

Simple Living Guide on USPS Shipping Overseas by Daria Perse

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Simple Living Guide

On:

USPS Shipping Overseas - How to Ship Internationally

By Daria Perse

Language editing: N. Hunt

NOTE: All of my articles and e-Books are the result of personal experiences, opinions or – most likely – descriptions of how I feel about things. I do not claim to be an expert in any area. Therefore, the decision to use the information contained in my written work is your (the reader's) soul responsibility.

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Introduction

If you're like me – shipping a lot to domestic locations, international addresses or both – it makes sense to have some basic value stamps and forms at home at all times. This way you might save some time (and gas) since it's possible to mail a lot of things by just dropping them in the nearest mailbox instead of standing in the line at the post office every Saturday (or even more often).

The USPS.com official website is big and might be quite confusing to use. Hence, I did the work (research) for you and wrote this summary of things you should be aware of whenever mailing abroad. My purpose is clear: to help you reduce the costs and time wasted, and to make better choices of which service to use when mailing a specific item.

Use this ebook as a reference book. It might be a good idea to read the whole thing once. After that, check out the table of contents and simply skip to the page/chapter dealing with your current concern.

Keep in mind that I'd be happy to hear from you. You're welcome to use the feedback form on my webpage www.TheSunflowerGardens.com or email me via contact info at the end of this Simple Living Guide.

1. Airmail Letter Post

Airmail Letter Post is best for comparatively fast shipments (letters or envelopes) that weigh **up to 4 pounds**. Estimated delivery time: 4 to 10 business days.

NOTE: If you're shipping an envelope that weighs more than 7 oz. and you're not in too much hurry, consider Economy Letter Post instead.

Letter: 1 oz. or less

Whenever you need to mail a letter abroad, make it simple. An ordinary #10 envelope (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") containing 4 sheets of regular letter-size paper (not heavy weight), should still weigh less than 1 oz. You don't even need postal scales for that.

That translates into \$.84 for postage to Europe and many other countries, \$.63 to Canada or Mexico (current rates: summer 2006). If you're writing a lot, keep some stamps at home and you can just drop a 1 oz. envelope in any collecting box.

- No customs forms required.
- Delivery time: 4 to 10 business days.

Letter: more than 1 oz.

If your letter is bigger and heavier than the one described above, you'll either need postal scales or go to the post office.

- Delivery time: 4 to 10 business days
- Customs form required: PS Form **2976** (green and white) or **2976-A** (see Chapter 7: Which Form – When?).

2. Airmail Parcel Post

Global airmail parcel post is primarily for packages that have to reach the addressee in 10 business days or so. For the weight up to 4 lb use Form 2976, for heavier packages (4 lb+) use Form 2976-A. Form 2976-A is also required for all packages with contents value over \$200.00. For more details see Chapter 7 (Which Form – When?).

3. Priority Mail

International priority mail is a fast and reliable way of mailing important documents and similar. It costs a lot more than airmail letter post, therefore choose *priority mail* for priority mailings only. Use the free *priority mail envelope* (available at the post office or online).

Note: *International priority mail* is not available for all countries.

4. Express Mail

Express mail is the fastest way of shipping and also the most expensive. The official sturdy carton *express mail envelope* is available for free at the post office and online.

Note: *Express mail* is not available for shipping to all parts of the world.

5. Economy Letter Post

Don't even think of shipping an envelope via *economy letter post* if it weighs less than 8 oz. It is pricier than *airmail letter post* (and a lot slower!). Delivery time is 4 to 6 weeks. That sounds like a long time but I assure you, this is a great way of shipping heavier envelopes (8 oz. +). The rates of *economy letter post* are much lower than for *airmail letter post*. Any time you're mailing photos and similar things that are not time-sensitive, that's the service to choose.

6. Economy Parcel Post

For packages 2 lb+. Again, delivery time is 4 to 6 weeks, which for example means that you would have to send a Christmas present at the beginning of November for the package to arrive to the addressee before Christmas. *Economy parcel post* is considerably cheaper than *airmail parcel post*.

7. Which Form – When?

Both customs forms (2976, 2976-A) are available free of charge at the post office. You can also order them online once you have an account with USPS.com.

Another option is to print the customs forms online. Unfortunately, that's not available to anyone. This service has been introduced comparatively recently and it requires an account with USPS.com. If you feel it could be useful to you and providing you don't mind putting in some effort in the beginning, go ahead and try it out.

NOTE: The form requirement varies by destination country. The instructions outlined below work for most European countries.

IMPORTANT: Check applicable customs restrictions for the destination country. Some items are prohibited. Since your shipment will most probably be inspected by the customs on arrival, don't send anything you're not supposed to.

Use Form 2976 for:

- Envelopes up to 16 oz. (1 lb) with contents value under \$400.00 (*priority letter post, airmail letter post, economy letter post*).

Use Form 2976-A for:

- Envelopes up to 16 oz. (1 lb) with contents value over \$400.00 (*priority letter post, airmail letter post, economy letter post*).
- Envelopes that weigh 16 oz. or more (*priority letter post, airmail letter post, economy letter post*).
- Envelopes with contents value \$400.00 or more (*priority letter post, airmail letter post, economy letter post*).
- All packages, regardless of weight and value (*airmail parcel post, economy parcel post*).

8. When to Purchase *Shipping Insurance*?

I had some bad experiences in the past when several of my packages shipped overseas mysteriously disappeared before they had ever reached their destination. Therefore, I now secure the shipments of gifts and similar with *shipping insurance* or *registered mail* special service. Sometimes I add *return receipt* as well.

Shipping insurance protects you from the loss of/damage to the package. In case of loss, the insurance is paid to the recipient (not the sender).

Shipping insurance is only available for parcel post to certain countries.

The fee depends on the value of the package.

9. When to Purchase *Registered Mail*?

For envelopes sent internationally, an additional protection designed to ensure delivery is *registered mail*. There's a flat fee of \$7.90 for this special service. When you're mailing something of greater value to either you or the recipient, it's well worth paying it.

PS Form **3806** is used as a receipt for *registered mail*.

10. When to Purchase *Return Receipt*?

PS Form **2865** is a *return receipt* for international mail. This pink card provides the sender with the evidence of delivery. It is completed (signed) by the recipient in the destination country and returned to you via *air mail*.

Whenever you need a proof of delivery (for instance when sending documents, higher value items etc.), paying a flat fee of \$1.85 is a smart expense.

The *return receipt* service is only available with *shipping insurance*, *recorded mail* or *global express mail* (to some countries).

11. When to Buy Postal Scales?

You can buy cheap and reliable mechanical postal scales (up to 5 lb) for less than \$20 (I don't have the prices from around the country) in every office store. There's no need to waste your money on electronic scales – which are expensive and tend to break down – except if you're really mailing (and weighing) a lot. Or maybe you simply prefer the accuracy of the electronic display.

The question is – do you really need them?

If your answer is 'yes' to most of the following questions, you should probably consider purchasing postal scales:

- Will you use the scales?
- Are you mailing frequently (smaller packages and envelopes)?
- Do you want to reduce the number of your visits to the post office?
- Will you use the directions in this ebook and calculate the postage at home?

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