

Caravans and trailers-Good news!

Two steps forward and one step back! Well there's a novelty when dealing with the Spanish bureaucracy

A few weeks ago a new system came into being at the ITV stations. This affected those of us who take vehicles to the stations on behalf of customers in order to have the import standard ITV inspection undertaken

Imagine this; your head office decides to implement a new system; the rules are not clear and individual staff members interpret the rules in their own way. Later the boss is surprised that everyone is doing things differently and your customers are revolting; well no, not obnoxious, but screaming and shouting, having hissy fits

This happened at the ITV and initially made life difficult as the manager that normally would have received and passed on the orders in a sensible fashion was on holiday for a few weeks. Customers who would rather have been shopping or enjoying life on the beach were dragged to the ITV station to sign bits of paper that were unnecessary only a few days before. Finally the voice of reason returned from holiday, smoothed things over and we have all got used to the new system and no longer have to inconvenience customers, but oh what trauma and grief for those two weeks; Lord knows how many of us felt like a fast journey down a cliff face!

Change of rules

Imagine my surprise when I heard about a change in the rules that will actually benefit us ex-pats and make life simpler for those of us who deal in the registration of foreign vehicles. Well, I've heard about the new rules and they are good news, but as yet they haven't been implemented and a week before we need to know, confusion abounds because as we all know "Confusion reigns, but mainly when in Spain"

So, to the point. Until now, bringing a caravan or trailer to Spain and attempting to make it legal to use on the roads has been a lengthy and expensive process. This is because each caravan or trailer was treated as a unique vehicle and as such had to be inspected by a specialist team who produced a technical report. A couple of months later the report would appear and we could take our 'van or trailer for its ITV inspection. Armed with bundles of paper and visits to Trafico, this meant that you eventually received a shiny red number plate to display on the back of your towed vehicle

(Just a note, caravans and trailers below 750Kg maximum carrying capacity do not get registered, but are still required to pass a one-off ITV inspection, so the special inspection etc, applies here too)

Change of Residence

So what are the new rules? Well firstly don't become too excited quite yet as there are some issues to be cleared up which affect caravans and trailers from the UK, but let

me try and explain by using a car as an example. You own a foreign (non-Spanish) registered car and decide to bring it with you when you move to Spain; you decide to get legal and contact me to re-register it. It doesn't matter what car it is, how old, whether petrol or diesel how many miles it has done etc. So long as it has had no major modifications, you can re-register it. This is known as importing a under the regime known as "Change of Residence" (Cambio de Residencia). Without this rule, we ex-pats could be seen to be discriminated against by not allowing us to bring our pride and joy with us. This regime is not open to Spaniards who have never left Spain or to those of us who are resident here and bought the vehicle after moving here

Until now, the change of residence regime has not been an option for caravans and trailers; hence the long drawn out process earlier described which inhibited many people from bringing them to Spain. Shortly, caravans and trailers will be allowed into this country under the change of residence regime. This is excellent news for those of you who have such vehicles or are thinking of bringing one over as the process will be much simpler, quicker and considerably less expensive than it has been

A hitch!

So far, so good, but let me take you back to my tale of the earlier change in rules at the ITV station when the left foot was kicking hell out of the right foot and neither knew what they were doing. The team that carries out the special inspections are from Madrid and tour the country just once per month visiting various ITV stations to do their work. They are due to inspect caravans belonging to my customers in a week's time, but guess what? No-one knows if the new rules are in force yet, though they are supposed to have started in September. Gordon Bennet!!

Another hitch (pun intended!). Towed vehicles are registered for road use in all European countries except the UK and Ireland (to the best of my knowledge), so where a caravan is already registered, in say France, importing it to Spain under change of residence is simple. For UK and Irish caravans, no one knows what to do about them!! There has been lots of head scratching and questions asked. However after discussions with the import engineer with whom I work daily we believe that we know what is required. As a starting point, we contacted the Caravan Council in the UK for help and advice, but I guess that the question was too difficult as we have been awaiting a reply for some time

Anyway, good news is coming for those who wish to make their caravans and trailers legal, but for those of us from the British Isles, not just yet, so watch this space

Finally, I do not make a habit of endorsing companies through this column, but I had a tricky problem with paperwork for a caravan only last week, so went to Cruz Caravans in Elche for advice. Even though it was my first visit, Paco could not have been more courteous and extremely helpful; his English was spot on too. Muchas gracias Paco

Orihuela, Alicante

www.spanish-number-plates.com

info@spanish-number-plates.com

966 753 375

605 319 889