

Driving in Spain

The law demands that:

- Driving license, car ownership document, proof of payment of car tax to town hall, and proof of payment from your bank for the insurance and the insurance documents be carried at all times.
- Seat belts are worn front and back at all times.
- Less than 50mg/100ml of alcohol be in the blood (less than many other countries).
- Two warning triangles be carried.
- Spare bulbs be carried.
- Do not use a mobile phone whilst driving unless completely hands off system.
- Children under 12 are not permitted in front seats or on a motorcycle.
- Radar detectors are illegal as is warning drivers ahead of a checkpoint.
- If you wear spectacles, 2 spare pairs must be carried - 3 pairs in the car.
- You indicate to overtake, indicate to join or leave a motorway, or turn a corner. If you fail to do so, and are seen by the Traffico, you are in line for a hefty 90€ fine, plus points on your licence.
- If you do not turn your headlights on when driving through a tunnel and you are seen, a fine of 90€ will be levied.

Speed limits:

- 120 km/h on motorways.
- 100 km/h on dual carriageways.
- 90 km/h on single carriageway roads.
- 50 km/h in towns.

Driving up to 30km above the limit will incur a fine of between 150 and 300 €, plus a docking of between 3 and 6 points from your 12 points on your licence.

Driving over 30km above the limit is a 2 year imprisonment.

Rules of the road

- Give way to the right.
- Priority is to those already on a roundabout.

Fines and points are given for the following offences.

- refusing to take a breath test.
- exceeding the speed limit by 50%.
- reckless driving.
- driving in the wrong direction against traffic.
- racing.
- carrying 50% more passengers than seats.
- Parking in a dangerous position.
- Negligence such as driving without lights.
- Throwing out an object which could cause an accident or fire. (currently a 300€ fine for throwing a cigarette out of the window, Imprisonment if the cigarette causes a fire)
- Parking tickets.

Offenders may obtain a 30% discount for prompt payment or may pay a policeman on the spot.

Points are deducted from an initial 12 points at varying rates for the seriousness of the offence.

Prison sentences are imposed for excessive speeds - over 60km in a town, 120km on a 90k country road and over 160k on a motorway.

Non residents tourists are usually fined on the spot. The fine may be a "garantia" so that you can continue your trip and you could then contest the fine later in court. Failure to pay the fine will mean your car is impounded. Signposts

Signposting is generally not good and often inconsistent. Old signs are often not taken down when new roads make them redundant. This can lead to conflicting directions. 'Cambio de Sentido' indicates an opportunity to turn round. Keep cool, you will get there in the end. Motorcycles

Helmets are compulsory on all bikes at all times, even on small motorbikes under 50cc. National Traffic Authority

All vehicles in Spain must periodically undergo a technical inspection - the ITV. The schedule your vehicle is required to follow will depend on the date it was first licensed. Following are the schedules for different types of vehicles:

Motorcycles

Up to five years old - exempt

Over five years - every two years

Private Vehicles

Up to four years old - exempt

Four to ten years - every two years

Over ten years - every year

Caravans

Up to six years - exempt

Over six years - every two years Car Insurance

If you are caught without a current ITV sticker (issued when the test is passed), you are liable for a fine of 90 to 150 euros (minimum). Your license could also be confiscated until you produce proof of passing the ITV (within 10 days of confiscation).

All risk " todo riesgo " car insurance will cost between 1.000 euros to 2.000 euros per year for a small car.

Third party insurance is the legal minimum and will cost about 400 euros per year. It will cover you for claims by third parties up to 360.000 euros, for injury and 100.000 euros for damage. It does not cover you or your car, only third parties up to the maximum limits stated.

You can pay extra to have the limits raised or even made unlimited. You can extend your cover for fire, theft, and damage to your vehicle.

Your Spanish car insurance will automatically cover you for the legal minimum in other European Countries. A green card will increase this cover to the same level as your own policy. Many insurance policies issue a green card "free" others will make a small charge Car Accident

If you are unlucky and have a car accident make sure you obtain the licence plate, drivers name and NIF number and the name of the insurance company of the other vehicle.

Complete the blue form which you should carry at all times. This helps to record all relevant information and includes space to draw a picture of the accident.

If you are driving a hire car telephone the hire car company for assistance.

If the car is not drivable check whether your insurance includes a Roadside Assistance element. If so call that number for a breakdown truck ("Grua") to take your car to the nearest garage or your destination.

At the earliest opportunity call the insurance company or his agent and they will guide you through the claims policy.

There is no specific requirement to inform the Police.

Keep Calm. Do not say too much. Make notes in case you need to defend or mount a legal action.