

Them and Us

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

[Reinhold Niebuhr](#)

I'm sure that many of us once had a plaque displaying these wise words. Mind you I bet that dear old Reinhold didn't live in Spain or he may not have been so serene. At least that is the conclusion that I have drawn after hearing the same old moans in words and writing from a certain element of the expat community

“Why does everything have to close in the afternoon; the siesta should be abolished”, “what a load of paperwork; haven't they heard of computers?”, “the police only pick on foreign drivers”, “why don't they drive properly around roundabouts?”

And so on, I'm sure that you all have your favourite expat moan. Believe me if anyone has a reason to complain, it is people like me who deal daily with the incredible bureaucracy. The rules change constantly; they are interpreted differently by different officials on a random basis. “Yes” may change to “no” the next time the question is asked. But I tell you what; it is absolutely no different for the natives and it has sure made me creative in finding ways around the problem; thank God or I would be in the loony bin by now! But hey, rough with the smooth eh?

Driving in Spain

You must have all noticed that the driving style in Spain is different from “back home”. The lack of indicator use is irritating to us, but you can learn to adopt by watching vehicles subtle movements to see where they are going. Conversely back in the UK how many times do we get caught out when an indicator is wrongly used or not cancelled and we pull out in front of the car? Mind you my Britishness occasionally comes to the fore when I want to exit a T junction and would have had plenty of time if the other driver had let me know that he was turning into it. “Silly Fool” or similar words starting with the same letters spring from my lips

It is not in the Hispanic nature to give way; whereas in the UK fellow road users not only expect you to give way, but demand it or you risk verbals, hand shaking with an imaginary sauce bottle, or worse. Personal choice, but I know which I prefer. OK so parking can be anarchic, but better this than be worried about the clamping mafia

On multi-lane roundabouts in Spain, the outside lanes are for overtaking only, so the vehicle on the right hand lane always has priority. Yes it may be prudent to take the outside lane if you are going right round, but you still have to cut across the inside lane to make an exit, so you could play safe and stay in that lane anyway

Cyclists

Now here's a subject that brings out the vitriol. It has been alleged that in the event of an accident between a cyclist and a car the law will generally support the two-wheeler. This may be why a section of these road users think that they own the road. No I do not mean you sir. I am well aware that you always stay close to the kerb, wear bright clothing, signal your intentions, never ride on pavements, always stop at red lights and never ever ride in a group that does not allow cars to pass; perish the thought! I am only referring to those people with the selfishness or arrogance to do any of these things. Mind you for those self-righteous cyclists that know the law I'm sure that they will have fun telling this to St. Peter at the Pearly Gates after a truck has wiped them out

Some things cannot be changed, so serene driving!

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