

That was the year that was

2010 came and went with the usual series of ups and downs. It's been a tough year for most people needing to work what with job losses and many businesses going to the wall. The buzz word has been "crisis" in both English and Spanish, so I count my blessings

"Scrappage"

What happened on the motoring front? The "scrappage" scheme came and went. There was certainly a surge in new cars being sold during the scheme so we now have less old bangers on the road, but I'm surprised that the indicators still don't seem to work on new Spanish cars! It is fairly easy for me to monitor the number of new vehicles being sold because of the way that the numbering system works and for those of you who are into details, the registrations beginning with "G" are almost exhausted, so expect to see newer plates beginning with "H" any day.

Fuel and costs

Fuel prices are at another high, so 50 euros will no longer fill my diesel tank; insurance premiums have crept up, but I remain staggered by the low amount of road tax that we pay in Spain compared to the UK and Ireland. Why the Town Halls which set this tax have not seen it as a foolproof cash generator is beyond me and thankfully it seems beyond them

The cost of cars and associated parts remains very high in Spain so many expats continue to save money by buying from "home" even when the cost of import tax is considered. My brother came to visit in the summer and complained about paying £700 for a 12 year old Audi A4 as he thought it expensive. I know where I'll be buying next time

Bikes and caravans

The import of motorbikes has remained constant with Harley-Davidsons being the most popular by far. The crazy situation whereby the Hacienda calculates the level of import tax on bikes (as well as cars) based upon the CO2 emissions persists. Why crazy? Well the level of CO2 emissions is not published by any bike manufacturer, which means that the tax charged will default to the maximum. Oh I see, perhaps they are not so daft after all?

Good news came over the horizon for owners of caravans and trailers, in that where previously registered with a government, or where they have European Type Approval, they can be re-registered in Spain at a much lower cost that previously experienced.

There was a relaxing also of the need for older cars to achieve modern emissions standards, allowing a few more cherished cars into Spain

Bureaucracy

New boxes of jobsworths are always being opened. These people can be downright dangerous as they interpret the rules and regulations in their own way, asking for bits of paper that have never been asked for before causing delays and frustration. Certain tax offices ask for the receipt from when a vehicle was purchased to prove ownership and the amount paid, even if owned for many years. Why oh why?? The log book shows to whom the vehicle is registered and the tax office has its own values. Answers on a fag packet please

Buyer beware

How would you like to buy a Spanish car and find out that there is 11000 euros worth of finance outstanding on it, or buy a UK plated car that had been previously registered in Spain only to find out that it had been embargoed because of unpaid taxes? If you are anything like my two customers who found themselves in these situations, then you would be shocked, angry and upset in turn. These are just the worst cases of many. So that you don't fall into this trap, have a background check undertaken on the vehicle before you buy. Some people sell their vehicles only to find out that the buyer has not transferred it to his name; why would he as it costs money and whilst you are still the registered keeper, the road tax, speeding fines and embargoes just keep rolling in against your name

Help and hindrance

Remember the dust cloud that stopped planes from flying? Why would that affect motoring? Well people were stranded so many decided to hire cars to get home. Oh what joy for the car hire firms who must have prayed for the cloud to remain for ever, the spin off being that more people decided to bring their cars with them on the next visit to their Spanish homes due to the cost of hiring. I had a few customers re-arrange appointments as they were stuck in the UK, but my hat went off to the staff at the British Consulate who were swamped. I visit the Consulate regularly as part of my business and they were dealing with some very needy cases as well as some screwballs demanding that passage home was granted to them as a right. Throughout it all the staff remained calm and helpful.

So what of the bar room lawyers? Well they gave me a few laughs with the rubbish that they spout, the latest being that a car does not need to be re-registered until the tax and MOT run out; where did this one come from? Mostly they cause me grief as I have to explain over and over that the information given by these people is just plainly wrong and potentially costly in all senses of the word

Next year will bring more changes in the law for certain. January is a good month for this; trouble is my lawyer and I normally find out about them in February! So if you need to keep abreast of the motoring laws in Spain, check my website but better still, read "Mediterranean Motoring" in the Costa News every fortnight and keep those questions coming

Happy motoring in 2011; things can only get better!

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