

How to Import Porcelain Tiles from China in 2026

A Buyer's Guide · 2026 Edition

Sourcing tiles from China can cut your cost dramatically — or turn into a costly mistake. Here's how to do it right, based on 19 years inside the industry.

1. Define your specification first

Before contacting any factory, fix the essentials: size, thickness, finish (polished / matte / structured), water absorption, PEI rating, slip rating and packing (boxes per sqm). A written spec sheet is your single most powerful quality tool.

2. Choose the right supplier

Foshan is the global centre of tile manufacturing, but not every factory suits every buyer. Match the factory to your volume, quality tier and lead time. Verify export history and, where possible, visit or commission a factory audit.

For the full solution, live inventory and factory list, visit L&Q GLOBAL:
<https://lqglobalcn.com/solutions>

3. Control quality, not just price

The cheapest quote often hides shade variation, flatness issues or inconsistent lots. Approve physical samples, keep a sealed reference tile, and require pre-shipment inspection before loading. This single step prevents most disputes.

4. Consolidate to cut logistics cost

If you source from multiple factories, consolidate into full containers (FCL) or share a container (LCL) to reduce per-unit freight. A sourcing partner can coordinate timing so everything ships together.

5. Calculate landed cost, not ex-factory price

Your real cost is FOB price + ocean freight + insurance + import duty + last-mile. Always compare on landed cost, and build in a realistic buffer for timelines.

Conclusion

Importing porcelain tiles from China rewards buyers who plan, specify and verify. With the right partner on the ground, you get the price advantage without the risk.

Tile classification by water absorption (GB/T 4100 / ISO 13006)

Use water absorption to match the tile to its environment. The international standard classifies ceramic tiles as:

- Porcelain (瓷质砖): water absorption $E \leq 0.5\%$ — densest, lowest moisture, best for floors, wet areas and outdoors.
- Stoneware (炻瓷砖): $0.5\% < E \leq 3\%$ — durable, common for indoor floor and wall.
- Fine stoneware (细炻砖): $3\% < E \leq 6\%$.
- Stoneware (炻质砖): $6\% < E \leq 10\%$.
- Ceramic / Faience (陶质砖): $E > 10\%$ — light, best for dry indoor walls.

For most export projects, porcelain ($E \leq 0.5\%$) is the default choice for flooring because of its strength and low water absorption.

Pre-shipment QC checklist

Before containers load, verify these items against the approved sample and written spec:

- Dimensions & flatness: size deviation, edge straightness and surface flatness within tolerance.
- Water absorption: confirm grade matches specification (e.g. porcelain $\leq 0.5\%$).
- Shade & batch consistency: tiles from the same order should share colour and calibre; check carton batch codes.
- Surface & finish: no cracks, chipping, pinholes or glaze defects on visible faces.
- Packaging & marking: correct boxes per sqm, intact cartons, clear shipping marks and destination.
- Quantity: full count against the packing list before sealing the container.

Frequently asked questions

Q: What is the best way to import porcelain tiles from China?

Work with an independent sourcing partner or vetted factory, lock specifications in writing, require pre-shipment inspection, and consolidate shipments to save on freight.

Q: How much does it cost to import tiles from China?

FOB price varies by size, finish and quality, plus ocean freight, insurance, import duty and last-mile delivery. Always calculate landed cost, not just ex-factory price.

Q: How do I avoid bad quality when sourcing from China?

Verify the factory, approve physical samples, use a written specification sheet, and commission pre-shipment inspection before loading.

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