Can You Take Teabags on a Plane?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Can you take teabags on a plane, in summary:** A UK guide to flying with teabags: yes in hand or hold luggage, possible extra screening for food at security, and declare tea where you land (the US, Australia and New Zealand all ask).

A common worry with a mostly simple answer. Another page in the tea travel set is best tea to take travelling .

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026. Security and customs rules checked against official sources on 18 September 2026.

Teabags on a plane, at a glance

Question	The answer
Allowed in hand luggage?	Yes, as a dry food; at UK airports food and powders may be taken out for extra screening
Allowed in hold luggage?	Yes
Counted as a liquid?	Dry tea, no. Brewed tea is a liquid, so a flask of tea follows the liquids rules
Need to declare where you land?	Depends on the country: the US asks you to declare all agricultural items, and Australia and New Zealand ask you to declare food
Quantity	Rules differ by country; the answers here assume personal-use amounts
Packaging	Original, sealed commercial packaging makes any check easier
Loose-leaf and herbal tea?	Can face extra conditions abroad, especially herbal blends with other ingredients; check the destination's rules

The short answer

Yes, dry teabags can go in hand or hold luggage when you fly from the UK. Three separate sets of rules apply, and it helps to keep them apart: airport security (what you can carry through screening), your airline's baggage limits, and the customs and biosecurity rules of the country you land in. Security rules are not customs permission.

Security when you leave the UK

Dry tea is a food, not a liquid. GOV.UK says food items and powders in hand luggage can obstruct images on x-ray machines, so they may be checked separately (GOV.UK hand luggage restrictions). Brewed tea is a liquid, so a flask of tea follows the liquids rules. Original packaging makes any check quicker. See brewing on arrival.

Customs and biosecurity where you land

United States: US Customs and Border Protection says all agriculture items must be declared and are subject to inspection, and undeclared prohibited items are confiscated and can bring a civil penalty (CBP: agricultural items). Declare your tea; personal-use tea can be allowed in, depending on its ingredients and the inspection.

Australia: food brought into Australia must be declared on the Incoming Passenger Card if you arrive by plane, even small amounts (Australian Border Force: food). Plain tea in clean, new commercial packaging is treated differently from herbal blends with other ingredients, so check the current rules for your tea before you fly.

New Zealand: declare food and plant products, including tea, on your arrival declaration. Whether an item can come in depends on its packaging and how it was processed, and it may be inspected, so check your tea with MPI's checker (MPI: check if you can bring an item to New Zealand).

Elsewhere, check the destination's official customs pages before you travel. When in doubt, declare.

Practical packing

For packing, either keep teabags in their original commercial packaging, which makes any customs check faster and signals personal-use food clearly, or decant them into a clear resealable bag, which saves most of the box volume for a longer trip. Foil-wrapped bags survive humidity best, and a transparent bag also speeds any security inspection. See packing tips.

In-flight tea

On board, in-flight tea is constrained whatever the airline, and airlines vary in the brands they serve. The reason is structural: the water on board is often not at a full rolling boil, the milk is UHT, and the paper cup loses heat fast, so even good airlines cannot make British-standard tea aloft. If you have packed your own bags, most crews will give you hot water to brew in your own cup, which is still limited by the water temperature but usually beats the default.

What to buy

For travel-friendly teabags buy Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips. For a premium travel tea buy Yorkshire Tea Gold. For loose-leaf travel, see our loose leaf tea and a portable infuser, and browse our teaware.

Reference noted

- GOV.UK: hand luggage restrictions
- US Customs and Border Protection: agricultural items
- Australian Border Force: food
- Ministry for Primary Industries: check if you can bring an item to New Zealand

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Pack the cheapest plain teabags first and see how they travel. Bring the fancy tea once you know the plain one travelled well.

Travel reading

For broader travel-tea context see should I take my own teabags on holiday and best tea to take travelling. For why tea differs abroad see why does tea taste different abroad. For hotel-room brewing see how to make tea in a hotel room. For the expat angle see the expat care package.

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