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The Baggage Rules 2026 introduce weight-based gold allowances and clearer electronics limits while mandating stricter declarations via digital platforms like the Atithi app

Under India's updated baggage rules, duty-free limits for gold, coins, and electronics are determined by stay duration and Customs declarations. The Baggage Rules, 2026 replace the 2016 framework, aiming to simplify allowances while tightening enforcement and compliance.

Jewellery allowance

- A critical change is the removal of value caps on jewellery. Instead, the allowance is linked to weight.
- Women passengers can carry up to 40 grams of gold jewellery duty-free
- Men and other passengers can carry up to 20 grams duty-free

The rule applies only to Indian residents or persons of Indian origin who have lived abroad for more than one year.

Earlier, travellers often faced disputes due to volatile gold prices, but Customs officers now assess only check the weight of ornaments.

However, this relief comes with conditions:

- Jewellery must be for personal use, not commercial purposes
- It must form part of accompanied baggage
- Any excess quantity will attract Customs duty

Gold coins, bars and bullion are excluded from relief, as these items fall under restricted items and must be declared separately.

Gold

For those carrying gold in forms other than ornaments or exceeding the duty-free jewellery limits, the rules remain restrictive.

Eligible passengers (Indian passport holders or persons of Indian origin) who have stayed abroad for at least six months can:

- Bring up to 1 kg of gold in total (including jewellery)
- Pay applicable Customs duty, often at concessional rates depending on duration of stay
- Short trips of up to 30 days are typically ignored while calculating the six-month stay requirement.

Key compliance points:

- Duty must usually be paid in foreign currency
- Gold must be declared at arrival

It can also be brought as unaccompanied baggage within prescribed timelines

Gadgets and electronics

The rules for electronics remain largely unchanged but are now defined better.

- Under the general free allowance (Rule 5):
- Passengers (other than foreign tourists) can bring goods worth up to Rs 75,000 duty-free when arriving by air or sea
- Foreign tourists have a lower cap of Rs 25,000

This limit covers items such as:

- Smartphones
- Cameras
- Watches
- Other electronic gadgets
- Laptops

Travellers aged 18 or above can bring:

- One new laptop (or tablet/notebook) will be duty-free
- This is over and above the Rs 75,000 limit
- This is a practical concession, recognising laptops as essential personal devices.

However, if you carry:

- Multiple new gadgets
- High-end devices exceeding the limit will attract Customs duty, often at a flat rate plus applicable GST.

Used personal items are fully exempt

There is no duty on:

- Personal laptops, phones, or watches that you took abroad and are bringing back
- Everyday personal effects

However, documentation matters. Travellers are advised to:

- Carry proof of prior ownership
- Obtain an export certificate before leaving India (if possible)
- This helps avoid disputes about whether an item is "new" or "used".

Declaration rules

Customs compliance hinges on proper declaration:

- Use the Red Channel if carrying dutiable goods
- Use the Green Channel only when you have nothing to declare

Non-declaration can trigger:

- Confiscation of goods
- Penalties up to three times the duty
- In serious cases, prosecution

Authorities are also pushing digital declarations through systems such as the Atithi app, signalling a move towards tighter, tech-enabled monitoring.

Other limits

- Prohibited/restricted items include firearms, certain electronics like TVs, and bullion in unauthorised forms
- Currency declaration is required if exceeding prescribed FEMA thresholds (typically \$10,000 or equivalent)
- Returning residents under transfer of residence rules may get higher allowances for household goods

What this means for travellers

The 2026 rules are designed to reduce ambiguity but increase accountability.

Key takeaways:

- Gold imports remain tightly controlled and always dutiable beyond limits
 - One laptop is freely allowed, but multiple gadgets can quickly breach limits
 - Documentation and honest declaration are critical
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