

What does that mean?

We have all had daft thoughts as well as done silly things, but I still cringe over my thought process when first coming to Spain in that I couldn't work out what "SP" meant on the back of trucks. To me it seemed like an abbreviation of "Spain", but why so when the natives call the country España?

Well you may be wondering the same or I suppose couldn't care less, but there must be other anorak wearers out there. In fact, it means *Servicio Publico* and appears on many vehicles including taxis, buses and trucks, this means and that the vehicle is licensed to be used for profit.

The opposite is "MP ". I have lived here long enough to know that Members of Parliament are unlikely to be driving trucks. For sure they will not wish to draw attention to themselves when driving their Ferraris or Lamborghinis which they can afford through their various "business dealings" so it must mean something else which is *Mercancias Propias*. This means that the vehicle itself is not used to make a profit, but is only used to carry people or goods on behalf of the owning company. You may see this for example on a furniture delivery van where the goods being carried belong to the store in question and not a third party

Coloured number plates

The standard style of Spanish number plate is black numbers and letters on a white background for both front and rear of the vehicle, but you may also see red plates. The most commonly seen are on the back of trailers and caravans. In the UK trailers and caravans are not registered, but in Spain they need registering and inspecting just like a powered vehicle. The red plate shows the registration number of the trailer.

Red plates can also be trade plates but these can only be used where a dealer owns the vehicle. Their use is strictly controlled, whereby each journey using the plates is recorded

Yellow plates are displayed on 49 cc mopeds and those pesky little cars

Green plates which have a validity of two months only were once very common and could be easily obtained at Trafico just by declaring that the original documents had been lost. These plates were supposed to be on the car pending more formal registration, but this system was abused by people wishing to avoid road taxes etc. and is now only used only for two purposes. The first is where a foreign vehicle does not have EU Type Approval and cannot be used with its present registration number. More commonly, green plates are issued where a car has been impounded because it is illegally on the road and has to be regularised. The past few weeks have seen a significant rise in the issue of green plates as the police now access the DVLA data base via their smart phones and are impounding any UK car that is either not taxed, has no MOT, is not insured or has been SORN'd. This has certainly kept me busy

Historical Sundays

Plates commencing with “H” show that the car has been registered as “Historical” (over 25 years old) and is therefore allowed on the road in its original condition, for example without seat belts if the car was made before they were introduced

In the UK the roads are as clogged on Sundays as they are during any other day of the week whereas in Spain driving commercial vehicles is more restricted. Just an aside but in my opinion the urge of some Spanish shops to open on Sundays is the thin end of the wedge to making it a 24/7 nation just like the UK. Such a shame to spoil this special quiet day

Those companies that can show a need to drive on Sundays, (domingo), for instance when carrying fresh produce can obtain a licence to do so. Proof of this is a large green plate with the letter “d” on it.

Just thought you may like to know!

Spanish Number Plates
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