

Sea Freight from China to Alajuela

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☐ Sea Freight

China → Alajuela · via SJO air / Moin sea · clearance by Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica



Cargo handling on the China-Alajuela lane.

Alajuela is free-zone belt around the international airport, and it is served through SJO air / Moin sea. That combination is what actually sets your delivery date on this lane — the inland leg is same-day, so the clearance date is effectively the delivery date.

Clearance itself is handled by Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica, and typical dwell at the gateway runs 3-8 days.

What you will pay on arrival in Costa Rica

Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica assesses duty and tax on cargo arriving for Alajuela consignees. Current regime: IVA 13%; duty 0-15% under the Central American tariff, plus selective consumption tax on some goods, with a de-minimis position of USD 500 for courier consignments.

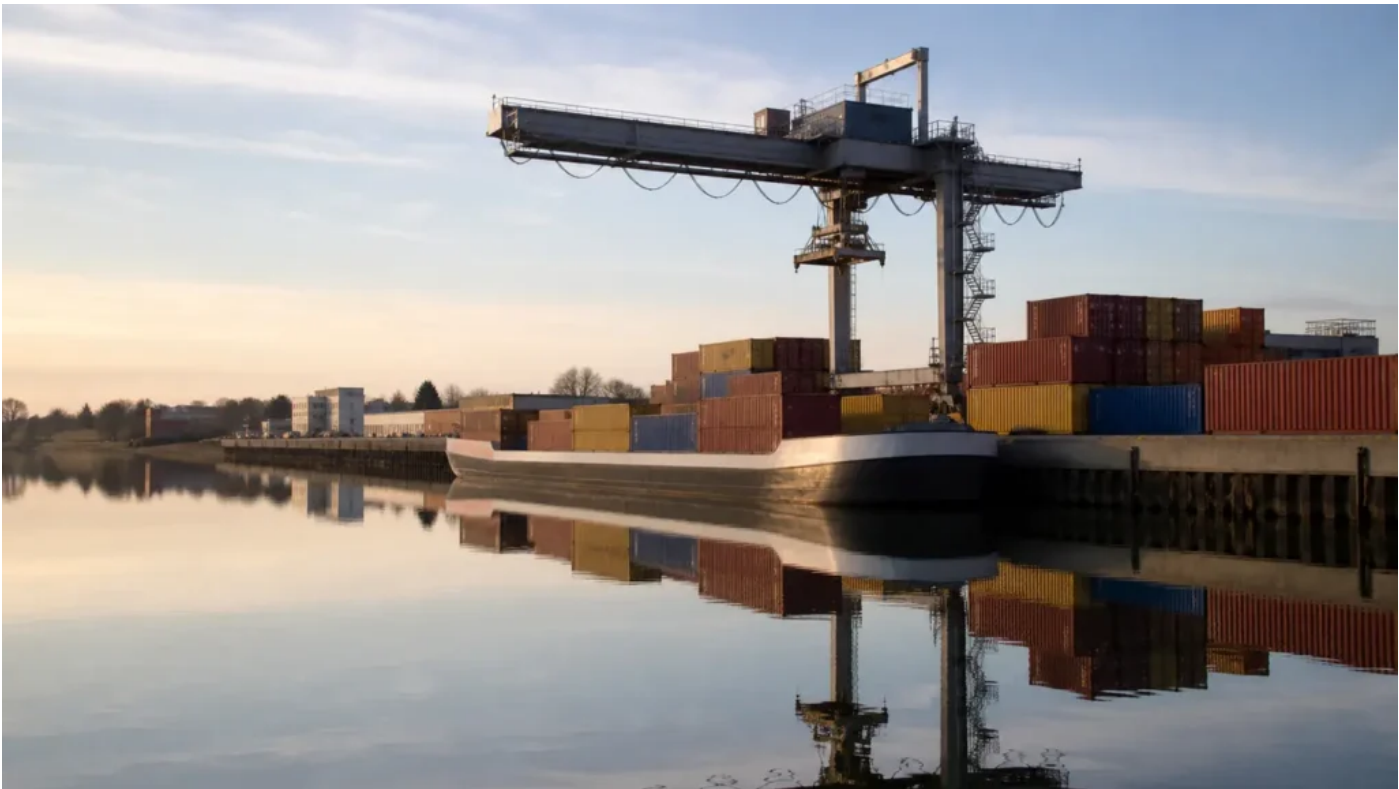
Conformity is the part most first-time importers underestimate: Ministry of Health registration for food, cosmetics and devices; conformity for regulated electricals. Getting this wrong is expensive because it usually cannot be fixed after the cargo has landed.

Restrictions and known friction points for Costa Rica: Free-zone versus ordinary import status changes the duty treatment entirely. Health registration must be held by the consignee for regulated goods.

How this lane actually runs

Moín on the Caribbean side handles most container volume and receives Asian cargo transshipped through Panama or Cartagena; Caldera on the Pacific is smaller but sometimes faster for west-coast consignees. Costa Rica's free-zone regime is heavily used by medical-device and electronics manufacturers, and inputs moving into a free zone are treated very differently from ordinary imports.

Sea gateways used	Moín (APM Terminals, Limón), Caldera
Sea transit, China to gateway	24-32 calendar days
Gateway serving Alajuela	SJO air / Moín sea
Inland leg to Alajuela	Same day from the gateway
Typical clearance / dwell	3-8 days
Peak season to plan around	Sep-Nov



Handling on the SJO air / Moín sea routing serving Alajuela.

What to sort out before the cargo leaves China

- Get the conformity paperwork moving early: Ministry of Health registration for food, cosmetics and devices; conformity for regulated electricals.
- Plan around the China-side windows too: Chinese New Year and Golden Week both compress capacity on the Costa Rica lane.
- Book earlier than the transit time suggests during Sep–Nov, when space on this lane tightens.
- Put the Alajuela delivery address, contact name and phone number on the invoice, not just the packing list.
- Confirm the consignee in Alajuela can act as importer of record — Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica will not release cargo to an unregistered party.
- Compare gross weight against volumetric weight ($L \times W \times H \div 6000$) — the higher figure is what gets billed on air and express.

Frequently asked questions

How long does shipping from China to Alajuela take?

China to the Costa Rica gateway is 24–32 calendar days. On top of that, allow 3–8 days of clearance with Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica and a same-day inland leg to Alajuela.

What duty and tax will I pay importing into Alajuela?

Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica applies: IVA 13%; duty 0–15% under the Central American tariff, plus selective consumption tax on some goods. The de-minimis position is USD 500 for courier consignments. Under a DDP arrangement these are pre-paid, so nothing is collected on arrival in Alajuela.

Which port or airport does cargo for Alajuela clear through?

Cargo for Alajuela is routed via SJO air / Moín sea. Sea gateways for Costa Rica are Moín (APM Terminals, Limón), Caldera; air gateways are SJO (San José). We pick whichever gives the shortest total door time for your address.

When is the busiest time on the China–Costa Rica lane?

Space and rates tighten around Sep–Nov, plus the China-side windows of Chinese New Year in January or February and Golden Week in early October. Book one to two weeks earlier in those periods.

What certification do I need for Costa Rica?

For regulated goods, plan for: Ministry of Health registration for food, cosmetics and devices; conformity for regulated electricals. Missing conformity paperwork is the single most common cause of a hold, and in most cases it cannot be remedied once the cargo has arrived.

Is sea freight cheaper than air freight into Alajuela?

Per kilo, yes — usually by a wide margin. The trade-off is time: 24–32 calendar days by sea versus 4–6 business days by air to the Costa Rica gateway, before clearance and the same-day inland leg. The crossover point is normally somewhere between 100 and 300 kg depending on the density of your cargo.

Other delivery cities in Costa Rica

- [China to Puerto Limon](#)
- [China to San Jose](#)
- [China to Cartago](#)
- [China to Heredia](#)
- [China to Limon](#)
- [China to Liberia](#)

[All Costa Rica freight information →](#)

References & official sources

Duty rates, thresholds and conformity requirements for Costa Rica change by ministerial decision, sometimes mid-year. The figures on this page are buyer-planning references, not a customs ruling — confirm the current position for your own HS code with Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica or your broker before you ship.

- [Dirección General de Aduanas](#)
- [WTO — Tariff Profiles \(applied MFN duty by country\)](#)
- [IATA — Lithium battery shipping guidance \(PI 965–970\)](#)
- [World Bank — Logistics Performance Index](#)
- [ICC — Incoterms 2020 rules \(DDP, DAP, FOB definitions\)](#)
- [IPPC — ISPM 15 wood packaging standard](#)

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Shipping by industry

This page covers the route and clearance picture for the destination. Packing, classification and the compliance step that actually holds a shipment depend on what you are sending — these guides cover that by commodity.

- [Connectors Electronic Components & Semiconductors](#)
- [Consumer Electronics Consumer Electronics & Smart Devices](#)
- [Air Conditioning Equipment Home Appliances, HVAC & Commercial](#)
- [Kitchenware Furniture & Home Products](#)
- [Home Textiles Textiles, Apparel, Footwear & Leather](#)
- [Medical Device Medical, Laboratory & Precision Instruments](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment Fire, Safety & Traffic Products](#)
- [Beauty Equipment Beauty, Personal Care & Wellness](#)

- [Inflatable Products Toys, Sports, Outdoor & Leisure](#)
- [Artificial Flowers Consumer Goods & Gifts](#)
- [Retail Products E-commerce & Retail Channels](#)
- [Sheet Metal Metal Products & Industrial Components](#)

[All 139 industry guides →](#)

Checking the Costa Rica duty position yourself

Duty and tax figures on this page are planning estimates. The binding assessment is made by Dirección General de Aduanas de Costa Rica against your declared HS code at the time of entry; where the amount is material, verify the current rate through [ITC Market Access Map](#) before committing to an order.

Classification drives everything downstream: the same carton can attract very different duty depending on the heading it lands in, and the structure those headings come from is [the World Customs Organization Harmonized System](#). If your product sits near a boundary between two headings, resolve it before shipping rather than at the border.

For ocean cargo, restricted commodities move under [the IMO's IMDG Code](#), and the container has to be declared and stowed accordingly. Batteries, flammables and corrosives all have a compliant ocean path; what causes rolled bookings is finding out about them after the container is packed.

For a wider view of how importing into Costa Rica actually works — documentation norms, inspection behavior, the paperwork that tends to hold shipments — the [U.S. ITA guide to Costa Rica customs regulations](#) is a useful independent read alongside our own lane notes.

Watch: the process behind this route

This guide covers routing and clearance for Alajuela. The video below covers the wider shipping process that sits around it.

Sea Freight Shipping Process for Beginners: Complete Factory-to-Door Guide (Every Step Explained) — Vixnk - English. Published on YouTube by a third party; we link it because it explains the process well, not because we produced it or endorse the provider.

Get a rate for Alajuela

This lane is quoted per shipment rather than from a published rate card, because the landed cost depends on the commodity, its density, the conformity requirements above and the delivery point. Send the cargo details and we will come back with a full DDP figure.

[Request a quote →](#) [See the Costa Rica route page →](#)

Freight Rates to Costa Rica

⚙ Cargo Weight (KG)

☐ Enter the actual gross weight of your shipment in kilograms. If you're unsure, fill in the volume fields below and we'll calculate it for you.

☐ Or enter volume (cm) — volumetric weight ÷6000

× ×

Non-integers rounded up. Larger of actual vs volumetric is used.

☐ Number of Boxes

Total chargeable weight = weight per box × number of boxes.

⚠ When you have not filled in the volume information, our prices may be inaccurate.

Sea Freight to Alajuela, Costa Rica: Transit Time, Duty & Clearance

Sea Freight from China to Alajuela, Costa Rica. Transit 24–32 calendar days to the gateway, 3–8 days dwell, same day inland. Duty, documents and packing.

Get a Quote

Send the cargo details and we respond within one business day with a full DDP figure for Alajuela.

[WhatsApp Us Send Inquiry →](#)

Alajuela by Mode

- [All modes — Alajuela](#)
- [→ Air Freight](#)

Other Cities in Costa Rica

- [China to Puerto Limon](#)
- [China to San Jose](#)
- [China to Cartago](#)
- [China to Heredia](#)
- [China to Limon](#)
- [China to Liberia](#)

Other Americas Destinations

- [Shipping to Argentina](#)
- [Shipping to Bolivia](#)
- [Shipping to Brazil](#)
- [Shipping to Chile](#)
- [Shipping to Colombia](#)
- [Shipping to Dominican Republic](#)
- [Shipping to Ecuador](#)
- [Shipping to El Salvador](#)

Route Page

- [Costa Rica DDP route details →](#)
- [All freight destinations →](#)

Customs clearance in Costa Rica

Duty and tax position, certification, typical port dwell and what actually holds shipments at this border — plus who files the entry.

[Costa Rica clearance requirements →](#)

Priced routes to Costa Rica

- [Ningbo to Puerto Limon FCL Ocean Freight Rates | 20GP & 40HQ](#)
- [Shanghai to Puerto Limon Container Shipping — 40NOR Rates](#)
- [Ship Yantian to Puerto Limon — FCL Container Cost from China](#)