

# Duty Free Shopping - Great Bargains?

Let's face it - there is not much else to do at most airports than wander around looking at the shops, and occasionally getting the wallet out. Most of us tend to know exactly what we need to get, whether it is some aftershave, perfume, a bottle of whatever or perhaps some cigarettes, but for these more regular items where is the best place to buy them?

After all, any traveler on an international flight will generally have three choices when purchasing his or her duty free. There is the airport of departure, the plane and then the airport of arrival. Logically, some may think that the prices would be similar, not worth comparing, but how wrong they could be. Sometimes the price difference for exactly the same size, brand and product can be quite large, and it is definitely worth doing some homework before you spend your hard earned cash.

Don't believe us? Well, let us give you an idea of what you could save on a trip from Hong Kong to Bangkok. We have listed a few regular items with the prices at Hong Kong International Airport, China Airlines inflight Duty Free and the arrival Duty Free at Bangkok International Airport. Please note that the below prices are no longer valid but they still give you an example of what the price differences can be.

Product	Hong Kong Airport	China Airlines	Bangkok Airport
Mild Seven (200 x cigarettes)	HK\$ 120 (US\$ 15)	US\$ 12	THB 480 (US\$ 16)
Dunhill Top Leaf (200 x cigarettes)	HK\$ 200 (US\$ 26)	US\$ 20	THB 980 (US\$ 32.5)
Marlboro (200 x cigarettes)	HK\$ 110 (US\$ 14)	US\$ 11	THB 480 (US\$ 16)
Davidoff Magnum (200 x cigarettes)	HK\$ 225 (US\$ 29)	US\$ 27	n/a
Black Label Whisky (1 litre)	HK\$ 198 (US\$ 25.5)	US\$ 22	THB 850 (US\$ 28)
Macallan Whisky 12yo (1 litre)	HK\$ 288 (US\$ 37)	n/a	THB 1,620 (US\$ 54)
Chivas Regal Royal Salute (75cl)	HK\$ 800 (US\$ 103)	US\$ 62	THB 5,320 (US\$ 177)

See the differences? Of course with the cheaper items such as the cigarettes the differences are quite small but still worth thinking about. Take the Mild Seven cigarettes as an example: inflight they are only US\$ 12 at HKIA they cost HK\$ 120 which is roughly US\$ 15 and at BIA they are THB 480 which is roughly US\$ 16. By purchasing them online you save over US\$ 2 per carton of 200.

If we then compare the more expensive item such as the Chivas Regal Royal Salute bottle inflight it costs US\$ 62, at HKIA HK\$ 800 (roughly US\$ 103), and at BIA THB 5,320 (roughly US\$ 177 !!!). This really is staggering.

It must be understood that buying duty free inflight does pose one small risk and that is that the airline may not have the item you want in stock, which would leave you with no other option than buying on arrival. One example of this, is the new Dunhill Limited Edition My Mixture cigarettes which are not available inbound or outbound at Bangkok International Airport nor inflight most airlines we have flown with. Hong Kong International Airport does stock them.

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Please note that due to much tighter restrictions and laws in Thailand very few cigarettes are available on arrival. We would advise you to buy them on the plane or in the Duty Free shops on departure. Cigarettes are widely available however on departure from Thailand's International airport.

Also, in Hong Kong, you are only allowed to take in 60 cigarettes per person over 18 years of age. We have not come across any other country selling just three packets in Duty Free, but such a small amount is available on arrival in HKIA's Duty Free shops.

Cigarettes are simply not allowed to be taken into Singapore, so while they are extremely cheap on departure from Singapore's Duty-Free, if you get caught taking any cigarettes in to the city-state you will be fined.

It is always worth checking with your airline what products they stock, and their current prices. Plus it is very important to check the Duty Free allowance of the country you are flying to (and the country you may have to stop in (if you will need to go through customs) if it is not a direct flight). Hong Kong for example has a ridiculous allowance on cigarettes of just three packets, meaning you are forced to buy from the limited selection at HKIA on your arrival.

(Table edited acc. to current exchange rates)

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