

## Homes on wheels

Ah, the freedom of the road; touring this beautiful country with no pressure of time or just taking a short break. A caravan or motorhome allows us to wander at will, stay for as long as we like and move on when we fancy; fantastic if neighbours have pitched in from hell or you need a break from the folks who are normally next door

Springtime is when most people with a yen to escape consider buying a home on wheels whether powered or not. Buying a Spanish registered vehicle is the simplest option, but the specifications are generally lower than UK models and the prices, as with cars, are sky high. Of course you may have brought such a vehicle from home and need to make it legal

### Ownership before or after coming to Spain

As is normally the case if you owned a vehicle before coming to Spain, re-registration is straightforward. This is due to a regime known as Change of Residence (Cambio de Residencia) which is positive discrimination in favour of us foreigners over the natives, allowing us to bring our personal vehicles with us to this country. And no, you do not need to take up permanent residency to qualify under this system despite what the bar room lawyers may say

If you purchase a vehicle after coming here (which in practice means signing on the Padron) then the same rules apply to us as to Spaniards. This means that the vehicle must have European Type Approval. This standard applies to most cars and bikes but less often to caravans and motor homes as standards were agreed later for these vehicles

### Caravan and trailer registration

Many expats are unaware that their caravan or trailer needs to be registered in Spain too. A caravan or trailer over 750 Kg has to follow the same process of registration as do powered vehicles. Proof of registration in your home country is also required; although DVLA do not provide caravan documents, CRiS registration via the Caravan Council is perfectly acceptable proof

If your caravan has a Certificate of Conformity it can go straight to an ITV centre for inspection of the brakes, tyres and lights. You will also need to have the gas and electric installations inspected independently; be careful here as many of these inspectors charge an extortionate fee for this simple process; whilst sensible ones like the one I use exist, they are less easy to find. If you do not have a CoC then the engineer's report (ficha reducida) acts in lieu and is more flexible

After the mechanical bits have been sorted the registration process itself takes place and you will eventually be issued with a red number plate. Unless you have patience that would put Mother Theresa to shame, speak Spanish, have infinite time at your disposal and masochistic tendencies you may find it less stressful to pay a professional to do this for you. They are easy to spot as they have pulled all of their

hair out, fingernails are chewed to the bone and after a drink or two can be found hiding in a corner babbling in Spanish.

### Lashing out

Motor homes and campervans follow the same process as for caravans and trailers except that the engine emissions are tested and the headlights checked to ensure that they do not point to the left hand kerb. In addition the drive shafts and steering mechanism go through the fearful process that shakes the vehicle as if it were off-roading, so keep the crystal glasses that the mother-in-law bought well lashed down or her tongue will lash you.

Many expats buy older vehicles because they are more cost effective. Quite a few buyers get pretty upset when advised that their new pride and joy cannot be registered. Please do not assume that because a vehicle is registered in another EU country it will automatically be accepted into Spain, so before you start your search or hand over any cash check it out first

Happy camping!

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