

It's good to get points on your license!

If you own a property in Spain then you will have an NIE number. In this case you fall into the category of having points on your driving license regardless of if this is your original British license or a Spanish one. The law in Spain regards you as a 'regular driver' here if you have an NIE number so you cannot claim to be a tourist and escape the system.

The Spanish authorities work on a similar system to UK whereby if you commit traffic or driving offences then your license may be in danger of being withdrawn and you become disqualified for a period of driving. However unlike Britain you start with 12 points and offences reduce these. Get to zero and you are automatically disqualified from driving. The first time this occurs incurs a 6 month disqualification and a second time a 12 month ban. A list of foreign drivers is maintained and this is accessible by Spanish Police at the roadside. Hence if you are caught having exceeded the points reduction then you will almost certainly be arrested and charged with driving whilst disqualified.

The main difference however is that you gain points for good driving, in other words if you drive free of conviction for 3 years you are rewarded with an additional 3 points. The points system was introduced in July 2006 so hopefully most will benefit from the additional 3 points very shortly. If you are unfortunate enough to have acquired points on your British driving license then these are not transferable to the Spanish system so you will not lose points in Spain.

The Spanish Department of Transport (DGT) has launched a new service that will benefit ex-pats who spend some part of the year in UK or who do not receive a mail service. This service allows for notification of traffic violations by E-mail rather than the conventional postal service. This service is free and voluntary and since you may wish to appeal against such a violation there is an immediate warning of that violation. Obviously you do need to ensure that you maintain a current E-mail address.

To activate the procedure simply visit the Ministerio de Obras Publicas website at www.map.es and click on the Notificaciones Telematicas Seguras link then the 'save e-notices option'. By signing up on-line under the new system you should note that you will no longer receive notifications by normal mail.

You should also receive notifications for driving license renewals, insurance expiry reminders and when your car is due for its ITV.

GPS systems are the subject of consideration by Congress and may well become illegal for drivers to operate. Apparently the interpretation is physically operating and not making use of so it is probably OK for your passenger to use the equipment and tell you when to turn left or right. Drivers violating this will be the subject of a 200 euro fine although prompt payment can reduce this to 120 euros.