



Make sure that your presents sent abroad are delivered on time – and avoiding extra charges

Published: December 19, 2025

Author:

Online version:

<https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/make-sure-that-your-presents-sent-abroad-are-delivered-on-time-and-avoiding-extra-charges/>



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Parcelhero's top 5 hacks to beat extra charges and get your presents delivered on time

They tell us:

Last Christmas, failure to give enough information about parcels sent abroad caused an average delay of over 11 days at Customs. Parcelhero



shares its 5 Top Tips to avoid Customs delays and unexpected charges.

Friday, 19 December is many international couriers' recommended final deadline for sending parcels to most EU and other overseas destinations. The global delivery expert **Parcelhero** is urging people to send their international Christmas parcels as soon as possible and label them correctly.

It says that 12% of all gifts shipped overseas failed to arrive in time for Christmas last year, simply because they had been sent too late or were not properly described in the Customs invoice form. Many more had unexpected Customs fees imposed on them that the receiver was forced to pay.

Parcelhero's Head of Consumer Research, David Jinks M.I.L.T., says: 'As a nation we spend a lot of money on the presents we send abroad. The average value for an overseas gift parcel delivered through Parcelhero last Christmas was £129. That shows how much we care about loved ones overseas. However, it does also mean we ought to put a little bit of that care into ensuring their presents arrive on time.'

'To ensure international parcels clear Customs in time and avoid extra charges, here are our top 5 Christmas Customs hacks:

1 Mark your parcel as a 'gift': When shipping abroad, senders must be aware that either they or the receiver may have to pay import duty and tax. Different countries decide their own levels of import duties and taxes. However, there are many countries that have quite generous exemption levels on gifts or have quite a high value threshold before duties and taxes are imposed.

'For example, the EU has a limit of €45 (about £39), providing the gift is clearly labelled. Gift parcels of €45 or below will not incur any duties or VAT. Similarly, the US won't impose charges on gifts below \$100 (around £74), providing the items are labelled as gifts. Canada's gift limit for duty/tax exemption is CAD \$60 per gift (around £32). Australia doesn't have a separate gift limit but, for non-commercial packages that have a value of



AUD \$1,000 (around £496) or less, there are generally no duties, taxes or charges at the border. Unfortunately, many other countries have far less generous gift limits and some have strict rules. For example, in South Africa a person can receive only two gifts per calendar year, of which the value must not exceed R1 400 (around £60) for each parcel.

2 State clearly what is inside: 'It's always nice to give someone a surprise gift but when sending presents abroad be sure to specify what is inside on all documentation. On average, parcels labelled simply "gift" or "present" were held 20% longer in Customs last Christmas. Declare the contents and value of each item inside a parcel on the Customs invoice.

3 Don't wrap your presents: 'Customs officials aren't known for their delicate touch. Woe betide meticulously gift-wrapped items if the sender has skimmed on the Customs form. The official will have to rip open the beautiful parcel to check its contents. The resulting tangle may not be a pretty sight when it finally arrives. In fact, Customs officials may check any parcel, whatever the invoice wording, so we recommend using easily opened gift bags rather than wrapping presents.

4 Consider paying duties in advance: 'If your package is worth over the gift limit or de minimis threshold, it is the receiver who normally has to pay. To add insult to injury, the receiver will also read exactly what the contents of the parcel are when they pay, spoiling the surprise. To avoid taking the shine off your gift giving, consider paying Customs fees in advance.

'It's quite simple to arrange. Just contact Parcelhero's customer service team as soon as you have completed your booking, as it must be arranged before your parcel is collected. Be warned, however, that there are additional upfront charges for this service. However, the good news is that when your parcel arrives at Customs Parcelhero will pay any duty and tax on your behalf and refund any difference on your deposit.

5 Don't send items on the naughty list: 'We've been making a list, and checking it twice, to reveal what items are naughty or nice when sending them abroad this Christmas. There are



two sets of rules to watch out for when shipping abroad. Firstly, individual countries have their own Customs regulations and, secondly, each courier has its own rules about what they prohibit from being sent. Parcelhero's own [prohibited items page](#) covers not only the items that we won't ship ourselves but it also includes all the major couriers' individual prohibited items lists. You may find that one courier will accept an item that others may refuse, so study the list carefully!

'Take the example of Christmas puddings and treats. If you want to send home-baked items, such as a Christmas pudding, the bad news is that no international courier will handle these foods because it's impossible to determine when they may go off. Imagine the rotting result of any delivery stuck at Customs for too long!

'Store-bought puddings may be OK. However, many couriers require a long shelf life, with a best-before date over six months away. It must also be unopened in the original manufacturer's packaging, the food label must list all the ingredients and the best-before date must be displayed on the packaging.

'There are other unexpected restrictions on food and drink you need to be aware of. For example, if you are sending chocolate Christmas treats to the USA, don't send chocolate Kinder Surprise Eggs with a little toy inside - America doesn't allow any food that has non-edible components.

'Sending parcels abroad isn't a minefield but it can be confusing for people who only send items once a year. That's why we recommend everyone reads our Customs clearance guide to take all the stress out of sending presents overseas: <https://www.parcelhero.com/en-gb/support/customs-importduties-taxes>