

Time scales and urban myths

Within about half an hour of the sad news of the death of Michael Jackson, I started to receive text messages from many people. Some people find these types of messages sad, funny, sick or helpful as a way of dealing with the news.

This phenomenon appears to be peculiar to we Brits. When I mentioned the texts to my Spanish and German colleagues, they were astounded and had not heard of such messages. They insisted on seeing some and their reactions were no different to anyone else's, proving I guess that we are all the same

This got me to thinking (a rare pastime those who know me might add), why is it that news and gossip travel so fast and why is it so often elaborated and twisted and turned into "Chinese whispers"

The latest story doing the rounds about driving in flip-flops is a case in point. This conjures all sorts of images. Do the Guardia Civil randomly stop drivers to inspect their footwear? Is there a foot fetish in the Policia Local?

Who knows how these things start, though I imagine in this case, a driver was involved in an accident and when interviewed, the police noticing that flip-flops were being worn probably came to the conclusion that as these are pretty likely to make your foot slip off the pedal, booked him or her for negligent driving. The rest of the incident is ignored, but the rumour factory picks up on a driver being fined for wearing flip-flops

Why do I mention this?

Well such stories become "urban legends" and sometimes but not always contain a grain of truth. For example, many young men arrange to have their stag weekend in Nottingham because legend has it that females outnumber us chaps by at least 3:1. Well this was the case during WW2 when many men went off to war, but was certainly not the case when I was growing up there as a teenager in the 1960's, but the myth persists

Where I live in rural Spain, we are surrounded by orange and lemon groves. On arrival here, a fellow Brit advised me with total conviction that we are allowed to pick 100 pieces of fruit per year. Really, who's counting?

This lead me to consider the amount of information/legend/rubbish that is given by your average "bar room lawyer" as the absolute truth. So to help clear up some of these legends, I am going to discuss the timescales that apply when importing a vehicle into Spain, as this is where much confusion arises

0 days. How long you can drive a vehicle on public roads after it has been SORN (Statutory *Off Road* Notice) at DVLA. There is a clue in the title

1 day. The amount of time that you can own a UK vehicle before importing it. In fact you can legally take ownership of a UK registered car in Spain and have it registered to you without your name ever appearing on the UK logbook

2 months. The length of time that you have from the date of application of FIRST Padron to re-register your vehicle without paying import tax. Your Padron should show the date of application (*Fecha de Inscripcion or Fecha de Alta*); this is the date that counts

- * The time period that a Baja Consular may assist you in avoiding import tax
- * The length of time that a vehicle that has failed ITV has to be re examined. In the case of Spanish registered cars, if no re-examination takes place within this timescale, then the ITV will send the papers to trafico for cancellation of the logbook

3 months. The normal length of validity for an insurance “green card” allowing you to drive your vehicle outside of its registered country. Once the green card has expired, then so has your insurance cover

6 months

There are a quite a few in this category which gives cause to the most confusion

- * The *maximum* time that you can keep a foreign vehicle in Spain before leaving yourself open to bother from the “Boys in Green”
- * The *minimum* time that your car has to back in the country where it is registered before you can bring it back to Spain again. So to be legal, you need to keep your car for 6 months at a time in both Spain and it’s country of registration on a continually rotating basis; this is hardly practical and the onus is always on the owner to prove this if challenged
- * The *minimum* period of ownership of a vehicle before you qualify not to pay import tax, though the vehicle can be in Spain during the qualifying period
- * The *minimum* period of ownership of a brand new vehicle purchased outside of Spain to avoid paying IVA. If you buy a brand new vehicle outside of Spain, you can either opt to pay VAT/IVA in the country of purchase or in Spain. If you pay it in the country of purchase, you may be liable for it in Spain as well, unless you wait until you have owned the vehicle for 6 months before re-registration

12 months.

- * The period between ITV inspections for vehicles over 10 years old
- * The *maximum* time that your road tax is valid for. All road tax in Spain is from January 1st to December 31st. Imported vehicles pay a proportion according to the month re-registered

2 years

The period between ITV inspections for vehicles between 4 and 10 years old

4 years. The age of new vehicles before the ITV inspection is due, though imported vehicles must always have an initial ITV

25 years. The age of a vehicle before it can be imported as historical. Historical vehicles can be imported in the same condition as which they were made. So if it was not made with seat belts, fog lights or indicators, it can be imported in that condition. Some would argue that fitting indicators to a Spanish car is a waste of time, as they are rarely used!

Any age. There is no minimum or maximum age of vehicles for import purposes

1 nanosecond. The elapsed time between a traffic light going green in Madrid and the first car horn sounding!

Now I can already see that this information taken in isolation will be spouted down the bars as gospel because “that bloke wot writes in the CBN says so, so it must be true”

Ah yes, as of today, the above information is true and correct. Next week, next month or next year maybe not, because the rules, regulations, laws and flavours of the month change regularly.

The other factor is that not all of the above points can be taken in isolation; some work in conjunction. For example, to avoid the import tax, the vehicle has to have been owned for 6 months and the Padron and Baja Consular have to be less than 2 months old

Well I hope to have settled a few arguments, but no doubt I have started a few more as we all like to think we are right don't we?