

THE SPANISH HIGHWAY CODE

(Concise version in English)

Spain has adopted the basic tenet of safe driving: mirror-signal-manoeuve. However, to accommodate cultural differences between Spain and the rest of the European Union, the use of mirrors and signals prior to a manoeuvre is not required.

The ten key points of the Spanish Highway Code are summarised below to help non-Spanish nationals adapt to driving in Spain.

1. It is illegal to park on pavements. However, when driving in urban areas – particularly in busy periods – it is permitted to stop your vehicle (without warning to other road users), wind down your window and have a chat with a friend or relation who you have seen walking by on the pavement. When circumstances dictate, it is also permitted to get out of your stationary vehicle (hazard warning lights should not be used) and pop in to the local bread shop. On returning to your vehicle with freshly baked ‘pan’ you are required to completely ignore other motorists unless it is raining when a simple shrug of the shoulders will suffice.
2. Bicycles do not need to use lights at night. This is because they will be stolen by street urchins (that’s if they don’t steal your bike as well).
3. It is compulsory to use the car horn at least five times per day. The timing and occasion is at the discretion of the driver but is mandatory for greeting friends walking by on the pavement, in celebration of a victory of the local or national football team, on sight of scantily clad women and during any fiesta which may be taking place in Spain. Prolonged use of the car horn, whether day or night, is not an offence.
4. Cement lorries and concrete mixers have absolute right of way and may stop to discharge for an indefinite period without due consideration for other road users or permission from the town hall.
5. One way streets are for motorists who are only going one way, regardless as to the direction they are travelling in.
6. The green coloured signal on a traffic light indicates right of way and to proceed. The other two lights simply serve as a reminder of the colours on the national flag.
7. Neither pedestrians nor motorists have right of way at a pedestrian crossing. The signs and road markings at crossings only indicate where pedestrians are more likely to be run over.
8. It is strictly forbidden to use a mobile phone while driving in Spain except for taking and making phone calls and text messages.
9. In urban areas ‘No Parking’ zones are indicated by a yellow line alongside the kerb. As these yellow lines do not appear on pedestrian crossings, roundabouts and junctions parking (up to one hour) is permitted in such places.
10. When parking in a car park, where parking bays are marked out with white lines, motorists are required to use a minimum of two parking bays.

If in doubt, do as the Spanish do. Happy motoring!