

Buying a Spanish car outside of Spain

This subject was covered some months ago, but more and more folks are making enquiries having seen a Spanish registered car back in the UK. It may be that more and more Brits have been going back and taking their cars with them

The understandable belief is that returning a Spanish car to its last home is straightforward and less expensive than bringing in a UK plated vehicle; well it is normally less expensive but potentially problematic so it is vital to get the facts straight before parting with your hard earned cash

Exported from Spain or not?

The main question to consider is whether the car has been declared exported via Trafico; this is distinct from being imported into the UK and registered with DVLA. It comes as a surprise to most people that as yet there is no communication between these two authorities regarding the import and export of vehicles, so Trafico do not tell DVLA that a car now has Spanish registration and vice versa

If a car was declared exported from Spain then it needs to be re-imported and whilst this is no problem in most cases, it can be problematic for older cars, say pre-1997.

Re-import means that the car either has to match its Certificate of Conformity or be inspected by an engineer to ensure that it is still acceptable here; mainly this is a formality. If the car has changed in any way, such as a tow bar being fitted, spoilers or extra lights added then approval may not be given immediately. It will also need an ITV inspection before the paperwork is dealt with

Vehicles that have not been declared exported on the face of it should be simpler to deal with, but as most Spanish cars in the UK are sold by dealers and not by the previous owner we can be faced by a bureaucratic nightmare of the type initiated during the Spanish Inquisition. If you buy directly from the last owner all should be well as he will have all of the papers required (log book, ITV card etc.). In these cases we proceed as if the car had never left the country

Buying from dealers

When a car is bought from a dealer he will hopefully also have the required paperwork which includes the last owner's passport and NIE certificate; if he does not this is where the problems start. Often people approach me after purchasing from a UK dealer who may have acquired it from another dealer and no-one is in contact with the last owner. We have to prove that the buyer has acquired the vehicle legally and whilst an invoice from the dealer certainly helps, Trafico cannot get their heads around why the car was bought and sold in the UK when it is still on their books. You have to bear in mind that certain types of Civil Servants don't live in the real world so it is inconceivable to them that someone didn't follow the correct procedures

So what to do?

Firstly, do not take the word of a dealer that all is in order. This is not to malign the reputation of second hand car merchants who as we all know enjoy an impeccable reputation worldwide, but because he may not be familiar with the complexities of car registration in Spain. It is vital that you obtain a background check on the car which will give much information including whether the car has been declared exported or not and if there are any outstanding debts; it will not show however if the road tax (IVTM) is fully paid up, so you could be clobbered for this

Buying Spanish could save you money, specifically as the registration tax was paid when the car was first registered here; this applies even if the car is now on UK plates but be careful and seek specialist advice before going ahead

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