

Taking your car back “home”

A general election is coming in the UK and hordes of Brits are rushing back to vote and change their homeland to the utopia that they would like it to be. The sun will always shine, freedom of speech, thought and action will once again prevail, the state will provide for them and then they wake up!

Alternatively, maybe they have become disenchanted with the Spanish way of life. Perhaps they have become caught up in the property scams or maybe family or financial reasons are causing their departure from this beautiful land.

Whatever the reasons for leaving, most will take their cars with them. At least from the amount of enquiries I am receiving people are doing just that and want to know how to de-register their cars here, what will happen the other end and at what price?

Over here, registering a car is complex and without sound advice, frustrating and expensive. At least when you take your car home, there will be no language barrier, so what does or should happen?

De-registering a Spanish car

Why de-register at all? Here is an example. A musician friend of mine decided a couple of years ago to return to the UK as he had been made a lucrative job offer. He took his Spanish registered car with him, changed it to UK plates and sold it. Two years later, he's back and living in a different town to his previous home. He buys a second hand Spanish car and has it changed to his name. When the road tax is paid, he is then presented with unpaid bills for the road tax on his old car that is now UK registered. Despite the fact that we can prove when the car was registered back in the UK and the efforts of my lawyer, the tax office won't budge, so he has to pay the back tax.

This story demonstrates that your car will remain forever in your name in Spain, unless you do something about it. Road tax will continue to mount and if someone clones your registration number, further problems could arise. You may leave Spain determined never to return, but none of us know what the fates have in store. If you sell the car to someone moving to Spain; that person may end up paying an accumulation of taxes and fines, so it is better to do it properly.

Baja Del Vehiculo

To de-register, certain documents are required, well there's a big surprise! The good news is that you will not have to queue at the crack of dawn for some new piece of paper as you will have acquired most of what is necessary whilst here. The documents needed are: Registration document, ITV card, road tax receipt and your NIE certificate. The only new document is the “Solicitud de Baja del Vehiculo”. Which is readily available at Trafico or specialist gestorias.

The Baja can be used for a variety of reasons such as exporting, scrapping, or declaring that a vehicle is not going to be used on public roads; the Spanish equivalent of SORN

These papers should be presented to the Provincial Trafico department where they will complete the necessary paperwork and charge you accordingly. The registration document will be stamped and handed back to you as you will need it when you re-register the car back in the UK

No time for this, can't speak Spanish or don't fancy queuing in Trafico? Fair enough, get in touch and I'll take care of it for you

Re-registering back in the UK

It is true to say, that I have never had to do this, but having spoken to people that I trust who have done so and searched the DVLA website, this is my understanding:

You take your car to the DVLA office nearest to your home in the UK armed with all of your vehicle documents and valid identification document, such as your passport. They will help you to complete the necessary forms and advise of any special requirements for your car. For example if it was not previously registered in the UK, it may need a special inspection unless it has European Type Approval. This is no different in principle to what happens in Spain as the procedures should be consistent throughout the EU (please note the emphasis on "should be"!)

In any event, it will need an MOT. The Spanish ITV will not be valid once your car becomes British again. The same applies to UK registered cars in Spain. The ITV inspection given to foreign registered cars is called a "Voluntary ITV" and is just that, voluntary. It has no legal standing

The process in the UK takes about a week before you get your new logbook and British number plates; about the same time that it takes me to re-register a vehicle in Spain

Selling your car in Spain

One of the reasons why I am always busy re-registering vehicles coming to Spain is because of the very high cost of vehicles here. In virtually every case, even where import tax is payable, it is overall less expensive to re-register than buy a similar car in the Spanish market. Why not use this to your advantage when returning home?

You could consider selling your car here, even if it is right hand drive as you are almost certain to get more money for it than you would in the UK. Many expats prefer RHD cars and the cost of transfer of ownership is cheaper than re-registration, so it will be an attractive proposition to fellow expats. If the car is LHD, then you have a much bigger market to aim at

Once back in the UK, where cars are plentiful and cheap, you will be spoilt for choice and have more money to spend on a replacement vehicle

Whilst you will have many things to consider when returning home and concerns about your car may not be a high priority, a bit of planning and forethought could save or even make you money as well as giving piece of mind