

How long does it take to ship from China?

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It can take anything from a few days to well over a month to ship goods from China to destinations around the world. It ultimately comes down to cost and the transportation methods available to the destination.

In this article, we compare lead times for the following transportation alternatives:

- Air express

- Air economy
- Air ePackets
- Railway freight
- Sea freight

Sea freight lead times

Shipping by sea is the slowest method to transport goods from China to destinations around the world. Yet it's also the most cost-effective.

This is an overview of the port to port delivery time from Hong Kong, to destinations in the US, Europe and the Asia Pacific.

- Hong Kong – Los Angeles, USA: 20 days
- Hong Kong – New York, USA: 32 days
- Hong Kong – Felixstowe, UK: 29 days
- Hong Kong – Hamburg, Germany: 30 days
- Hong Kong – Singapore: 5 days
- Hong Kong – Sydney: 12 days

It takes about a month for cargo to reach destinations in Western Europe or the US East Coast. That said, you need to add at least another 7 days, sometimes more, to account for the time it takes to load and unload the cargo in both ports.

Air freight lead times

In terms of volume, air freight only makes up a fraction of the goods transported internationally. In terms of value, however, it's around 30% of the total.

This is explained by one thing; speed to market. [FedEx, DHL, TNT, and](#)

[other air freight companies](#) can deliver a parcel or box from anywhere in China to destinations worldwide, in only a few days. That said, speed comes at a cost.

Air freight can be up to ten times more expensive per shipped unit, compared to sea freight. But, you don't necessarily have to book express air freight. If you can wait a few more days, economy air freight might be a better option.

- Express Air Freight: 3 – 4 days
- Economy Air Freight: 7 – 12 days

ePacket Delivery Time

Some Chinese suppliers also [offer ePacket deliveries](#). While these may be phased out in the future, ePacket delivery allows companies to ship small parcels for next to nothing. But, with a delivery time between 2 to 4 weeks. This is the method used by most dropshippers in China.

Fulfillment Centers

Ecommerce companies are increasingly utilizing fulfillment centers in Hong Kong and Mainland China to deliver products to international customers. Rather than first shipping the cargo to your country, its transported to nearby Hong Kong and made available for global fulfillment within a matter of days.

Most fulfillment centers can offer both express and economy air freight. ePacket delivery can also be offered by some fulfillment centers in Hong Kong, which is [further detailed in this article](#).

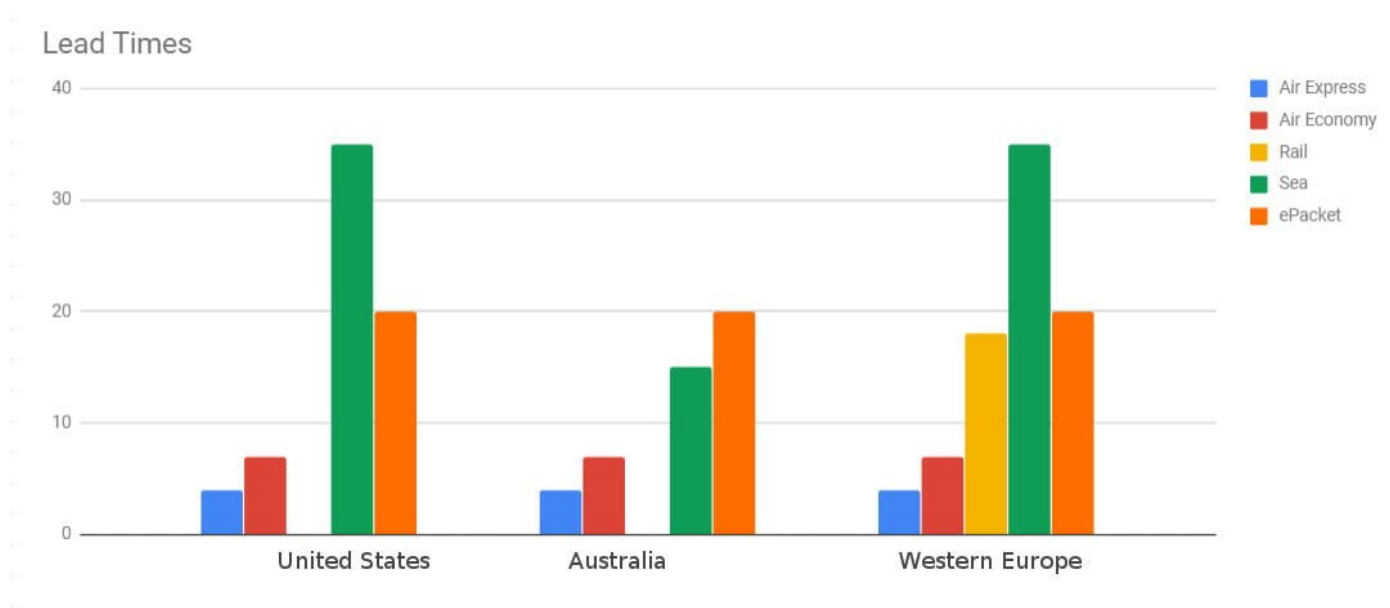
Railway freight lead times

[Railway freight has risen from obscurity](#) to an attractive complement to sea and air freight, on the China-Europe route. Railway freight is in between sea and air freight, in terms of cost and transportation time.

This is an overview of railway freight lead times [from Yiwu, Zhejiang](#), to various destinations in Europe:

- Yiwu – Berlin: 17 days
- Yiwu – London: 18 days
- Yiwu – Madrid: 21 days

Lead Time Comparison



Questions & Answer

How can I speed up the delivery time from China?

Air express is the fastest method to transport goods from your Chinese supplier. Yet, it's also the most expensive mode of transportation. Railway freight is a fast and alternative option for European companies. For US and

Australian businesses, air economy is the only way to move goods fast and relatively cheap.

We've also noted that many of our customers apply a mix of sea and air freight, to enjoy the benefits of speed and low costs. This can be achieved by dividing the shipment into one smaller lot, delivered by air economy, and the bulk delivered by sea freight.

As such, you can start selling your products only a week after the production is completed, while you don't need to waste money on expensive air freight.

Why is sea freight so slow?

Container ships traversing the oceans are obviously slower than aircraft. Furthermore, loading and unloading containers is also a time-consuming process which adds to the overall delivery time.

Is railway freight faster than sea freight?

Sea freight normally takes 35 days from China to Western Europe, when accounting for the additional time it takes to load and unload the cargo in both the port of loading and the port of destination.

Railway freight on the same route only takes 18 to 20 days, which is considerable [given that the cost is comparable to sea freight](#).