

Dear Sir

The issue of the “Baja Consular” as issued by the British Consulates is generating substantial interest amongst readers of CBN

As part of my business, I normally attend the British Consulate in Alicante at least once per week in order to assist customers in obtaining this document as part of the overall service that we provide

I have always found the staff to be courteous, friendly, helpful and professional and most definitely on our side instead of being faceless jobsworths. They have no control over fees for the Baja Consular and other documents as these are set by the FCO in London

If you log onto the British Embassy website ([www.ukinspain.com](http://www.ukinspain.com)) controlled from Madrid, and search “Baja Consular” it will take you to the section regarding importing vehicles. The information contained is I’m afraid, out of date, misleading and generally unhelpful. Correct information is available, from within our profession and from lawyers who are expert in this field, such as Samper and Samper with whom we collaborate and who in turn are advisors to the College of Gestorias

To be fair to the staff in Madrid, I have pointed this out to them (via Alicante) and some of the information has been withdrawn with Alicante advising me that the website is undergoing review

The cost of the Baja has gradually increased over the years and is also tied to the exchange rate, last week it was 156 euros. The cost of other documents has also increased. There was a furore a year or so ago when the cost of passports was similarly increased and if my memory serves me well, the justification given was that Consulates need to be more self sufficient and not subsidised by UK residents

Not many years ago the cost of the Baja at the British Consulate was 30 euros. Readers may be interested to know that at the Irish and Dutch Consulates, which I have also visited, it is still 30 euros.

Expats obtain the Baja Consular as part of the process of importing a vehicle in order to circumvent the import tax. However, the Baja will only help you to avoid the tax if you have owned the vehicle for more than 6 months and re-register it within 2 months of registering on the Padron or Central Register. If you cannot meet these criteria, the Baja is a waste of time and money

Whilst we can argue about the costs, set by the government, of documents provided by the Consular staff in Spain, I would be surprised if any action is taken as all governments wish to obtain as much revenue from the populace as they can.

Perhaps the bigger issue is the charging of “import tax” (a.k.a. registration fee, emissions tax etc) by the Spanish authorities which is surely against the convention and spirit of free movement of goods within the EU

This tax is calculated on the official Spanish valuation of the vehicle in question (these values are much higher than UK values, not because of underlying greed, but because vehicles are much more expensive in Spain). The value is multiplied by a percentage based upon the CO2 emissions of the car and can be quite a high figure. This is a good revenue stream for the Spanish and one that I am sure they would not give up lightly

In an ideal world vehicles could be re-registered without the need for a Baja Consular or the need to pay import taxes. Not everyone who re-registers lives in Spain permanently, but all homeowners should be on the Padron. Shouldn't registering on the Padron be sufficient justification for changing vehicle registration to Spanish? The big problem with this idea is a reduction in income for both the British and Spanish governments, so it is probably a non-starter

There are literally thousands of UK registered cars on the Spanish roads. Whilst this is not the time and place to discuss the illegality of this in terms of the law and lack of insurance cover, many drivers are put off because of the perceived costs involved in terms of import taxation

When we move to Spain, our lives are taken up with settling in, finding schools, getting into the system etc, etc. Changing the plates on our cars for most people is something they think of after all the other vital things have been done. For most, this means that when they contact an organisation such as ours, their Padron is already 2 months old, so no Baja Consular, but instead a tax bill.

I believe that it would be fairer to extend the qualifying period to say 6 months, but of perhaps more importance, for good simple information to be available to newcomers to Spain so that they are not caught in this tax trap and as a result, their expenditure would be reduced. The advantage here is that more people would obtain a Baja Consular, so more revenue for the UK government, whatever the cost may be

I'm sure that our Consular staff are aware of these concerns expressed by many British citizens resident in Spain and will be providing clarity and guidance via the media at their disposal. I would like to hope so.

Regards

Graham Shelton

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