

Sea Freight from China to Adama

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□□ Sea Freight

China → Adama · via ADD air / Djibouti transit · clearance by Ethiopian Customs Commission



Cargo handling on the China-Adama lane.

Adama is the dry port and industrial city on the corridor, and it is served through ADD air / Djibouti transit. 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 Ethiopian Customs Commission, and typical dwell at the gateway runs 10–20 days.

Duty, tax and clearance into Adama

Ethiopian Customs Commission assesses duty and tax on cargo arriving for Adama consignees. Current regime: VAT 15%; duty 0–35%, plus excise and surtax of 10% on many goods, with a de-minimis position of No practical de-minimis for commercial cargo.

Conformity is the part most first-time importers underestimate: Import permit and letter of credit required for most commercial goods; conformity certificates for regulated items. Getting this wrong is expensive because it usually cannot be fixed after the cargo has landed.

Restrictions and known friction points for Ethiopia: Foreign-currency allocation and LC opening are the main bottleneck and can delay shipments by months — confirm the consignee's FX position before booking. Djibouti corridor demurrage accrues quickly. Import permits are required for most commercial goods.

How this lane actually runs

Ethiopia is landlocked and effectively single-gateway: nearly all sea cargo lands at Doraleh in Djibouti and moves 750 km inland by road or on the electrified Addis–Djibouti railway. Air is unusually competitive here because Ethiopian Airlines runs one of the largest freighter operations in Africa with direct China services, so for high-value goods the air premium is smaller than the corridor delay it avoids.

Sea gateways used	Landlocked — via Djibouti (Doraleh) then road or the Addis–Djibouti railway
Sea transit, China to gateway	26–36 calendar days including the Djibouti corridor
Gateway serving Adama	ADD air / Djibouti transit
Inland leg to Adama	Same day from the gateway
Typical clearance / dwell	10–20 days
Peak season to plan around	Sep–Dec



Handling on the ADD air / Djibouti transit routing serving Adama.

Before you book: Adama checklist

- Book earlier than the transit time suggests during Sep-Dec, when space on this lane tightens.
- Put the Adama delivery address, contact name and phone number on the invoice, not just the packing list.
- Get the conformity paperwork moving early: Import permit and letter of credit required for most commercial goods; conformity certificates for regulated items.
- Declare lithium batteries, magnets, liquids and powders up front — retro-declaring after booking usually means re-planning the whole shipment.
- Confirm the consignee in Adama can act as importer of record — Ethiopian Customs Commission will not release cargo to an unregistered party.
- Check the de-minimis position (No practical de-minimis for commercial cargo) against your invoice value before you decide how to split the shipment.

Frequently asked questions

How long does shipping from China to Adama take?

China to the Ethiopia gateway is 26–36 calendar days including the Djibouti corridor. On top of that, allow 10–20 days of clearance with Ethiopian Customs Commission and a same-day inland leg to Adama.

What duty and tax will I pay importing into Adama?

Ethiopian Customs Commission applies: VAT 15%; duty 0–35%, plus excise and surtax of 10% on many goods. The de-minimis position is No practical de-minimis for commercial cargo. Under a DDP arrangement these are pre-paid, so nothing is collected on arrival in Adama.

Which port or airport does cargo for Adama clear through?

Cargo for Adama is routed via ADD air / Djibouti transit. Sea gateways for Ethiopia are Landlocked — via Djibouti (Doraleh) then road or the Addis-Djibouti railway; air gateways are ADD (Addis Ababa Bole). We pick whichever gives the shortest total door time for your address.

What certification do I need for Ethiopia?

For regulated goods, plan for: Import permit and letter of credit required for most commercial goods; conformity certificates for regulated items. 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.

What documents does Ethiopian Customs Commission require?

A commercial invoice with HS codes, a packing list, the bill of lading or air waybill, a certificate of origin where it lowers duty, and any product certification (Import permit and letter of credit required for most commercial goods; conformity certificates for regulated items). We prepare and file these as part of the service.

Is sea freight cheaper than air freight into Adama?

Per kilo, yes — usually by a wide margin. The trade-off is time: 26–36 calendar days including the Djibouti corridor by sea versus 1–3 business days by air to the Ethiopia 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 Ethiopia

- [China to Addis Ababa](#)
- [China to Dire Dawa](#)
- [China to Bahir Dar](#)
- [China to Mekelle](#)
- [China to Hawassa](#)

[All Ethiopia freight information →](#)

References & official sources

Duty rates, thresholds and conformity requirements for Ethiopia 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 Ethiopian Customs Commission or your broker before you ship.

- [Ethiopian Customs Commission](#)
- [WTO — Tariff Profiles \(applied MFN duty by country\)](#)
- [IPPC — ISPM 15 wood packaging standard](#)

- [WCO — Harmonized System nomenclature](#)
- [IMO — IMDG Code for dangerous goods by sea](#)

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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.

- [Smart Home Products Consumer Electronics & Smart Devices](#)
- [Refrigeration Equipment Home Appliances, HVAC & Commercial](#)
- [Tableware Furniture & Home Products](#)
- [Apparel Textiles, Apparel, Footwear & Leather](#)
- [Hospital Equipment Medical, Laboratory & Precision Instruments](#)
- [Parking Equipment Fire, Safety & Traffic Products](#)
- [Massage Equipment Beauty, Personal Care & Wellness](#)
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- [Artificial Plants Consumer Goods & Gifts](#)
- [Direct to Consumer E-commerce & Retail Channels](#)
- [Fasteners Metal Products & Industrial Components](#)
- [Pressure Vessels Metal Products & Industrial Components](#)

[All 139 industry guides →](#)

Checking the Ethiopia duty position yourself

Duty and tax figures on this page are planning estimates. The binding assessment is made by Ethiopian Customs Commission 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.

Most landed-cost surprises trace back to classification rather than freight. [the WCO Harmonized System](#) defines the heading structure every customs administration builds on, and [ITC Market Access Map](#) will show you the duty a given heading attracts in this destination.

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.

Watch: the process behind this route

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

How to Calculate CBM in Shipping | Volume vs Weight Explained | CBM Formula & Freight Cost Guide — 10 Min For Supply Chain.
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 Adama

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 →](#)

Freight Rates to Ethiopia

📦 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 $\div 6000$

× ×

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.

Adama Sea Freight, Ethiopia: Cost, Transit & Customs

Sea Freight to Adama: 26–36 calendar days including the Djibouti corridor in transit, cleared by Ethiopian Customs Commission, same day to the door. What the rate covers and what it does not.

Get a Quote

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

[WhatsApp Us Send Inquiry →](#)

Adama by Mode

- [All modes — Adama](#)
- [✈ Air Freight](#)

Other Cities in Ethiopia

- [China to Addis Ababa](#)
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Other Africa Destinations

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- [Shipping to Burundi](#)
- [Shipping to Cape Verde](#)
- [Shipping to Comoros](#)
- [Shipping to Congo \(Brazzaville\)](#)
- [Shipping to Djibouti](#)
- [Shipping to Egypt](#)
- [Shipping to Eswatini](#)

Customs clearance in Ethiopia

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

[Ethiopia clearance requirements →](#)