAT (16%) applied on CIF value.
Standards	KEBS pre-export inspection required. Safety standards must be met.

Major Ports

Mombasa	Principal deep-water port and main vehicle import hub for East Africa.
Nairobi ICD	Inland container depot serving the capital for customs clearance.

Shipping Options

- Ro-Ro Shipping — Roll-on/Roll-off vessels. Cost-effective for standard vehicles. Frequent sailings from Japan, UK & UAE.

- Container Shipping — Enclosed protection. Recommended for prestige and high-value vehicles or multi-car shipments.
- Air Freight — Fastest option, reserved for time-sensitive high-end shipments.
- Inland / Transit Routing — Onward road/rail transport from Mombasa to Nairobi or upcountry destinations.

Required Documentation

- UK/JP V5C Registration Certificate (original)
- Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Commercial invoice
- Packing list
- Certificate of Origin (where required)
- Insurance certificate
- Import Permit / Customs Entry Forms (destination)
- Copy of buyer's passport / national ID

Estimated Timelines

Vehicle sourcing & prep	1-2 weeks depending on spec & auction availability
Documentation & export	3-5 working days
Sea freight transit	18-35 days at sea
Customs clearance	5-10 working days after landing
Total end-to-end	6-12 weeks door-to-delivery

Import Tax Breakdown

Import duty	25% of CIF value
Excise duty	20% (petrol <1500cc), 25% (diesel <2500cc), 35% (petrol >2500cc), 35% (SUVs)
VAT	16% on (CIF + duty + excise)
Railway Development Levy	2% of CIF
IDF Fee	3.5% of CIF (min KES 5,000)
Age restriction	First registration ≤ 8 years. Vehicles over 6 years attract a 20% additional levy.

Mombasa Port — In Detail

Mombasa Port is the main harbour and the primary entry point for East Africa. Vehicles arrive at the Mombasa Inland Container Depot (ICD) via KEBS pre-export inspection (PVOC) — a mandatory step arranged with a KEBS-approved inspector in the country of origin.

On arrival, the importer presents documents to KRA for customs clearance. Standard vehicle customs clears in 5-10 working days. Budget 7-14 days at Mombasa. Port congestion may

add buffer days.

Local Market Advice

The Kenyan used-car market is capital-scarce. Nairobi buyers expect clean service histories and low mileage. Japanese-spec RHD vehicles are the norm; low-mileage GCC-spec and UK cars stand out positively.

SUVs and 4WDs dominate — avoid basic-trim limited-edition sedans. Colours drive value; whites and blacks command premium. Budget for import duty + excise + VAT (roughly 30–35% of value), plus valuation, port handling, customs agent fees, and inland transport.

Why Import with Arcana X Motors

- 10+ years export experience
- Full documentation support end-to-end
- Trusted shipping partners across Ro-Ro & container
- Prestige & commercial vehicles handled
- Private and trade clients welcome

Contact — Arcana X Motors

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Import rules and tax rates are subject to change. Confirm current requirements with the relevant Kenyan authorities before shipment.