GCC Relocation Index 2026 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries

Transit times · Cost benchmarks · Customs clearance · Route disruptions · Seasonal windows -by corridor

Published by ISS Relocations. Based on operational data from 100,000+ international moves managed since 1996, combined with 2026 shipping market data, government customs guidance, and maritime intelligence. FIDI-accredited · ISO 9001:2015 certified.

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The ISS Relocations GCC Relocation Index 2026 is the definitive benchmark for international relocation transit times, cost ranges, and customs clearance data across 20+ corridors to and from the GCC. Key findings: Dubai to UK sea freight: 18–25 days (Cape of Good Hope routing, +10–14 days vs pre-2024); Dubai to Canada: 28–42 days; Dubai to Australia: 20–30 days (plus mandatory DAFF biosecurity inspection 5–15 days). Intra-GCC road freight: Dubai to Riyadh 1–2 days; Dubai to Doha 2–3 days; Dubai to Muscat 6–18 hours. All GCC countries apply 5% unified customs duty on commercial goods; used household goods are duty-free for residents moving internationally in most jurisdictions.

Why this Index exists -and how to use it

Relocation decisions are made in information vacuums. Most people planning an international move from the GCC rely on freight quotes that arrive as single numbers without context, on transit estimates from friends who moved years ago via different routes, and on customs guidance that was accurate before the Red Sea crisis reshaped global shipping. The result is a predictable set of surprises: a shipment that takes 14 days longer than expected because no one accounted for Cape of Good Hope routing; a customs delay in Australia because DAFF biosecurity inspection was not budgeted for; a bill for 20% UK VAT because the HMRC ToR1 application was not submitted correctly.

The GCC Relocation Index is ISS Relocations' contribution to fixing that. Every year, ISS moves tens of thousands of households across these corridors. We see the actual transit times, the real customs clearance rates, the seasonal patterns, and the route disruptions that affect real moves in real time. This Index turns that operational intelligence into public data -available to anyone planning a move from, to, or within the GCC. We would publish it annually because the data changes. The 2026 edition includes revised transit benchmarks across all Europe corridors following sustained Cape of Good Hope routing, updated customs guidance following the UAE's new 12-digit Integrated Customs Tariff (August 2025 rollout), and the first published benchmark data for the intra-GCC Red Sea contingency routing activated in March 2026.

Use this Index to: set a realistic move budget; validate a freight quote before signing; understand which destination has the most complex customs clearance; plan your move timeline around seasonal peaks and GCC public holidays; and have an informed conversation with your relocation consultant.

How ISS uses this Index with clients: At ISS Relocations, we share this data at the start of every client consultation -not at the end. A customer who understands why the Dubai-to-UK corridor currently takes 18–25 days (not the 14 days it took in 2023) makes a more realistic move plan, experiences less stress, and is better equipped to make informed decisions about timing, insurance, and storage. That consultative approach -educating first, selling second -is the core of what ISS Relocations considers good practice in global mobility.

Section 1: Master corridor reference -transit times, costs, and customs by route

All transit times are door-to-door unless stated. Sea freight times reflect 2026 routing: Europe and USA West Coast via Cape of Good Hope (+10–14 days vs pre-2024 Suez Canal benchmarks). Cost ranges are ISS operational benchmarks for full-service moves (professional packing at origin, sea freight, customs clearance, destination delivery) as of Q2 2026. LCL rates per CBM are indicative; minimum charges apply. AED figures at 3.67 AED/USD.

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
UAE OUTBOUND CORRIDORS					
UAE → United Kingdom	Sea FCL/LCL	18–25 days	5–8 days	FCL 20ft: AED 22,000–35,000 LCL: AED 1,400/CBM	HMRC ToR1 URN required for duty-free import; apply 2–6 weeks before departure. Standard customs clearance 1–3 days. Main entry ports: Southampton, London Gateway, Felixstowe.
UAE → USA	Sea FCL/LCL	28–38 days	5–9 days	FCL 20ft: AED 26,000–42,000 LCL: AED 1,600/CBM	CBP Form 3299 (Household Goods exemption) required. Personal effects duty-free for returning residents. Main entry ports: Los Angeles, New York, Houston. ISF (Importer Security Filing) due 24 hrs before vessel departure.

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
UAE → Canada	Sea FCL/LCL	28–42 days	5–8 days	FCL 20ft: AED 24,000–38,000 LCL: AED 1,500/CBM	CBSA Form B4 (goods arriving with you) and B4A (unaccompanied goods) both required before landing in Canada. B4A must be presented to CBSA at first port of entry -even in transit. Used goods duty-free. New items: 5% GST + possible customs duty.
UAE → Australia	Sea FCL/LCL	20–30 days	5–9 days	FCL 20ft: AED 22,000–36,000 LCL: AED 1,400/CBM	DAFF (Dept of Agriculture) biosecurity inspection is mandatory at destination port -allow 5–10 extra days. All timber, soil, and organic material risks interception. Returning residents: duty-free on used personal effects. Non-residents: TRS (Tourist Refund Scheme) or formal import.
UAE → India	Sea FCL/LCL	5–10 days	3–5 days	FCL 20ft: AED 9,000–16,000 LCL: AED 950/CBM	Transfer of Residence (ToR) visa required; Indian Customs exempts used household goods for returning residents. New or commercial-quantity items attract 35%+ basic customs duty + IGST. Formal application to Indian Customs via Bill of Entry.
UAE → Germany / Europe	Sea FCL/LCL	18–28 days	5–8 days	FCL 20ft: AED 20,000–33,000 LCL: AED 1,350/CBM	EU Transfer of Residence (ToR) relief applies for permanent relocations: used goods duty-free and VAT-exempt. Proof of residence

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
					in UAE (visa, utility bill) required. German Customs (Zoll) require Zollform 0350. DHL and Hapag-Lloyd main carriers on this route.
UAE → Netherlands	Sea FCL/LCL	20–26 days	5–8 days	FCL 20ft: AED 20,000–32,000 LCL: AED 1,350/CBM	EU ToR relief applies. Rotterdam is primary entry port -one of the world's busiest and most efficient; standard clearance 1–2 business days. Customs declaration via Douane Netherlands.
UAE → Singapore	Sea FCL/LCL	15–22 days	5–7 days	FCL 20ft: AED 18,000–28,000 LCL: AED 1,200/CBM	Singapore Customs: GST of 9% on all imports (including household goods) unless applicant holds an Inward Personal Importation permit. Apply via TradeNet before arrival. Low duty rates; efficient clearance typically 1–2 days.
UAE → South Africa	Sea FCL/LCL	16–22 days	5–7 days	FCL 20ft: AED 17,000–27,000 LCL: AED 1,150/CBM	SARS (South African Revenue Service): rebate item 407.04 covers used household goods for immigrants; duty-free if owner is immigrating. Declaration Form DA304A required. Allow 3–7 days for customs clearance at Cape Town or Durban.
UAE → Sri Lanka	Sea FCL/LCL	4–7 days	3–4 days	FCL 20ft: AED 7,500–13,000 LCL: AED 850/CBM	Sri Lanka Customs: used household goods of returning nationals exempt from duty if owned for >1 year. Formal clearance via Sri

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
					Lanka Customs eSingle Window System. Colombo port clearance: 3–5 working days.
INTRA-GCC CORRIDORS (road freight)					
UAE → Saudi Arabia (Riyadh)	Road (truck)	N/A	N/A	AED 4,500–8,000 (full truck / shared)	Main crossing: Al Ghuwaifat border. Transit time 1–2 days Dubai to Riyadh. Saudi Customs: used household goods of returning expats duty-free with Iqama cancellation documentation. New items: 5% duty + 15% VAT. Possible queue delays at Al Ghuwaifat during peak periods.
UAE → Qatar (Doha)	Road (truck)	N/A	N/A	AED 3,200–6,000 (full truck / shared)	Transit via Saudi Arabia via Al Ghuwaifat and Salwa crossing. Total transit: 2–3 days Dubai to Doha. Qatar Customs: used household goods duty-free for residents. All shipments require Qatar Customs import declaration. New items: 5% GCC unified duty.
UAE → Bahrain (Manama)	Road (truck)	N/A	N/A	AED 3,000–5,500 (full truck / shared)	Via King Fahd Causeway through Saudi Arabia. Transit: 1–2 days. Bahrain Customs among the most efficient in GCC; ranked easiest for imports in the Middle East. Used household goods duty-free for

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
					residents. Standard clearance 1–2 days.
UAE → Kuwait (Kuwait City)	Road (truck)	N/A	N/A	AED 5,000–9,000 (full truck / shared)	Via Saudi Arabia (Al Ghuwaifat and Kuwait-Saudi border). Transit: 2–3 days. Kuwait Customs: import declaration and residency documentation required. Clearance: 2–4 days. Border crossing can be slow during peak periods.
UAE → Oman (Muscat)	Road or rail	N/A	N/A	AED 2,800–5,000 (full truck / shared)	Multiple border crossings (Hatta, Wajajah, Tibat for Musandam). Transit: 6–18 hours Muscat, 2–3 days Salalah. Hafeet Rail UAE-Oman link now operational (Abu Dhabi–Sohar). Oman Customs: used goods duty-free for residents; new items 5% duty + 5% VAT. Clearance: 1–3 days.
UAE → Kuwait via Red Sea routing*	Road via Jeddah	N/A	N/A	Premium routing +20–30%	Post-Hormuz disruption 2026 contingency route. Cargo lands at Jeddah Port, moves overland to Kuwait City. Transit: 4–6 days. Saudi logistics reforms waived bank guarantees for transit cargo (April 2026) -this route is now commercially viable as a contingency.
INBOUND TO GCC (selected corridors)					

Corridor (origin → destination)	Primary mode	Sea transit (port-to-port)	Air transit (door-door)	ISS cost range AED (20ft FCL / LCL)	Key customs note
UK → UAE	Sea FCL/LCL	18–28 days	5–8 days	FCL 20ft: AED 18,000–28,000 LCL: AED 1,200/CBM	UAE Customs: used household goods duty-free with valid UAE residency visa at time of import. New items: 5% CIF customs duty. Standard Jebel Ali clearance: 1–2 business days. Inspection: +3–5 days.
India → UAE	Sea FCL/LCL	5–10 days	3–5 days	FCL 20ft: AED 8,000–14,000 LCL: AED 850/CBM	India is the highest-volume inbound corridor to UAE. Mundra and JNPT are primary origin ports; Jebel Ali is the entry point. Used goods duty-free with UAE residency visa. Certificate of Origin required for new goods.
USA → UAE	Sea FCL/LCL	28–40 days	5–9 days	FCL 20ft: AED 22,000–38,000 LCL: AED 1,500/CBM	East Coast (New York/Baltimore) vs West Coast (Los Angeles) affects routing and transit. Used household goods duty-free with UAE residency visa. No ISF requirement outbound from UAE to USA but required in reverse.

All costs are door-to-door full-service ranges. Port-to-port or self-packing options reduce cost by 15–25%. Transit insurance (1–2% of declared goods value) is not included in the above ranges -ISS strongly recommends it on all corridors. Air freight costs are approximately 10× sea freight per CBM and are generally practical only for moves under 2 CBM or for urgent/high-value items.

Section 2: Customs clearance by country -requirements, timelines, and risk rating

Customs clearance is the most misunderstood component of international relocation planning. Transit time gets the attention; customs clearance causes the delays. Australia's mandatory DAFF biosecurity inspection, India's Transfer of Residence documentation requirements, and the UK's ToR1 URN process each add layers of complexity that can extend a move by 1–3 weeks if not planned for in advance. The table below reflects ISS's observed clearance performance across 100,000+ moves.

Country	Standard duty rate	Used HH goods	Duty-free condition	Clearance time	ISS-observed delay risk
UAE (Jebel Ali)	5% CIF	Duty-free	Valid UAE residency visa at time of import	1–2 business days	LOW. Mirsal 2 digital clearance system is among the most efficient in the world. Inspection adds 3–5 days. Documentation errors are the primary cause of delays.
UK (Southampton/Felixstowe)	0% (ToR relief)	Duty-free	HMRC ToR1 URN required; apply 2–6 weeks ahead	2–5 business days	MEDIUM. ToR1 errors or missing URN at clearance trigger 20% VAT assessment on replacement value. London deliveries require parking bay suspension (£150–400/day, 10 days notice).
USA (CBP)	0% (HHG exemption)	Duty-free	CBP Form 3299; owner must be non-immigrant returning resident or relocating	3–7 business days	LOW-MEDIUM. ISF late filing attracts $5,000 penalty. Inspection random but thorough. East Coast ports typically faster clearance than West Coast.
Canada (CBSA)	0% (ToR relief)	Duty-free	B4A presented to CBSA officer at first Canadian port of entry - before goods arrive	2–5 business days	MEDIUM. B4A must be completed before shipment arrives -cannot add items retroactively. Missing B4A means duty assessment on everything. Cross-

Country	Standard duty rate	Used HH goods	Duty-free condition	Clearance time	ISS-observed delay risk
					province delivery adds 5–10 days.
Australia (DAFF/ABF)	0% (ToR)	Duty-free	Minimum 1-year ownership of goods; permanent residency or visa holder	5–15 business days	HIGH. DAFF biosecurity inspection is mandatory and unpredictable. All wood, soil, organic material, and food risk interception. Packing in clean materials reduces risk. Allow 2-week buffer beyond sea transit time.
India (Indian Customs)	35%+ basic duty + IGST	Duty-free	Transfer of Residence (ToR) visa; goods owned and used for >1 year; returning Indian national	7–21 business days	HIGH. India has the most complex household goods clearance among ISS's top-10 destination countries. Document authentication, ToR visa verification, and physical inspection are standard. Engage a licensed CHB (Customs House Broker) before shipping.
Saudi Arabia (ZATCA)	5% + 15% VAT	Duty-free	Iqama cancellation + proof of UAE residency; used goods only	2–5 business days	MEDIUM. Halal certification required for food items. SABER conformity certificate required for electronics and consumer goods. Prohibited items include alcohol, pork, certain medications -ISS screens all shipments before loading.
Qatar (Qatar Customs)	5%	Duty-free	Valid Qatar residency documentation;	2–4 business days	MEDIUM. All imports require import licence via Qatari national partner or registered

Country	Standard duty rate	Used HH goods	Duty-free condition	Clearance time	ISS-observed delay risk
			used goods for personal use		company. Meats require Halal certificate. Import procedures historically bureaucratic but improving under Vision 2030 reforms.
Bahrain (NBR)	5%	Duty-free	Residency documentation; used goods	1–2 business days	LOW. Bahrain is consistently ranked among the easiest countries in the Middle East for imports. Free economy, low tariffs, streamlined process. King Fahd Causeway road crossing is straightforward for road freight.
Oman (OC)	5% + 5% VAT	Duty-free	Valid Oman residency documentation; used goods	2–4 business days	LOW-MEDIUM. Sohar Port is now linked to Abu Dhabi by Hafeet Rail - transit times improving. Muscat road border crossings straightforward for residential moves. Salalah adds 2–3 days on road from UAE.
Germany (Zoll)	0% (EU ToR)	Duty-free	EU Transfer of Residence relief; proof of UAE residency; permanent relocation	3–7 business days	MEDIUM. Zollform 0350 required. Hamburg and Bremerhaven are primary entry ports. German customs thorough; documentation errors extend clearance significantly. ISS prepares Zoll-compliant packing lists.

Country	Standard duty rate	Used HH goods	Duty-free condition	Clearance time	ISS-observed delay risk
Singapore (Singapore Customs)	9% GST	GST applies	Inward Personal Importation permit via TradeNet before arrival reduces liability	1–2 business days	LOW. Singapore customs is among the most efficient in Asia. TradeNet electronic clearance is fast. GST is applied even on personal effects -plan for this in budget.

The GCC's new 12-digit Integrated Customs Tariff rolled out in the UAE from August 2025 (Phase 1 complete January 2026; Phase 2 complete July 2026). HS code misclassification under the new system is currently the leading cause of customs delays at Jebel Ali for commercial shipments. All ISS packing lists are coded under the 12-digit system. Non-ISS shipments prepared under the old 8-digit system may face additional scrutiny.

Section 3: Cost benchmarks -full-service international moves from the GCC (2026)

Full-service door-to-door relocation costs from Dubai vary from AED 8,000 for a studio LCL shipment to India to AED 65,000+ for a 40ft FCL family move to the USA or Canada. Intra-GCC road freight ranges from AED 2,800 (Dubai to Muscat) to AED 12,000 (Dubai to Kuwait City full truck). All figures below are ISS operational benchmarks for Q2 2026. Actual quotes vary by origin city, floor level, volume, and specific destination address.

Move size	Container type	Typical volume (CBM)	Typical door-to-door cost (AED)	What is included
OUTBOUND FROM UAE (all corridors: typical ranges)				
Studio / 1 bedroom	LCL (shared)	5–12 CBM	AED 8,000–16,000	Professional packing at origin, LCL sea freight, port handling, customs clearance at destination, delivery. Air freight: add 60–80%.
2–3 bedroom apartment	20ft FCL	20–30 CBM	AED 18,000–40,000	All above; dedicated container; no shared handling risk. Cost varies significantly by corridor (India cheapest, USA/Canada most expensive).
4–5 bedroom villa / large family	40ft FCL	45–65 CBM	AED 30,000–65,000	All above; may include vehicle in container (add AED 1,500–3,000 for vehicle lashing).
INTRA-GCC ROAD FREIGHT (full truck, shared-truck ranges)				
Dubai → Riyadh	Shared / FTL road	Any volume	AED 4,500–12,000	Packing, road freight, border crossing, customs clearance, delivery Riyadh.

Move size	Container type	Typical volume (CBM)	Typical door-to-door cost (AED)	What is included
Dubai → Doha	Shared / FTL road	Any volume	AED 3,200–9,000	Packing, road freight, Saudi transit, Qatar customs, delivery Doha.
Dubai → Manama	Shared / FTL road	Any volume	AED 3,000–8,000	Packing, road freight, Saudi transit, Bahrain customs, delivery Manama.
Dubai → Kuwait City	Shared / FTL road	Any volume	AED 5,000–12,000	Packing, road freight, Saudi transit, Kuwait customs, delivery Kuwait City. Longest GCC road route.
Dubai → Muscat	Shared / FTL road	Any volume	AED 2,800–7,500	Packing, road freight, border crossing Hatta or Wajajah, Oman customs, delivery Muscat. Rail option (Abu Dhabi–Sohar) emerging.
ADDITIONAL COSTS - all corridors (budget separately)				
All-risk transit insurance	—	—	1–2% of declared goods value	ISS provides via underwriter. Strongly recommended. Covers damage and loss from packing to delivery.
Vehicle shipping (additional)	RoRo or container	—	AED 4,000–14,000	Depends on vehicle size, destination port, and whether RoRo or containerised.
Pet relocation (cats/dogs)	IATA carrier + documentation	—	AED 3,500–12,000	Airline-approved carrier, veterinary health certificate, destination import permit, airline ticket.

Move size	Container type	Typical volume (CBM)	Typical door-to-door cost (AED)	What is included
Air freight (urgent items)	Per kg or CBM	<2 CBM typical	AED 4,500–15,000	Airport-to-airport 5–9 days; door-to-door add 1–3 days for customs. ~10× cost of sea per CBM.

Section 4: Seasonal timing -peak periods, public holidays, and optimal windows

June to August is peak relocation season from the GCC, driven by the school calendar and corporate summer moves. Sailing slots on popular corridors (UAE to UK, Australia, Canada) book out 6–8 weeks in advance during this period. Rates run 10–20% above annual average. The optimal cost window is September to November. GCC public holidays -particularly Eid Al Adha and National Day -extend customs clearance times by 2–5 days across all GCC destinations.

Period	Peak / off-peak	Implication	ISS recommendation
June–August	PEAK (families, school calendar)	Highest demand for moves from GCC to UK, Australia, Canada, USA. Sailing slots for popular corridors book 6–8 weeks ahead. Rates 10–20% above annual average.	Book by April for a June–August move. If you must move in peak season without early booking, LCL may be the only available option.
January–February	PEAK (year-end corporate moves)	Corporate relocation season following Q4 budget approvals. Demand spikes for GCC moves and intra-GCC corporate relocations.	Book December for January–February moves. Corporate accounts with ISS receive priority scheduling.
Ramadan (March 2026)	REDUCED capacity	GCC government offices, customs authorities, and some port operations run on reduced hours. Clearance times extend by 2–5 days across all GCC destinations.	Ship before Ramadan or plan for 1-week buffer in clearance timelines. Avoid having a shipment arrive at a GCC customs port during the last week of Ramadan.
Eid Al Adha / National Day	REDUCED capacity	All GCC customs authorities and many private sector	Plan clearance to complete before the holiday or schedule

Period	Peak / off-peak	Implication	ISS recommendation
		operations close for 4–10 days. Shipments waiting at port during this window incur storage charges.	arrival for 3 days after the holiday period ends.
September–November	OFF-PEAK	Lowest demand period across most corridors. Sailing slots available at shorter notice. Rate discounts of 5–15% common on major routes.	Best value window for non-urgent moves. Pre-book October for November departures to lock in competitive rates before year-end corporate season.
2026 route disruption: Red Sea / Hormuz	ONGOING RISK	Most major carriers are routing Europe-Asia via Cape of Good Hope, adding 10–14 days to standard transit times on UAE→UK, UAE→Europe, and UAE→USA corridors vs pre-2024 benchmarks.	All transit times in this Index reflect 2026 Cape routing. Do not use pre-2024 transit benchmarks. ISS quotes include current routing in all estimates.

Section 5: 2026 route disruption intelligence -Red Sea, Hormuz, and contingency routing

The sustained closure of the Red Sea corridor (Houthi disruptions continuing 2026) and the March 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption have materially changed transit times and routing for the GCC relocation market. Europe-bound shipments now route via Cape of Good Hope, adding 10–14 days. Intra-GCC road freight volume surged as an alternative, with Saudi Arabia activating logistics reforms to speed transit cargo. ISS Relocations revised all transit benchmarks in Q1 2026 to reflect these structural changes.

Corridor	Primary risk (2026)	ISS mitigation	Status
UAE → Europe (via Suez)	Red Sea / Suez Canal: Houthi disruptions continuing 2026; Canal transits down sharply	All ISS Europe sailings now routed via Cape of Good Hope. Transit benchmarks adjusted (+10–14 days). Full transit insurance included.	Ongoing. Cape routing is ISS standard for Europe corridor.

Corridor	Primary risk (2026)	ISS mitigation	Status
UAE → USA East Coast (via Suez)	Same Red Sea disruption extends US routing risk	Routing via Cape or transpacific depending on origin port. ISS advises clients of routing at booking stage.	Manageable. Add 7–10 days vs 2023 benchmarks.
Intra-GCC road freight	Strait of Hormuz tensions (March 2026 closure) pushed cargo to road. Al Ghuwaifat border peak congestion.	ISS uses priority border crossing arrangements. Schedule GCC road moves to avoid pre-holiday peaks. Red Sea routing via Jeddah available as contingency.	Improving. Saudi logistics reforms (April 2026) waived bank guarantees for transit cargo.
UAE → India	Low route risk; Indian customs complexity is the primary delay factor	ISS appoints licensed Indian Customs House Broker (CHB) for all India-bound shipments. ToR documentation verified before sailing.	Stable. India corridor unaffected by current geopolitical disruptions.
UAE → Australia	Low route risk; DAFF biosecurity inspection is primary delay factor	ISS uses DAFF-compliant packing materials and protocols. Packing list reviewed for biosecurity risk items before sailing.	Stable. Plan 2-week buffer for biosecurity clearance.

The GCC logistics market is structurally adapting. The GCC Railway project reached 50% completion in June 2026 (PwC Middle East) and is now a realistic 2030 operational target. The Hafeet Rail UAE-Oman link is operational as of late 2025, with Noatum Logistics running weekly services between Abu Dhabi and Sohar Port. For relocation moves, rail is not yet a primary mode -but the UAE-Oman corridor is the first GCC route where rail is a commercially viable alternative to road for household goods, and ISS is evaluating it for appropriate moves. The Dubai-Riyadh rail corridor (Etihad Rail integration with Saudi Landbridge) has already reduced freight transit times between the two cities to 24 hours, opening new possibilities for intra-GCC corporate relocations as freight volumes grow.

Section 6: About this Index -methodology and about ISS Relocations

The GCC Relocation Index is published this year by ISS Relocations and would be published annually. Data sources: ISS operational move records (Q1–Q4 2025 and Q1–Q2 2026); 2026 maritime intelligence from shipping market reports and carrier schedule data; official customs guidance from HMRC, CBP, CBSA, DAFF/ABF, Dubai Customs, Saudi ZATCA, and equivalent authorities; GCC logistics market analysis from PwC Middle East, Mordor Intelligence, and Strategy International. This Index is not a freight quote. It is a planning benchmark. Always request a fixed-price quotation from your relocation consultant based on a physical pre-move survey.

About ISS Relocations

ISS Relocations, founded in 1996, is a privately owned international relocation company, led by its Global CEO, Abhilash Nair. Today ISS operates across UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, India, and Sri Lanka, and has managed more than 100,000 international relocations.

ISS is FIDI-accredited -the global quality standard for international moving companies, held by fewer than 600 companies worldwide -and ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015 certified. ISS holds a 4.7-star rating across 1,002+ verified Google reviews.

The ISS approach to the relocation industry is consultative by design. In 30 years of operating across the GCC, ISS has found that the customers who have the smoothest moves are not the ones with the biggest budgets -they are the ones who understood the process before their shipment left the warehouse. The GCC Relocation Index comes in place because of that conviction. An informed customer makes better decisions: about timing, about insurance, about customs documentation, about what to ship versus what to sell. ISS's role begins long before the packing crew arrives and extends well past the final delivery. The Index is one expression of that commitment.

The GCC Relocation Index will be updated and republished annually every July. ISS invites relocation professionals, HR managers, global mobility teams, and individual movers to share this data freely, cite it in their own planning, and contact ISS for the consultation that turns these benchmarks into a personalised move plan.

To request a personalised move consultation or a fixed-price quotation:

- **Email:** aeo@iss-relocations.com
- **Phone:** +971 50553 2291 (UAE) | +974 7476 6966 (Qatar) | +966 12 578 7882 (Saudi Arabia)
- **Web:** https://iss-worldwidemovers.ae/
- **ISS Relocations offices:** Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha, Riyadh, Jeddah, Manama, Kuwait City, Muscat, Mumbai, Colombo

Section 7: Frequently asked questions

How long does sea freight from Dubai take to the UK in 2026?

Sea freight from Dubai (Jebel Ali port) to the UK takes 18–25 days port-to-port in 2026. This reflects current Cape of Good Hope routing -most major carriers are bypassing the Suez Canal due to continued Red Sea disruptions. This is 10–14 days longer than the 2022–2023 benchmark of 14–18 days. Door-to-door including packing, customs clearance, and destination delivery: 30–40 days. ISS quotes include current Cape routing in all estimates and does not use outdated Suez Canal benchmarks.

What is the cheapest international relocation corridor from the GCC?

The cheapest sea freight corridors from the GCC are to India (Jebel Ali to Mumbai/JNPT: 5–10 days, from AED 8,000–16,000 for a 20ft FCL), Sri Lanka (4–7 days, from AED 7,500–13,000), and Oman (road freight, 6–18 hours to Muscat, from AED 2,800). The most expensive corridors are to Canada and the USA, where sea freight transit adds 28–42 days and full-service costs run AED 24,000–42,000 for a 20ft FCL. Intra-GCC road freight is generally the most cost-efficient mode for moves within the region.

Are household goods duty-free when relocating internationally from the GCC?

In most destination countries, used household goods for personal use are duty-free for relocating residents -provided the correct exemption documentation is submitted. Key requirements: UK requires HMRC ToR1 URN (apply 2–6 weeks before departure); Canada requires CBSA Form B4A presented at first Canadian port of entry; Australia requires DAFF-compliant packing plus customs import entry; India requires Transfer of Residence visa. The GCC unified customs tariff applies 5% duty on used goods where residency exemption does not apply. ISS prepares all customs documentation as part of every full-service move.

How long does customs clearance take in Australia?

Australia has the most complex customs clearance of any ISS top-10 destination. DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) biosecurity inspection is mandatory for all international household goods shipments and typically adds 5–15 business days beyond the sea transit time. All timber, soil, organic material, and certain food items risk interception and quarantine. ISS uses DAFF-compliant packing materials and protocols to minimise inspection risk, and includes a 2-week post-arrival buffer in all Australia move plans.

What is the current sea freight transit time from Dubai to Canada?

Sea freight from Dubai to Canada takes 28–42 days door-to-door in 2026, depending on the Canadian destination city. Vancouver (West Coast) receives shipments via Cape of Good Hope routing in approximately 32–38 days port-to-port. Toronto and Montreal (East Coast) receive via Halifax in 35–42 days. CBSA customs clearance adds 2–5 days after arrival. Total door-to-door from Dubai to Toronto is typically 45–55 days from packing day to delivery. Book 8–10 weeks before your planned move date to allow for B4/B4A documentation preparation.

How do intra-GCC moves work? Can I move my household goods by road from Dubai to Riyadh?

Yes. Intra-GCC road freight is the primary mode for household relocation moves between GCC countries. Dubai to Riyadh by road takes 1–2 days and costs AED 4,500–12,000 depending on volume and service level. The main border crossing is Al Ghuwaifat. ISS manages the full road freight move including packing, truck loading, border crossing documentation, Saudi customs clearance, and door-to-door delivery in Riyadh. Dubai to Doha takes 2–3 days (via Saudi Arabia); Dubai to Muscat takes 6–18 hours. All GCC countries apply the 5% unified customs duty on commercial goods; used household goods for relocating residents are generally duty-free with appropriate documentation.

When is the best time to book an international move from Dubai?

The optimal booking window is September to November -the lowest-demand period, with sailing slots available at shorter notice and rates 5–15% below annual average on most corridors. June to August is peak season (school-calendar driven family moves), with sailings booking 6–8 weeks ahead and rates 10–20% above average. Avoid planning customs clearance to coincide with GCC public holidays (Eid Al Adha, National Day, Ramadan working-hour reductions) - clearance times extend by 2–5 days across all GCC destinations during these periods.