

What about my road tax?

This is a very common question at this time of the year as whilst most customers remember that road tax is from January to December; many are not sure how to pay it this year.

So what do you do? At this moment in time nothing. Whilst road tax is for the calendar year, it is typically not payable until May. The way it works is this: Whoever owns the vehicle on 1st January is liable for the tax for that year; the authorities send out bills during the spring to the address to which the vehicle is registered which will state the amount due and where to pay it

Has your situation changed?

There are some important points here that are bound to affect some of you. The first is are you still the registered keeper of a vehicle that you have sold? Time and again people sell a vehicle and take the word of the buyer that he will transfer it to his name, but as this will cost the buyer money, he may be disinclined to do so. Who is liable for the tax? You as the registered keeper are

Secondly, have you changed address? Many people move and completely forget about notifying Trafico that they have done so. The problem with this is that the road tax bill will arrive at your old address, not such a big deal if the people who now live there let you know, but I guess often the bill gets filed in the bin. Incidentally, one of the biggest potential costs in not advising Trafico of a new address is that you may have been caught speeding. Several times in 2010, I helped to sort out problems for people in these circumstances whose speeding fines had increased from 100 euros to 300 euros because they hadn't paid the fine which had been sent to their previous address

When and where to pay

Assuming that all is normal in your affairs, then when you get the bill, read it carefully; many authorities are now sending them out in English as well as Spanish which is very thoughtful of them, but if you are not sure what it says take advice. Normally as well as the amount owed and the due by date, it will explain where it is to be paid, typically at any number of banks. Alternatively, set up a direct debit; this way you can forget all about it until you see the money disappear from your account and you will receive confirmation of payment

Most Brits find it strange that road tax is not displayed on the car as it is in the UK (though remember that if your vehicle is more than 4 years old, you will need to display a current ITV sticker). However, you are obliged by law to carry proof of payment of the current road tax with the vehicle, along with the log book and ITV card

Another major difference between the UK and Spain is that the road tax is set by your Ayuntamiento (Town Hall) and can vary significantly between towns. I was once

talking to a customer about the potential cost of his road tax when overheard by a big mouthed know-all who said that I was talking out of my back side as it was much less than the amount that I mentioned; whilst he knew it all, he wasn't aware that road tax is levied locally not nationally, hence the difference in values.

In case by now you are rummaging through the mound of paperwork that you have accumulated since moving to Spain, road tax is called "Impuesto Vehiculos Traccion Mecanica". It will show amongst other things the name of your Ayuntamiento. For the majority of people living in the province of Alicante, this tax along with other local taxes is collected by an organisation named SUMA and the tax is often referred to by this name. For those of you with an overwhelming thirst for trivia, SUMA stands for "Sending Up Mortgages Annually". Actually no, the real meaning is that it is Spanish for add or addition as in adding more to your bills

ITV inspections

Also due this year for many of you will be your ITV (MOT) inspection. How do you know when? Well, a rough guide is to look at the ITV sticker on your windshield, which will show you the year in large numbers and there will be a hole punched for the month in which it is due. The actual due date will be shown on your ITV card (Tarjeta Inspeccion Tecnica de Vehiculos). Where a car has been re-registered or is less than 4 years old, then the date is on the inside of the card. Where a car has had at least two inspections, then the due date will be shown on the back of the card. The vehicle can be inspected at any time before it is due, so if you will be "back home", get it done before you go; this new date will then be the anniversary of the next inspection

The vehicle can be taken to any ITV station in Spain. You will need to take the ITV card, registration document, known as "log book" by us baby boomers and proof that the vehicle is insured. The first thing to do on arrival at the station is to look on the information boards for the lane where your vehicle should go; this means that you reserve your space in the queue. For those with limited Spanish, then you need to look for "Turismos" which is normal cars, "Motos" or "Motocicletas" if you are on two wheels. Motor homes will normally go into the lane reserved for "Forgons" or "Forgonetas" the same as for vans. There are normally separate lanes for petrol or diesel driven vehicles, so if you have a petrol driven car, your lane would be marked "Turismos, gasolina". Once in lane, go to the office with the documents, pay and follow instructions. If you need assistance with this, please get in touch

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