

## Here and there

Ah, motoring in the UK. The mere thought sent shudders as it was not an experience that I was eager to reacquaint myself with

The visit to my native land was precipitated by the birth of my partner's first grandchild so this and the ability to visit my own kids, grandkids and siblings made me try to put motoring concerns to one side.

Whilst having a coffee before leaving an officer of the Policia Local was at the same bar enjoying a drink with a couple of her friends from the small scissor sisters' community in our village. She asked me to confirm that I was the owner of a transit minibus which had been parked in the municipal car park. I agreed and she kindly pointed out that it had been removed to another area as the car park had been closed for the fiestas so I could expect a small fine. What about the grua costs I enquired? She reserved her broadest smile for my partner and said in a girly way that we needn't worry about that. "Good job she fancies you Kathy" I said. Her reply is unprintable

A week later in Nottingham I had misread a parking sign and upon returning to the hire car the windshield was being plastered by sticky notices. I had overstayed my welcome by a few minutes. The enforcement officer said "Good job you are here mate as the tow truck is on its way". No friendly smiles, just a bloke doing his job; guess he didn't fancy either of us

## Density and etiquette

Always the biggest shocks when driving in the UK apart from the sheer volume of traffic are the rule enforcement and etiquette which are both rigidly adhered to. Here in Spain I set my sat-nav for an appointment with a client and always arrive at the minute Tom Tom says I will. In Bristol, the same piece of kit gave me a 19 minute running time for a journey that actually took 50 minutes. I had stupidly believed that the motorway route would be the quickest; how naive. The journey back through the suburbs was much faster

Every few minutes Tom-Tom pinged with speed trap warnings as the limits went up and down and the traffic obeyed in unison. The amount of road signs was overwhelming so just trying to assimilate this information made concentration imperative. The use of indicators was dazzling; I had almost forgotten that they exist so infrequent is their use in Spain. It took me a while to realise that flashing headlights was a fellow motorist giving me priority, thankfully a dim memory reminded me to wave my hand in thanks or suffer the consequences from the other driver whose attitude would change from courteous to raging finger-wagging, horn hitting demon if this courtesy was overlooked

## Warts and all

It will be hard to complain again about being tailgated, cut up on a roundabout, the lack of indicators and the general self-centredness of Spanish motorists. The sheer joy of freedom, of enjoying driving with the minimum of restrictions puts me firmly in favour of Spain over the UK

Whilst there I was reminded why I chose to leave my native land. An RAF sergeant was made to feel like a pariah for wearing his uniform in a multicultural A&E department. An elderly friend, a stroke victim, had fallen out of bed; his wife could only watch in frustration as the two carers sent from social services to help could only give advice as he struggled to remount the bed as health and safety rules forbade them to lift him. The country has forgotten and overlooked the needs and concerns of the indigenous population in its masters' drive to welcome all comers

Thank you Spain for welcoming me back home, warts and all

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