

Guide to driving in Spain

Driving in Spain

Driving in Spain is generally very easy but you do need to be aware of certain travel requirements and basic information, particularly when driving.

The information on this page will provide tips and explain all the essential facts you need to know, including information on Spanish law and driving regulations.

The minimum age for driving in Spain is eighteen years old, and your UK insurance should give automatic third party cover. We would recommend you contact your insurers to check you have adequate cover. However, be aware that Spanish law requires all car occupants to wear a seat belt - also that no child under twelve years old is allowed to travel in the front of a vehicle unless it is in a specially adapted rear-facing seat for infants.

Leaded petrol is usually sold as super/super 97, and unleaded as sin plomo 98 or Eurosuper 95. Diesel is known as gasoleo. It pays to remember that few rural garages are open 24 hours, also that they are liable to be closed for up to two hours at lunchtime, and all day on Sunday. Sometimes you can drive for many miles in rural Spain without seeing a garage, so don't let your tank get low.

Speed Limits

Radar speed traps are very common, and fines (which must be paid on the spot in cash) can be heavy. If oncoming vehicles flash their headlights at you it often means that there is a speed trap ahead. However, flashing headlights can also mean the driver is warning you that it is his right of way, the complete opposite of its accepted meaning in the UK. Speed limits in Spain are mentioned below.

Motorways and other roads



In recent years there has been a huge road-building programme in Spain, and their motorways (autopistas) are now amongst the best in Europe. However, most are toll roads (autopistas de peajes), and the charge for using them (payable by cash or credit card) is far from cheap. This has two very obvious knock-on effects. The motorways themselves are never particularly crowded - also the non-toll roads leading to the same destination are almost invariably busy. The choice is simple. If you are intent on covering large distances as quickly as possible, using the motorway network is probably the only realistic answer. On the other hand, if you are not in a hurry, want to save money, and fancy seeing something of Spain along the way, you'll be better off using the dual-carriageway roads (autovias) that are prefixed with an E.

All 'E' roads are toll free. They also have the same maximum speed limit as the motorways, although getting even remotely close to this limit may be far from easy at times. One useful feature to look out for on dual carriageways if you happen to miss your turn off is the sign 'cambio de sentido', which means that just ahead is the opportunity to reverse your direction via an under or over-pass.

Road Type
Toll motorway
Dual carriageway
Other roads
Built up areas

*** Unless indicated otherwise**

All Weather Speed Limits

Speed* km / mph
120km / 75mph
110km / 68mph
90km / 56mph
50km / 31mph

Road Signs

The quality of signposting in Spain varies considerably. In general, all main roads are well served, but venture off these and the standard can dip alarmingly. Carrying a large-scale map is strongly advised whatever your route, but if you are planning to stray off the major highways it is absolutely essential. The Michelin Motoring Atlas of Spain is highly recommended for both route planning, and locating your holiday accommodation.

Finally, one thing to remember when joining motorways or dual carriageways: Spanish drivers generally do not move over or slow down to help merging traffic. You may well have to come to a full stop at the end of the entry slip road until the road is clear.

For motoring abroad, the Direct Gov website is a useful source of additional information <http://www.gov.uk>

Continental motoring checklist

Ensure you comply with European Motoring Requirements by carrying the following essential items of accident, emergency and breakdown equipment.

Motoring in Spain summary

Minimum age at which UK driving Licence accepted	18
National Driving Licence required	YES
International Driving Permit required	NO
Vehicle Registration document required	YES
Motor Vehicle Insurance required	YES
Bail Bond required	R
GB Sticker/ Europlates	C
Warning Triangle required	
2 C Reflectorisrd jacket/ waistcoat	C
Spare Headlamp bulbs required	R
Headlamp adjustment needed	C
Seatbelts required front and rear	C
Minimum age of children allowed in front seat	12
Minimum age of children allowed in front seat	12
Wide acceptance of credit cards for petrol	YES
Wide availability of unleaded petrol	YES
Motorway Tolls payable	YES
Maximum Motorway Speed Limit	120kph/ 75mph
On the spot Fines	YES
Safety camera warning devices allowed	YES
R = Recommended. C = Compulsory.	

All compulsory items are available from the onboard shop (subject to availability) check our list of [Motoring Equipment](#) for more information and prices.

Failure to Comply

In the event of prosecution and conviction for failure to comply with the legal requirements, the courts in all EEC countries have wide powers to impose stringent penalties, and the arresting officers have extensive powers to impose "on the spot fines".

On the Spot Fines

The moment these are demanded, they have to be paid in cash, in the local currency, to the arresting officer. Credit cards or travellers cheques are not accepted.

Radar detectors are illegal in France whether in use or not. If you are caught with such equipment in your vehicle, you are liable to a fine, confiscation of the device and the vehicle.

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Emergency telephone numbers

112 - European general emergency number

061 - Medical emergency

080 - Fire brigade

091 - Police