

Pick up and go!

It started with a casual enquiry to the boss of an ITV station that I occasionally use as he can be less fussy than the folks at my usual station. A client has a motorhome that was converted from a van and the UK registration document, V5, showed that it is classed as N1, which means commercial use, and for some time right-hand-drive commercials could not be registered in Spain, however, the good old boy said that he would not have a problem with it

Last week I had a similar enquiry and this time spoke to the manager of my usual ITV, who not only said no problem, but that vans classed as N1 with the steering wheel on the right could now be re-registered under the change of residence regime. The lightest of feathers could have knocked me over, my gaster was well and truly flabberd. What? When did that change then?

This is of major significance to those who have pick-up trucks, Transit vans etc. which previously could never display Spanish number plates, so let me explain more. Firstly, there has never been an issue in registering right-hand-drive cars, motorhomes or even caravans with the door on the wrong side, despite what the bar-room lawyers say, but commercials that were always a no-no, are now are a go-go.

Stipulations and restrictions

There are of course stipulations, all significant, with the prime one being that the vehicle cannot be used for commercial purposes but only for private use by the owner. I can hear you now saying so what's the use of the relaxing of the regulations if the vehicle cannot be used for the purpose for which it was specifically built. I agree, if you are a builder, chippy or plumber as you will not be allowed to carry the tools of your trade, but if you use your van for taking loads of rubbish to the skip, or buying a new flat packed kitchen from IKEA it would come in handy, but the main beneficiaries will be those who own pick-up trucks. If the US movies are to be believed, all pick-ups must carry a rope, rifle and dog or they just don't look right, but many of our fellow countrymen just like to use them to get around in and now they can in Spain too

Change of residence regime

Another major criterion is that the vehicle must have been registered "back home" before the owner brought it to Spain. This triggers the regime known as "change of residence" or "cambio de residencia" as the natives call it. This regime relaxes many of the strict rules that surround the import of vehicles and is designed to allow folks who move from one EU country to another to take their pre-owned vehicle with them. So, does this mean that you have to move here permanently to qualify? In practice, no. In the entire region of Valencia proof is that the date of applying for your first Padron is deemed to be the date that you arrived in Spain and providing that this date is 6 months after the vehicle was registered in the UK or Ireland you qualify. Some other regions such as Murcia require the Residencia in

addition to the Padron, in Andalucía it seems to vary depending upon which ITV station you go to. Change of residence also allows approved bolt-ons such as tow bars to remain on your car

The rules only allow RHD commercials that are no more than 3500 Kg in carrying capacity to be registered, in other words those that can be driven on a standard car licence. This restriction does not apply to motorhomes. Be careful what you carry though, the ITV manager put it rather succinctly when he said that one sack of potatoes was OK, but not two or you may be accused of carrying goods for profit!

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