

Do I need to be a resident to have a car in Spain?

Last week I took a call from a chap in Barcelona who asked if he could re-register his 7.5 tonne truck in Spain. “Not if it is right hand drive as RHD commercials cannot be registered here”. I explained “Oh”, he said “I use it as a camper van is that OK?”. “In principle yes, if it is registered in the UK as a camper” I replied. “Oh no I just use it to sleep in”. In that case not unless it is firstly registered as a camper in the UK” was my advice.

“By the way, are you a resident of Spain?” No, I’m just touring”. “Well it is not possible to register a vehicle here or indeed in any country unless you have an address to register it to”

This type of enquiry is unusual but the responses serve to answer many questions. As is typical, questions come along in batches and in the last week or so there have been many from enquirers who have stated “I hear that it is necessary to be a resident of Spain in order to register a vehicle here, is that so?”

Emphatically no is the answer. Many of my past and no doubt future clients are merely holiday- homers in Spain, spending the bulk of their time in their country of origin. There is no problem in them registering vehicles because they have an address here, whether full time or not

Alright, so what do I need?

So what documents are required in order to register a vehicle? Well firstly an original registration document, referred to by us old-timers as a log book, is mandatory. Whilst it is not impossible to register a vehicle here if the log book is not in your name it will certainly incur extra taxes if not. Secondly an NIE certificate is required which the chap in Barcelona did not have. Finally, proof of address; this can be a Padron which is a document confirming that you are registered at your Ayuntamiento (Town Hall), or escritura (property deeds), or rental agreement or letter from your campsite

The mystery of the Padron

Note that the Padron is not generally mandatory for re-registration or even buying a Spanish plated car. You can get it from most, but not all, Town Halls as a part-timer. What I find odd is that each Town Hall receives an amount of money from higher authority for each person registered, but whilst in most towns the process is simple and free, others put hurdles in the way making it a chore and downright difficult, but why, when it is in their interest? I have given up trying to apply Anglo-Saxon logic to the Spanish mindset as it is an exercise in futility and frustration. Most clients supply the escritura as proof of address

What to do next

So you have a caravan in Beni-by-the-Mar. Firstly ask the site management for a letter confirming that you reside there, leg it to the Policia Nacional to apply for an NIE certificate, then hop it to the ITV station with your log book and get on with it.

I have registered vehicles in such circumstances but am equally aware that the rules and regulations change from province to province, so there are bound to be exceptions and this is where the misinformation starts. Someone somewhere had a problem and assuming that his situation was universal hit the social media and convinces people that this or that cannot be done when in fact each situation is unique and there are always, all right then nearly always, solutions

Equally there are exceptions, but if your vehicle was made for the EU market, it should be a breeze to make it Spanish. This applies universally whether you are an EU citizen, or from Switzerland and Norway for example which are not in the uncommon market and so should equally apply post Brexit

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