

Motorhomes and older vehicles

It's that time of the year again when in preparation for touring our beautiful adopted country peoples' thoughts turn to motorhomes which seem to be more popular than caravans for getting out and about

I have been advised by previous clients that such vehicles in Spain are expensive, less cared for with lower specifications which is why people generally buy outside of Spain, but if you are a resident be careful. Residency in this context means that you have either Residencia or the more common Padron. Non-residents have more choice, but more on this later

EU Type Approval

In principle any vehicle whether motorhome, caravan, car or bike being imported and re-registered in Spain must have EU Type Approval. This means that it was built to standards agreed within the Union and can therefore be registered in any EU country. Type Approval is also known as the tongue-twisting homologation and where a vehicle has this it may appear on the registration document though is often missed off but will be on the vehicle itself, commonly but not exclusively in the engine compartment. Here is an example e13*97/27*0040*02. If you are unsure you can ask the vehicle manufacturer for a European Certificate of Conformity; if they can supply one then the vehicle has Type Approval

The approval system started in the 1990's with cars, then motorbikes, motorhomes and finally caravans so older cars are more likely to have Type Approval than older motorhomes. There is no fixed date for when each vehicle received approval

No approval?

So you have seen the perfect tourer, good nick, sensible price but it does not have approval so what are your options? Before EU Type Approval existed each country had its own system so the first option is to discover if it has Type Approval for Spain and if it has there will be no problems with re-registering. The manufacturer is the best place to ask

If no joy with the maker, then "unit importation" is the only way forward. This is much more expensive and protracted than a standard re-registration as an engineer's report has to be drawn up as if the vehicle was the only one ever made

Homologation describes exactly the characteristics of a vehicle when it was manufactured. So we slap on a tow bar, put bull bars on the front so that careless parkers don't ram into us, side steps are a must for those like me who are vertically challenged. Rear spoilers give fantastic down-force when hurtling along the autovia and wheel spacers make cornering a breeze. But the vehicle is now outside of its homologation so to have it re-registered all of this kit has to be removed. Some of it may be allowed on afterwards, but this can be expensive and frustrating when dealing with the men who just like to say "no"

Cambio de residencia

I have had potential clients say to me “well my mate Cyril had a tow bar, big wheels and a mini-bar in the boot and he didn’t have this hassle so why I have got to take my parts off?” The answer as always is that “Cyril’s circumstances were different to yours even though your vehicles are identical”

A great piece of legislation exists that allows owners of vehicles who move from one EU country to another to take their pride and joy with them even though it has been changed from its original spec’ or indeed has no EU Type Approval. The regime is known as “cambio de residencia” or in English “change of residence”. Under this regime most changes to the specification are accepted, the most common being that a tow bar can stay on the car

Proving change of residence varies throughout the country, well there’s a surprise! In some regions obtaining the Padron after the vehicle was registered to you back home is perfectly acceptable. In other regions the Residencia is mandatory

Minefield? You bet. If unsure, please get in touch

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