International Traveler: Souvenirs

Last Modified:

The United States restricts or prohibits the entry of many agricultural products, which can carry foreign pests and diseases that harm American agriculture and our environment. Help us keep American agriculture healthy by following the guidance on this page about products you may want to bring into the United States.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products to U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. You must also tell them if you visited a farm or were in contact with animals before traveling to the United States.

U.S. agricultural inspectors will examine your items to be sure they meet entry requirements and do not harbor harmful foreign pests or diseases. U.S. inspectors have the authority to make a final determination about whether your products can enter the country. We recommend that you keep receipts and original packaging of agricultural products as proof of their country of origin.

As long as you declare all of the agricultural products you are bringing with you, you will not face any penalties—even if an inspector determines that they cannot enter the country.

Souvenirs You CAN and CANNOT Bring Back to the United States

Expand All

Souvenirs (driftwood, handicrafts, palm fronds, rocks, beach sand, peat and seashells)

Please think carefully when buying/collecting souvenirs abroad: just because an item is for sale or you found it does not mean that you can legally bring it home to the United States. When purchasing souvenirs, consider where that item might have come from. Permits may be required to lawfully bring wildlife or plants, including parts and crafted products, into the United States. Even if a permit isn't required, you may not be able to demonstrate that the item can lawfully enter the United States if you cannot provide documentation confirming the species of wildlife or plant. Be sure to declare all such products at entry: by making informed choices, you can avoid having your souvenir items confiscated upon returning home.

Driftwood

Travelers may enter with driftwood—wood that was naturally weathered by saltwater to the degree that no pest risk exists—that is free of soil or other organic material. Driftwood must be declared and is subject to inspection at entry.

Grapevine Wreaths and Baskets

Handicraft items such as wreaths and baskets woven from grapevines (*Vitis*) from any country may enter only if the inspector at the port of entry determines that all of the vines are completely dried, dead and incapable of propagation. If found to be otherwise, the products will be seized and destroyed.

Handicrafts Made in China that Contain Plant/Wooden parts

Handicraft-type items made in China—whether purchased in China or in another country—that contain wood or other plant parts may present a pest risk. Invasive wood-boring forest pests can emerge from such products long after purchase. Crafts made with natural materials like corn, wheat, rice, straw, grasses, sticks with bark, or bamboo also may be contaminated with invasive insects and plant diseases, or may contain prohibited plant parts such as seeds.

All such handicrafts made in China must be declared and presented for inspection upon entry. Learn more (89.97 KB) about guidelines regarding the importation of handicrafts.

For further questions, or to determine if you will need a permit and/or other documents to import a handicraft from China, please contact USDA's Plant Import Information Line at 877-770-5990 (toll-free) or by email at plantproducts.permits@aphis.usda.gov.

Palm Fronds and Articles Crafted from Palm Fronds

The entry of palm fronds and articles made from palm fronds into the United States is regulated to prevent the entry of the red palm mite. Travelers may enter the United States with single palm fronds that are completely dried or processed—subject to inspection.

Fresh, green, and/or pliable palm fronds are prohibited entry. Craft items made of palm fronds, such as baskets, bracelets, fans, hats, headband, napkin rings, and placements **are prohibited entry unless** the item was processed (bleached, dyed, painted, or shellacked) beyond just crafting/weaving.

Date Palm Fronds

Passengers may enter the United States with dried (not green) date palm fronds and products made from dried date palm fronds from any country except Algeria or Morocco, subject to inspection. **All date palm fronds (*Phoenix spp.*) and products made from date palm fronds originating in Algeria or Morocco are prohibited entry**.

For further information, please contact USDA's Plant Import Information Line at 877-770-5990 (toll-free) or by email at plantproducts.permits@aphis.usda.gov

Rocks/Stones, Beach Sand, and Irish Peat

Travelers entering with souvenirs such as rocks and stones, beach sand, or Irish peat must declare and present items for inspection at entry. The inspector will examine the items to determine if they are entirely free of soil or other organic matter (such as algae) and make a determination as to whether the items are enterable.

Seashells

Although many varieties of seashells collected from saltwater beaches are enterable without restriction, certain countries limit the collection, sale, and export of shells and shell products. The importation or exportation of certain species of seashells (e.g., queen conch and nautilus) from some countries are restricted under international agreements. For more information on the status of seashells, coral, and a wide variety of other items you may find offered for sale in gift shops overseas, please review the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) import information.

USDA does **restrict/regulate** the entry of land snails/shells and many species of freshwater snails/shells, because many foreign snail species are considered to be invasive pests that could cause harm to U.S. agriculture and the environment.

Need Help?

If you can't find your commodity listed above, browse the Agricultural Import Requirements Database.

If you still have questions about a particular plant or plant products (fruits, vegetables, plant parts, seeds, soil, or souvenirs made from wood or plants), contact us.

Phone: 877-770-5990 (toll-free)

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

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