

Shipping & Customs

Cheat Sheet

A printable 6-page summary of everything you need to know to import a used car or Chinese EV from China to your country. Use it as a checklist on the day your shipment leaves port, or hand it to your customs broker.

In this sheet

1. Three shipping modes (RoRo / 20HQ / 40HQ) and when to pick each
2. Transit time table from 3 Chinese ports to 10 destinations
3. Indicative duty + VAT rates for 10 key markets
4. Incoterms 4-way comparison (FOB / CFR / CIF / DDP)
5. 10-document customs checklist
6. Common mistakes and how to avoid them

Contact

Partnership team:	yuhua0095@gmail.com
WhatsApp:	+86 ... (request in email)
Shanghai HQ:	Pudong New Area, China
Response SLA:	1 hour first reply, 24 hours full quote

1. Three shipping modes

Mode	Cars	Cost vs RoRo	EV?	Best for
RoRo	1	Cheapest	Limited	Used cars, single shipments
Container 20HQ	1	+USD 600-900	Yes	EV, high-value, non-running
Container 40HQ	2	Cheapest/car when split	Yes	Two-car batches

2. Transit time (days) - sample lanes

Destination	RoRo Shanghai	Cnt Shanghai	Cnt Nansha
Vladivostok	7-10	10-14	-
Jebel Ali UAE	28-32	22-28	20-25
Dammam SA	30-35	26-32	24-28
Mombasa KE	34-38	28-35	26-32
Lagos NG	45-52	38-48	36-45
Durban ZA	38-42	32-38	30-36
Alexandria EG	40-46	34-42	32-40
Algiers DZ	42-48	36-44	34-42
Almaty KZ (overland)	-	40-48	Khorgos 7-14d

Add 5-10 days for China-side customs (export declaration + CIQ) before the vessel sails. Add 3-7 days for destination customs after arrival.

3. Indicative duty + VAT (2026)

These are indicative spot rates - actual depends on engine size, vehicle age, EV vs ICE, and free-trade agreements. Confirm with destination customs broker.

Country	ICE customs	EV customs	VAT	Other
Russia	30% (>3yr)	15-20%	20%	Utilisation fee
UAE	5%	0% new EV	5%	Salik road fee
Saudi Arabia	5%	5%	15%	SABER fee
Kenya	25%	25%	25%	Excise 20% + RDL 2.5%
Nigeria	35%	35%	7.5%	Surcharge 20%
South Africa	25%	0% till 2027	14%	ITAC permit
Egypt	40-135%	0% new	14%	Engine-size based
Kazakhstan (EAEU)	10%	10%	12%	EAC mark
Algeria	30-50%	0-20%	19%	VRPC fee
Ethiopia	35%	15%	15%	Excise 35-100%

Worked example - BYD Atto 3 to UAE

FOB Shanghai	USD 22,000
Ocean freight (40HQ split)	USD 1,100
110% CIF insurance (~0.55%)	USD 127
Pre-shipment inspection	USD 80
Total CIF Dubai	USD 23,307
UAE customs duty (5%)	USD 1,165
UAE VAT 5%	USD 1,224
Landed cost before ESMA/RTA	USD 25,696

4. Incoterms - who pays for what

Term	Seller pays	Buyer pays	Risk transfers at
FOB	Up to vessel rail	Freight + insurance + duty	Onboard at China port
CFR	Freight to dest port	Insurance + duty	Onboard at China port
CIF	Freight + insurance	Duty + onward	Onboard at China port
DDP	Everything to your door	Nothing	At delivery address

We typically quote CIF (Cost + Insurance + Freight) to your destination port. You handle import duty + VAT + onward delivery. DDP available on request but adds 8-12% to total.

5. Customs documents - the 10 you need

01. Commercial Invoice (FOB value, VIN, make/model)
02. Packing List (container number, weight, dimensions)
03. Bill of Lading - original courier (DHL/FedEx)
04. Certificate of Origin (Form A or non-pref)
05. Pre-shipment Inspection Certificate (50+ point)
06. Lithium Battery Declaration (UN3480) - EV only
07. Conformity Certificate (SBKTS/GCC/KEBS/SONCAP/GOEIC)
08. Marine Insurance Policy (110% CIF)
09. China Export Customs Declaration
10. VIN photo + Dispatch Report (vessel + voyage + B/L)

6. Common mistakes - and how to avoid them

01. Paying full balance against scanned B/L copy

>> Never. Original B/L is what releases cargo. Scan-released cargo has been a fraud vector. We courier the original.

02. Skipping pre-shipment inspection

>> It saves USD 80 today and costs you USD 5,000 later when paint defects, OBD codes or wrong VIN surface at port.

03. Buying a used car older than destination age limit

>> Many markets ban used cars over 3-8 years (Egypt 3yr, Algeria 3yr, Kenya 8yr). Check before deposit.

04. Not having a customs broker pre-arranged

>> Without a broker your container can incur USD 150/day demurrage from day 8. Arrange before vessel sails.

05. Wrong shipping mode for EV

>> Most RoRo carriers reject lithium-battery EVs. Default container (20HQ or 40HQ) for any EV unless explicitly approved RoRo.

06. Under-declaring FOB value

>> Tempting to lower duty - but mismatch with insurance value voids your insurance and triggers customs investigation.

07. Forgetting Lithium Battery Declaration for EV

>> Carriers reject the booking at the last minute. We file 7 days before vessel; you confirm SoC 30-60%.

08. Not asking for SoH battery screenshot before deposit

>> Used Chinese EVs can have 75-85% SoH. Demand manufacturer-app screenshot from BYD/Zeekr/NIO before paying.

09. Assuming all flags = same right-hand drive

>> Kenya, SA, Tanzania, Zambia, UK = RHD only. Algeria, Egypt, UAE = LHD only. Don't ship the wrong one.

10. Booking a container with no consolidation partner

>> Single-car 40HQ wastes USD 1,000+. Consolidate with another buyer or use 20HQ for a single high-value unit.

7. Glossary - 25 terms in plain English

B/L	Bill of Lading - the original document that proves ownership of cargo at destination port
CIF	Cost + Insurance + Freight - price includes ocean transport and insurance to destination port
FOB	Free On Board - price is for cargo loaded on the vessel; you pay freight onward
CFR	Cost + Freight - like CIF but no insurance
DDP	Delivered Duty Paid - seller handles everything to your door, including destination duty
RoRo	Roll-on/Roll-off - cars drive onto specialised carrier vessel
HQ	High Cube container - 9.5ft tall (vs standard 8.5ft) - needed for SUVs
20HQ	20-foot high-cube container - fits 1 car
40HQ	40-foot high-cube container - fits 2 cars
BAF	Bunker Adjustment Factor - fuel surcharge on top of base freight
THC	Terminal Handling Charge - port loading/unloading fee
CIQ	China Inspection & Quarantine - China-side export inspection
CO	Certificate of Origin - proves where the goods were made
PSI	Pre-Shipment Inspection - 50+ point check at our yard before loading
UN3480	Dangerous-goods code for lithium-ion battery vehicles (full EV)
SoC	State of Charge - EV battery charge level at shipping (must be 30-60%)
SoH	State of Health - EV battery health percentage (75-85% is normal for 2-3yr used)
SBKTS	Russia/EAEU type-approval certificate for vehicles
KEBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards - issues PVoC import certificate
SONCAP	Nigeria Standards Org Conformity Assessment Programme
GCC CoC	Gulf Cooperation Council Certificate of Conformity (UAE/Saudi/etc)
ETD/ETA	Estimated Time of Departure / Arrival
Demurrage	Per-day late-pickup fee at destination port (~USD 150/day)
Telex Release	Electronic B/L release without original courier - faster but riskier
General Average	Rare maritime law - if vessel jettisons cargo, all consignees share the loss pro-rata

This cheat sheet is published for educational use. All duty rates, transit times and compliance requirements are indicative as of January 2026 and change with policy updates. Confirm specifics with our partnership team or your local customs broker before shipping. GoldenLaneAuto - yuhua0095@gmail.com