

THINKING ABOUT GOING GREY?

Grey Imports, Before you buy

What seems attractive at first glance often hides a very different story underneath.

So it is when it comes to grey imports. Buying goods cheaply doesn't always mean you're getting great value. There are hidden pitfalls many of us are unaware of. And unfortunately, if the truth is revealed, the penalties can be rather more serious than mere personal embarrassment...

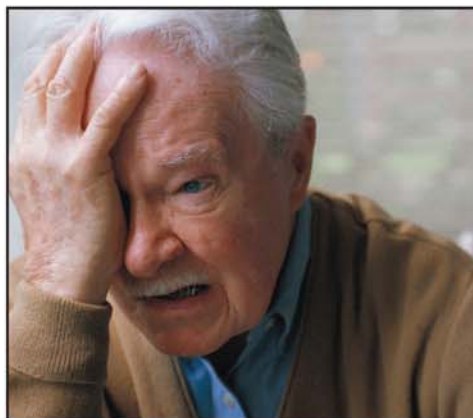
Things you should know before going grey...

- Sigma lenses sourced from foreign markets will not include the valuable addition of Sigma Imaging (UK) Ltd's extended UK warranty, offering an extra two years free of charge to provide an unrivalled three years' peace of mind.
- Retailers operating outside the UK may not include VAT in the price of goods, so at first glance their offers may appear very attractive. However the purchaser then has to transport the item back to the UK, with two obvious disadvantages:

a) If the goods go missing during transportation then the responsibility of tracing or replacing them – if the purchaser has been prudent enough to take out expensive insurance cover – falls to the customer. The vendor has received his money and will show no further interest.

b) As a UK resident the purchaser is legally required, upon receipt of the goods, to pay import duty and VAT. For peace of mind it is advisable to check the small print of the vendor's documentation. According to HM Revenue and Customs, unscrupulous overseas suppliers may falsely describe or value items to evade import duty. If the Customs declaration form on the parcel is found to be misleading then the recipient may be liable to financial penalty or prosecution. Purchasers may even have to forfeit the goods.

You may have heard from friends and acquaintances of grey imports 'slipping through the net', but this is fast becoming a thing of the past as HM Revenue and Customs address the issue more thoroughly. The Post Office may also charge the addressee for clearing the package through Customs, and even hold the goods if the contents have not been properly declared by the sender. Post Office fees for doing so are completely separate to Customs charges.



- If a desire to avoid paying VAT and import duty overcomes the above obstacles, then perhaps common sense will prevail. It is a widely accepted practice outside the UK not to sell the complete package that you would expect. Lens caps, lens hoods, back caps, accessories, cords, power leads, chargers and even instruction booklet are removed from the box and sold as optional extras.

- While legitimate goods have been handled responsibly by importers, wholesalers and retailers, grey imports have often exchanged hands many times. Often they have been removed from their protective packaging and stored in damp, humid conditions, encouraging the growth of fungal spores in optics and seriously affecting the efficiency and life span of the microelectronics in today's high tech. products.
- To sum up, grey importers can only undercut legitimate retailers because of their irregular practices.

Their overheads are much reduced because they have no showrooms; help lines or workshops with knowledgeable staff. They offer no service, support or back up. The knock-on effect is that independent and trustworthy importers and retailers, who offer the above advantages to customers, will disappear.

- So don't confuse cheap with value for money. If in doubt, contact Sigma Imaging with your serial number for further advice.

For more information, please see www.hmrc.gov.uk

Sigma Imaging (UK) Ltd does not condone the avoidance of the payment of VAT and import duty. Any claims on our 12 month International Warranty from the owners of products not imported into the UK by Sigma Imaging (UK) Ltd must therefore be accompanied by proof of payment of import duty & VAT.

SIGMA

SIGMA Imaging (UK) Ltd. 13 Little Mundells, Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire, AL7 1EW, United Kingdom
Tel: 01707 329999 • Fax: 01707 327822 • E-Mail: sales@sigma-imaging-uk.com
Web: www.sigma-imaging-uk.com