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Darien Gap – Shipping From Panama to Colombia



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Valparaiso, Chile

How To Ship A Vehicle Around The Darien Gap

Note: This is a play-by play of our experience shipping a Toyota Tundra + Four Wheel Camper around the Darien Gap from Colon, Panama to Cartagena, Colombia. YMMV due to changes in cost, vehicle size, regulations, transporting drugs or random acts of God.

The Basics:

- Find A Shipping Partner (If Applicable)
- Contact A Vehicle Shipping Agent
- Schedule A Shipping Date
- Panama City – DIJ Police Inspection & Paperwork
- Colon – Paperwork & Vehicle Loading
- Travel to Cartagena
- Paperwork & Insurance
- Unloading & Inspection
- Celebrate!

The Shipping Costs:

2 4 0
Years Months Days
On The Road!

Amazon Affiliate Disclosure

TOTAL in \$USD (Panama + Colombia)

- 20 ft container = \$1850.00 (This included all costs on both sides)
- 40 ft container = \$2030.00 (This included all costs on both sides. If sharing container = \$1015.00 USD/Vehicle).

Paid in Panama:

- 20 ft container = \$1150.00
- 40 ft container = \$1300.00

Fees include: freight, documentation, terminal fees and agent fees.

Paid in Colombia:

- 20 ft container = \$700.00
- 40 ft container = \$730.00

Fees include: Customs, port and doc. fees.

Darien Gap

The Darien Gap is a break in the PanAmerican highway between Yaviza, Panama and the Colombian border. Impassably dense jungle, marshlands, mountainous rainforests, FARC activity and smugglers makes this 60-100 mile stretch difficult, to say the least. If months of bushwhacking through the Darien doesn't sound fun, you have a few options to get you and your vehicle from Panama to Colombia.

The most secure and popular method for crossing the Darien Gap is via shipping container (for vehicles that fit). We shipped our Truck Camper (Tortuga) in a 40 ft (12m) container with 1 other vehicle in December of 2016. Here's how we did it:

Find Shipping Partner:

A couple months prior to your intended crossing it's best to visit the online forums to search for a shipping container partner(s) if you want to save money. A popular site is drivetheamericas.com as well as the Facebook group: [PanAmericanTravelersAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/PanAmericanTravelersAssociation). Here you can search for a partners ad and/or post a 'wanted' ad.

Make sure you know your vehicle width, length and height to ensure adequate space in the container for all vehicles. When shipping small rigs, you may be able to squeeze 1 or 2 motorcycles in as well. Click [here](#) for both external & internal container measurements. Keep in mind that you will need a space buffer (30cm) around the vehicles and walls inside the container.

Contact Shipping Agent:

We used Boris Jaramillo and recommend him. Let him know your approximate shipping week and he will get your information and instruct what needs to be done next. In addition, he will help play partner matchmaker if you don't already have one. Much of the information below was provided by Boris and may vary when using another agent.

Ever Logistics, Inc.

e-mail: sales3@everlogistics.net

e-mail: boris_jaramillo@hotmail.com

Phone: (507) 431-0390 / 431-0391

Fax : (507) 431-0395

Cel.: (507) 6213-3485

Skype: borisj23

Schedule Shipping Date:

You must notify & book with the agent at least 6 days prior to the vessel departure. Vessels leave every Sunday from Colon and arrive in Cartagena on Monday night (most of the time).

From the day it arrives you have 3 days to take your car out of the port in Cartagena or you will be charged a daily storage fee of \$32.50 (As of Dec 2016).

Panama City – Complete DIJ Police Inspection:

Arrive by 8am and get a 'number' to hold your spot in line

DIJ inspection can be done up to one day before the loading and the process takes most of the day. Most of the morning you wait until it's your turn to be inspected. The inspection itself only takes 10 minutes but you have to come back at 02:00 pm to pickup a document that certifies you passed the inspection. This document has 8 days of validity from when it is printed. Normally people do the inspection 1 or 2 days before the loading day. (We did our inspection first thing Monday morning in case we failed and needed to have our TIP revised. We then loaded our vehicles Tuesday.)

Inspection Documents Needed (2 Copies):

1. Title of the vehicle
2. Temporary Importation Permit (document you receive at the border from customs)
3. Insurance (you also get this at the border)
4. Passport
5. Driver license *sometimes they ask for it.
6. Booking Confirmation (Shipping Agent will send to you).

COORDINATES: 8.966387,-79.544905

Google maps: <http://goo.gl/maps/yjY1T>

OUR TIPS:

- *Get there a little early since the dirty lot fills up quickly.*
- *Go in the office and get a number when you arrive.*
- *Make sure your temporary import permit has no mistakes and has a number in the motor # box – We heard stories of this being a problem.*
- *Triple check the motor # box at the border upon entry to avoid problems – The people at the border would not fill out this box for us since it is not on our title so we repeatedly distracted the inspection officer in Panama City while he went over the paperwork... somehow it worked. Others have had to go to an office in Panama City and get their TIP corrected.*

Panama City – Visit DIJ to Receive Inspection Paperwork:

After the inspection you will need to return to pickup the DIJ Inspection Document at 2:00pm at Secretaria General which is the building in front of the DIJ. Text or email a picture of the confirmation to your shipping agent. Arrange date/time and location to meet in Colon.

OUR TIPS:

- Take a taxi or Uber to go back and receive the completed inspection form at 2pm. It's a crappy area of the city and not worth driving to twice.

Colon – Meet Shipping Agent:

We met Boris at 9am in Colon. It's 1 h 45 min drive but add extra time for Panama City traffic. Agent will send you the coordinates.

OUR TIPS:

- The “sticker required” toll road is only a small portion within Panama City. Once you get out of the city you can take the main highway all the way to Colon (nice road).

Colon – Complete Paperwork w/Agent at Customs Office:

Boris escorted us to this office and handled the paperwork process for us.

Documents Needed (5 Copies In This Order):

1. Temporary Importation Permit
2. DJJ Inspection Document
3. Vehicle-Title
4. Vehicle Insurance
5. Passport

Colon Port – Load Vehicle(s) into Container:





Vehicle Shipping – Loading Process

Try to bring the vehicle with no more than 1/4 tank of gas and no additional propane or fuel is allowed in the container. These tanks must be empty (No one checked ours). You are also asked to disconnect the battery.

You will each load your vehicle onto a flatbed truck and then drive into the container. Once the vehicles are loaded the container will be securely closed and locked. You will pay the shipping agent (Boris) in cash or bank transfer (\$25 bank fee for International banks) and they will issue a receipt.

OUR TIPS:

- *Colon is dirty and so is the loading process. Wear crappy clothes. You'll likely sweat a lot and may need to crawl under/over your car.*
- *We had ¾ of a tank of gas and [these propane bottles](#) in the truck/camper. They didn't check but we were nervous that we'd cause an explosion and sink the cargo ship 🙄*

- *We were required to unplug the battery, which meant we had to leave a window open so we could get back in the truck through the camper (no room to open doors) and re-open the hood in Cartagena. Take time to think about the process before loading day in the event you also have to disconnect your batteries.*
- *We removed our laptop & ipad since the containers get very hot.*

Bus, Train, or Taxi Back to Panama City:

We used Uber and split the cost with our shipping partners. Buses and a train are also available – [More Info](#).

CELEBRATE in Panama City!

Travel to Cartagena Two Days Before Unload Date:

Remember – From the day the vehicle arrives at the port you have 3 days to unload or you will be charged a daily storage fee of \$32.50 (As of Dec 2016). We took a flight but you can also sail from Panama to Colombia through the San Blas Islands.

Depending on the time of year the winds can make for a very rough sail. Do your research before choosing a boat. Pay attention to the number of people it holds as some boats can be packed. Drunk captains are not uncommon. Some friends used and recommended Blue Sailing to search for and book boats. We've also heard of travelers taking speed boats along the coast to cross the Darien Gap.

Cartagena Port

- **Day 1 – Start Paperwork The Morning After Ship Arrives**
- **Day 2 – Final Inspection/Paperwork, Unloading & Exit**

Follow the vessel here: Vehicle Shipping Route

<https://www.marinetraffic.com/es/ais/details/ships/shipid:726684/mmsi:563587000/vessel:YERUPAJA>

Tracking of the shipping container: select the option container No. and enter yours.

http://www.shipmentlink.com/servlet/TDB1_CargoTracking.do





Inspection / Unloading – Cartagena

The following information was provided by our shipping agent and listed as “their blog” but it appears to be an entry from [Bus Around The Globe](#) with references to [Life Remotely's](#) shipping post. Kudos to these guys for doing most of the legwork. Modifications and updates have been made based on our experience.

Note: Start the paperwork/unloading process the morning after your vehicle arrives at the port in Cartagena. We heard of other people completing the unloading process in one day but were unable to do so even though we completed all paperwork by 11am. We asked the DIAN official for a same day inspection and were told repeatedly that it never happens and is impossible. YMMV but plan for a 2 day process. Also, wear long pants and covered shoes. Offices close for lunchtime 12 – 1:30 p.m.

1. **Sociedad Portuaria** – Present passport at greeter’s desk. Get your port badge. The lady sends you to Servicio al Cliente. Present the temporary Bill of Lading Boris gave you in Panama to the official.
2. **Global Shipping** – Go outside, turn left and walk 50 meters hugging the left wall. Stop at Control de Acceso. They check your badge, search any bags and grant you access. Go through the pedestrian gate. Follow green arrows and go around the cafeteria. Global Shipping is in a dark green building behind the cafeteria, with a small red sign above the door. Ask around if needed. Get bank invoices and the Colombia Bill of Lading from Global Shipping.
3. **Banco de Occidente** – About 6 blocks from Sociedad Portuaria near DIAN. You can walk or take a taxi. Pay invoices with Colombian pesos. There is an ATM on site.
4. **SOAT insurance** – SOAT office is listed on iOverlander a couple blocks from DIAN office (iOverlander – Seguro SURA). Show your passport and vehicle paperwork. Contrary to other posts we needed SOAT prior to going to DIAN.
5. **DIAN** – (iOverlander – Dian Office Cartagena) Security entrance is at north-west corner. Get badge at the gate and walk 30 meters. Turn right at the first building, go thru it to the building behind it. Tell the receptionist that you need “un *inspector para importación temporal*”. Inspector will give you a form. Fill it out, go back out of security gate, cross the street to get two copies. You will also need copies of passport (picture

- page and entry to Colombia stamp page), car title, SOAT and Bill of Lading. Bring copies back to DIAN inspector. He/She will set up time for the inspection later.
6. **Back to Global Shipping** – Turn in paid receipts. Sign letter authorizing port to unload container. Make sure they stamp this letter with GS logo.
 7. **Back to Servicio al Cliente** – Return to same official from step 1. Present passports, Bill of Lading, unloading letter (*carta de vaciado*) and copy of your accidental death/dismemberment insurance. Make sure your insurance lists your names, what you're covered for and the amounts (example, \$500,000 medical emergency, \$100,000 accidental dismemberment, etc.). Get invoice from official.
 8. **Bank inside Servicio al Cliente** – Pay in Colombian pesos. There is an ATM onsite.
 9. **Servicio al Cliente** – Wait. Official enters information on his computer and calls inspector to arrange unloading (*vaciado*) and inspection. Our inspection was the following morning. He gives you the unloading schedule. You will need this to get location of unloading.
 10. **INSPECTION DAY** – Get helmet and vest at Servicio al Cliente.
 11. **Go back through Control de Acceso** – Show badge to be granted access. Hand them the schedule. They will check in the computer and tell you where to go. Walk through the pedestrian gate to inspection location. You may need to take a bus to this location. Locate container with port employee or wait for container to be dropped off. DIAN inspector arrives.
 12. **Unloading** – Port employee cuts security lock, opens the container and takes off the straps. Reconnect battery, if needed, and drive out of container. Both inspectors look over the vehicle. You should do the same. DIAN inspector gives you two pieces of paper. Follow port employee to parking spot where you will leave the car.
 13. **Servicio al Cliente** – Receive and pay the last invoice. After paying invoice, ask official to check your paperwork and see if any further steps are necessary. Check your paperwork as well.
 14. **Walk Back to Where You Parked** – Drive vehicle into one of the "inspection" lanes just before the exit. After waiting our turn, our vehicle was inspected, a picture taken, and the VIN and paperwork were reviewed by a port employee. Drive up to exit lanes. Paperwork and VIN are checked one last time. Exit and park in front of Servicio al Cliente.
 15. **Servicio al Cliente** – Turn in badge and get passport back. You're done!

**After unloading (Step 12) our experience varied quite a bit from the aforementioned posts. We did not have to give our keys to anyone or make a final exit appointment. Our suggestion is to ask what to do next after each step. Aside from the DIAN personnel, the officials we worked with were helpful and friendly.*



Congratulations! Time to celebrate!!!

By Jenna | August 25th, 2017 | Central America, Resources, The Trip | 3 Comments

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3 Comments

Eugene August 27, 2017 at 8:00 am - Reply



Thanks for the great post, Jenna! This is the most complete & detailed description of the process I have encountered so far. Well done!



Jenna August 29, 2017 at 8:13 am - Reply

Thanks so much. Glad we could help! 😊



John S October 4, 2017 at 10:33 pm - Reply

Best description and advice I've seen on the internet for container shipping. Thanks so much!!!!!!!!!!!!11

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