

Can Your Supplier Air-Freight From Its Own Town?

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Usually not. Most Indian export towns have no busy international cargo airport, so urgent goods and samples are trucked to a gateway, most often Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru or Chennai. Delhi and Mumbai carried 58.5% of India's international air freight in FY2025–26.

Key takeaways

- Surat, Rajkot Hirasar, Indore, Visakhapatnam and Agartala airports moved no international freight in FY2025–26.
- Most north Indian craft towns fly from Delhi. Gujarat leans on Ahmedabad or Mumbai.
- Ask the supplier which city the goods or samples leave India from, and add the truck leg.
- For regular stock, ship on your own courier account or forwarder, not the supplier's.
- Forwarders use about 200 kg as a rough point where air and sea cost about the same.

Usually not. Most Indian export towns have no busy international cargo airport, so urgent goods and samples are trucked to a gateway first, most often Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru or Chennai. Delhi and Mumbai alone carried 58.5% of India's international air freight in FY2025–26, and five export towns' airports, Surat, Rajkot, Indore, Visakhapatnam and Agartala, handled none at all.



This matters when a buyer says "just fly it, the factory's next to an airport".. Below is what the official airport figures show, and the realistic airport for the main export towns, from our own map of 57 clusters. One caveat: the tonnages are official, but which airport a given supplier uses is our reading from those figures, so confirm it with the supplier or your forwarder.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01** **Delhi handled about 739,779 tonnes and Mumbai about 694,919 tonnes of international freight in FY2025-26, 58.5% of the national total between them. Bengaluru (336,545 t) and Chennai (329,865 t) came next. (AAI Traffic News, Annexure IV-A, March 2026, our share calculation)**
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02 Five export-town airports moved no international freight in the year: Surat, Rajkot Hirasar, Indore, Visakhapatnam and Agartala. *(Same source)*

03 Busy craft towns sit next to small cargo airports. Jaipur handled about 2,144 t, Varanasi 999 t and Srinagar 198 t of international freight, against Delhi's 739,779. *(Same source)*

What we don't know yet

□ Which airport each supplier actually books. Airports publish tonnage, not who sent it.

Why Can't My Supplier Just Use the Local Airport?

An airport can be open to international passengers and still be almost useless for export cargo. Freight needs scheduled cargo space, a customs-cleared cargo terminal and airlines that sell it, and those sit where the volume is. India's volume sits in a handful of cities. Delhi and Mumbai moved 58.5% of the country's international air freight in FY2025–26 by our calculation from the Airports Authority's own table, and the next two, Bengaluru and Chennai, take most of the rest.

So for a supplier in a town with a quiet airport, "air freight" really means a truck to the gateway, export clearance, and a flight from there. That's fine, as long as you plan for it.

Which Airport Will My Goods Fly From?

Here's the departure airport we estimate for the main export towns on our map. The tonnage is official: the town's nearest airport in FY2025–26, from the [AAI table](#). The last column is not official. It's our estimate, made from those cargo figures and the distance to the nearest busy gateway.

Export town	Nearest airport, FY26 international freight (official)	Departure airport
Surat (diamonds, jewellery)	Surat, 0 t	Mumbai
Morbi, Rajkot (tiles, engineering)	Rajkot Hirasar, 0 t	Ahmedabad
Indore, Dewas (soya, pharma)	Indore, 0 t	Mumbai
Visakhapatnam, Bhimavaram (seafood)	Visakhapatnam, 0 t	Chennai or Hyderabad
Agartala (bamboo, cane)	Agartala, 0 t	Kolkata
Jaipur (handicrafts)	Jaipur, about 2,144 t	Delhi
Bhadohi, Mirzapur, Varanasi (carpets)	Varanasi, 999 t	Delhi
Srinagar (handicrafts)	Srinagar, about 198 t	Delhi
Ludhiana, Jalandhar	Amritsar, about 1,845 t	Delhi
Tiruppur, Coimbatore	Coimbatore, about 1,908 t	Chennai, Bengaluru
Moradabad, Agra, Panipat, Noida	Delhi, about 739,779 t	Delhi
Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad, about 63,539 t	Ahmedabad

The departure airport column is our estimate from the official airport cargo figures and distance, graded Indicative, not a fact about any supplier. Most north Indian craft towns land on Delhi. Gujarat leans on Ahmedabad or Mumbai. Tamil Nadu's textile belt has three possible hubs, and Tiruppur in particular isn't settled by any public source, so ask.



Surat has one wrinkle worth knowing. The customs list of connected sites includes an air cargo station at the Surat Diamond Bourse ([CBIC / ICEGATE list, Feb 2024](#)), yet Surat airport moved no international freight in the year. So paperwork may start in Surat while the goods still fly from Mumbai. Check this with your forwarder if you buy jewellery there.

What Does That Mean for Samples?

Samples usually go by express courier, not air cargo, and the same geography applies. The parcel still has to reach a gateway with international

flights. Ask your supplier one question before you count the days: "Which city does it leave India from?" If the answer is a truck ride away, add that.

Two more things catch buyers out, by their own accounts on forums. First, when the supplier ships on its own courier account, the courier often ends up as the importer of record, which matters if you ever want duty back ([r/ecommerce, 2026](#)). Second, couriers sometimes classify goods wrongly, and one US distributor said the wrong tariffs "are starting to add up" ([r/smallbusiness, 2025](#)). For a one-off sample, fine. For regular stock, use your own account or your own forwarder. Our [freight forwarder guide](#) covers when that's worth it.

When Is Air Worth It Over Sea?

For small lots, more often than people think. Forwarders on a UK small-business forum use about 200 kg as the point where air and sea cost roughly the same on India shipments, and below it sea saves little and takes six to eight weeks ([r/smallbusinessuk, 2024](#)). Another forwarder notes that for small air shipments an express courier often beats a forwarder, because forwarders' minimum charges bite ([r/logistics, 2025](#)). Those are practitioner rules of thumb, not published rates, so get both quotes for your own lot.



What air can't fix is the inland leg. If your supplier is in Bhadohi, the truck to Delhi is part of the air plan, and so is export clearance at Delhi. [SourcingSync](#) can arrange pickup, export paperwork and the flight from the right gateway if you'd rather not run it from abroad.

FAQ

Can I air-freight directly from Surat? ^

Surat airport moved no international freight in FY2025–26, so our estimate, from the official airport cargo figures, is that goods fly from Mumbai. Confirm it with your supplier or forwarder.

Which Indian airports handle the most export cargo? v

Will my samples from Jaipur fly from Jaipur?



Do I need a forwarder for air freight from India?

