

Campervans

Many people who like the freedom to wander prefer campers to caravans. The price of new ones is mind-boggling. For this reason I receive many enquiries, particularly at this time of the year from people looking to buy a motor home from another country as they are less expensive outside of Spain.

If any vehicle was owned before coming to Spain which in practice means registering on the Padron they are imported under the “change of residence” regime without hindrance. So what is different about re-registering a motor home as opposed to a car or motorbike?

The main obstacle can be the age of the vehicle as it may not conform to the latest standards. Apart from change of residence, there are three ways in which a motor home may be re-registered; the same applies to cars, but less cars fall foul of the regulations. The cost of each process varies considerably

Historic vehicles

Any vehicle more than 25 years old can be re-registered in the condition in which it was manufactured and generally any modern attachments accepted so if you have an ageing VW micro bus, you should have no real problems apart from rust, lack of power, under performing brakes etc. but who cares; it's your cool baby

Modern vehicles

Trying to define modern in this context is not easy as it varies from brand to brand and no I don't mean whether it has a satellite dish or self flushing loo. It means whether it has European Type Approval (homologation), the system of Europe wide standards that has been applied to cars for over 20 years, but more recently to motor homes

The first motor homes had a basic body bolted to a chassis. The same chassis could be used for a variety of applications such as having a box body, a small crane or just be a flat bed. This system persisted for many years and to an extent still does. Builders of these vehicles bought in chassis from say Mercedes or Fiat (remember the Talbots?) and built coachworks onto it. There have been thousands of different designs with beds at the back, on the side and almost on the roof when Luton boxes made an appearance. For many years, just the chassis had homologation, but not the coachworks and therefore not the entire vehicle. The homologation must apply to the whole build for it to be accepted for re-registration

Unit importation

This regime is used where a vehicle does not have homologation and is not being imported under change of residence. The vehicle is re-registered as if it were the only one ever made and undergoes a thorough examination in order to gain its vital statistics in terms of size, weight, specification etc. the biggest stumbling block here is that the emissions must comply to at least the Euro 3 standard

Why does this affect you?

If your motor home (or any other vehicle for that matter) does not qualify under the above three headings, don't buy it!! A few people have said to me, "ah well, I'll leave it on English plates and take a risk as I won't use it much" Fair enough, but it's like having no insurance, saves a bit of money up front, but extremely expensive if something does go wrong- your choice

The oft repeated tale about homes on wheels is that the door must be on the right hand side i.e. that facing the kerb when normally parked. Now I can't deny that jumping out of the door when it is on the side of the traffic is potentially suicidal, but this applies wherever the door is, so yes you can have a door on the left side of your motor home or caravan, so there! It can be right hand drive too, another myth in the bin

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