

SERVICE GUIDE

Next Flight Out: A Shipper's Guide to NFO and to Choosing Between NFO and OBC

For logistics buyers deciding between hand-carry and priority air freight — the trade-offs in weight, transit time, documents and risk, set out side by side.

• Service Guide • FlashGL • 2026

Contents

WHAT'S INSIDE

-
- 01 What NFO is
 - 02 Hard limits
 - 03 Three mechanics
 - 04 Four-step process
 - 05 OBC vs NFO
 - 06 Where NFO wins outright
 - 07 Before you book
 - 08 Export documents
 - 09 How priority booking works
 - 10 Lane transit times
 - 11 What breaks an NFO shipment
 - 12 Case: Ningbo to Houston
 - 13 FAQ
-

Next Flight Out is priority air cargo on the earliest available commercial flight. Your shipment is tendered as freight — not consolidated, not queued behind a full container — and cleared at both ends before the aircraft lands.

NFO exists because OBC has a ceiling: **200 kg per courier** and a three-side sum under **180 cm**. Above that, hand-carry stops being an option and priority air freight takes over, up to **2,000 kg per shipment** and **24–48 hours door-to-door**.

Most buyers we talk to are not choosing between NFO and standard air freight. They are choosing between NFO and OBC, and they are doing it under time pressure with incomplete cost data. This guide is built for that decision. It puts the two modes side by side across eight dimensions, names the situations where NFO is unambiguously correct, lists the export documents you must have ready, explains how priority booking actually works, and closes with a real Ningbo to Houston run — including the 26-hour layover that pushed it well past the target window. We publish the bad numbers too.

| NFO in four numbers

≤ 2,000 kg Per shipment	24–48 h Door-to-door target	10 min Quote with confirmed routing	200+ Airports served
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| Three mechanics that make NFO fast

• Priority tender, not consolidation Your cargo is booked as priority freight on the earliest available flight. It does not sit in a warehouse waiting for a container to fill up.	• Dual-end clearance Licensed brokers prepare the export declaration and the import entry in parallel — before the cargo is tendered, not after it lands.	• One chain, both ground legs Origin pickup and airport-to-door delivery at destination run under a single chain of custody, with photographic proof of delivery.
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| Four steps, one accountable owner

- 01 Submit your request**
Share the commodity, weight, dimensions and deadline. We check real flight availability first, then quote — within 10 minutes, with a routing attached.
- 02 Pickup and export documents**
We collect the cargo, prepare the export declaration and classify the HS code, then tender it to the airline as priority freight.

03

Priority air transit

Your shipment flies on the next available commercial flight, tracked in real time through every leg and transfer.

04

Customs and delivery

Pre-cleared at destination, released from airside, delivered to the recipient with proof of receipt and a time-stamped record.

OBC vs NFO, dimension by dimension

FACTOR	OBC (ON BOARD COURIER)	NFO (NEXT FLIGHT OUT)
Weight ceiling	≤ 200 kg per courier	≤ 2,000 kg per shipment
Dimensions	Sum of 3 sides < 180 cm	Per airline AQR restrictions
Door-to-door	6–24 hours	24–48 hours
Who travels with it	A vetted courier, physically, the whole way	No courier — the cargo moves as declared priority freight
Handling points	None. Cargo terminals are bypassed entirely	Airline cargo handling at origin, transfer and destination
Documents	Invoice, packing list, AWB, commodity licences	AWB, export declaration, import entry; more for regulated commodities
Customs	Dual-end, pre-cleared while the courier is airborne	Dual-end, prepared before the cargo is tendered
Cost profile	Highest per kg — you are buying a seat and a person	Materially lower per kg on anything above hand-carry size
Best for	One small piece, an extreme deadline, high value or high sensitivity	200–2,000 kg, multi-piece cargo, deadlines measured in one to two days
Main risk	One courier on one flight — a cancellation needs an immediate re-route	Airline capacity and customs dwell — both actively managed, both real

Both modes are run from the same Budapest operations centre and quoted on the same call. Cost depends on lane, weight and deadline — we do not publish rate cards, and we return a firm figure within 10 minutes rather than a range.

Where NFO is the correct answer

SITUATION	WHY OBC FAILS	WHAT NFO DOES INSTEAD
A single piece over 200 kg	Above the per-courier carried allowance	Books the piece as declared priority freight

Volume too large for one courier	Would need multiple couriers on multiple flights, fragmenting custody	One booking, one AWB, one accountable owner
Sum of three sides at or above 180 cm	Exceeds the hand-carry dimensional limit	Sized against airline AQR limits and crated where required
Deadline is one to two days, not hours	You pay for speed the shipment does not need	Meets the deadline at materially lower cost per kg
Several pieces to one consignee	Split custody across couriers breaks the chain of custody	One consignment, one customs entry, one delivery
Commodity barred from accompanied baggage	Hand-carry is not a permitted mode	Tendered as declared air cargo under the correct classification
Dangerous goods above hand-carry quantity	Volume exceeds what a courier may carry	Shipped under IATA DGR as declared cargo

Read this table as a routing rule, not a preference. If your shipment matches any row, OBC is the wrong purchase regardless of how urgent it feels.

Before you book: have these ready

Complete this list before the first call. Accuracy here is what keeps a booking on the flight it was promised.

- ☐ Origin pickup address, with an on-site contact name and mobile number
- ☐ Piece count, and the weight and dimensions of every piece
- ☐ Commodity description in plain language, and the HS code if you have it
- ☐ Whether the cargo is stackable, plus any orientation or handling constraints
- ☐ Required delivery date, and the hard deadline sitting behind it
- ☐ Consignee details for the import entry, including tax ID where applicable
- ☐ Licence or permit, if the commodity is controlled, dual-use or strategic
- ☐ Temperature requirement, if the shipment needs controlled conditions
- ☐ Dangerous goods classification and DGR documentation, if applicable

Export documentation for NFO

DOCUMENT	PROVIDED BY	WHAT TO WATCH
Commercial invoice	Shipper	Declared value drives both insurance cover and duty assessment — make it accurate
Packing list	Shipper	Piece count and weights must match the physical cargo exactly

Air waybill (AWB)	FlashGL	Check the consignee and notify party before we tender
Export declaration	FlashGL brokers	Filed against the correct HS code before the flight is booked
Certificate of Origin	Shipper	Required for preferential duty treatment on many lanes
Licence or permit	Shipper	Controlled, dual-use and strategic goods — obtain it before pickup, not after
Import entry	FlashGL brokers	Prepared in parallel with export so destination clearance never waits
DGR declaration	Prepared by FlashGL to IATA DGR	Dangerous goods must be declared at the request stage
Power of attorney	Consignee or shipper	Needed before a broker can file on your behalf in some jurisdictions

Customs delays are the most common cause of disruption and the most preventable. Every item below is cheaper to get right before tender than to fix after arrival.

How priority air cargo booking actually works

- **Availability first, price second**

The first question is which aircraft can physically lift your cargo on your date. We confirm that, then quote. It is why a FlashGL quote comes back in 10 minutes with a real routing attached rather than a rate card and a caveat.

- **Tendered as priority, not standard**

Priority freight is not held until a container is full. Your cargo moves on the flight it was booked on, against the carrier's own priority handling rules.

- **Booked against airline AQR limits**

Every carrier sets aircraft quantity restrictions — what a specific aircraft type can accept, by dimension and by weight distribution. Oversize pieces are routed to an aircraft that can take them, not squeezed onto one that cannot.

- **Alternate options held open**

If a booked flight cancels or rolls, the re-route starts immediately. Ask your coordinator to name the alternate before you approve the booking.

Core lane transit times, door-to-door

LANE	DOOR-TO-DOOR
PVG → LAX	12–16 h
PVG → SFO	12–16 h
HKG → LAX	12–15 h
ICN → LAX	11–14 h

TPE → SJC	10–13 h
PVG → JFK (NFO)	16–20 h

Figures below are FlashGL seed data for main lanes and assume documents are complete at booking. Shanghai Pudong (PVG) handled about 3.78 million tonnes of cargo in 2024 and sits beside the Waigaoqiao bonded zone, where cargo can be held duty-free pending clearance; Hong Kong (HKG) handled about 4.94 million tonnes, the largest air cargo hub in the world.

The two things that break an NFO shipment

Capacity and paperwork. Capacity: a booked flight cancels or rolls, and your cargo waits for the next departure — the flying time is a fraction of the door-to-door figure, the connection is the rest. Paperwork: an HS code is wrong, a licence is missing, or the declared value does not match the invoice, and the shipment sits at customs while the deadline passes. Both are manageable when handled before tender. Give us accurate commodity data and complete documents at the request stage and most of the risk disappears before the truck leaves.

Case: Ningbo to Houston, door-to-door

Jun 3 · 13:37 ● Inquiry received

Manufacturing client, critical components bound for a Houston production line that could not be allowed to stop.

Jun 3 · 13:42 ● Flight availability confirmed

Five minutes after the call: TK6593 PVG to IST and TK0033 IST to IAH identified and held.

Jun 3 · 13:58 ● Quote issued

21 minutes from inquiry, with the full routing attached. Client confirmed at 16:42 the same afternoon.

Jun 4 · 19:06 ● Factory pickup

Ningbo to the PVG warehouse by truck; cargo checked in at 22:18 the same night.

Jun 6 · 05:42 ● TK6593 departs PVG

Arrived Istanbul 11:47. Transit layover at IST ran 26 h 46 min — the single largest block of time in the whole move.

Jun 7 · 14:33 ● TK0033 departs IST

Arrived Houston IAH at 18:12 local.

Jun 8 · 16:49 ● Destination ground leg starts

Driver collected the cargo at IAH after US customs release, 22 h 37 min after arrival on the clock.

Jun 9 · 08:33 ● Delivered to the client facility

5 days 18 h 56 min door-to-door, 10 milestones tracked and communicated. Zero production downtime at the Houston plant.

| Frequently asked questions

Q Is NFO cheaper than OBC?

Per kilogram, yes — materially. OBC buys an aircraft seat and a person; NFO buys priority freight space. The gap widens fast once you are above hand-carry size. Both are quoted on the same call, and the figure depends on lane, weight and deadline — returned within 10 minutes rather than as a range.

Q How much weight can NFO carry?

Up to 2,000 kg per shipment, subject to the carrier's aircraft quantity restrictions on dimensions. Above that, or when your volume is large enough to fill a hold, ask for an air charter quote instead.

Q How fast is NFO really?

24–48 hours door-to-door is the target, and the lane table above shows what that looks like on main corridors. Real transit depends on the connection and on customs. The Ningbo to Houston run took 5 days 19 hours because of a 26-hour Istanbul layover. We publish it because buyers should see the range, not only the best case.

Q Does NFO include customs clearance?

Yes, dual-end. Licensed brokers file the export declaration and prepare the import entry in parallel before the cargo is tendered. Accurate HS classification across all 97 chapters is what keeps it moving; bonded zone and free trade zone entry and exit are handled where they apply.

Q Can NFO handle oversize cargo or dangerous goods, and what packaging do I need?

Oversize yes, against airline AQR limits and crated where the routing requires it. Dangerous goods yes, declared up front and packed, marked and labelled to IATA DGR — our staff are IATA DGR trained. Packaging is industry-standard export packing or custom crating; fragile, high-value and long-transit cargo should be crated. Ask at the quote stage and we will specify the requirement against your actual routing.

Get both quotes in 10 minutes

Send us the city pair, weight, dimensions and your real deadline. We come back with an NFO routing and an OBC routing side by side, with the trade-off explained — not whichever mode we prefer to sell. Email service@flashgl.com or call the 24/7 desk +86 400-011-9188.

REQUEST A QUOTE

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