THE PRACTICAL EBOOK

2026 EDITION • FREE GUIDE

# DRIVING IN SPAIN

Your license. Your car.
A clearer way through the paperwork.



**MOVE WITH A PLAN**

Find your license route, follow the right steps and decide whether a car makes sense for your new everyday life. A practical companion to Mitch’s Driving in Spain video.

**LICENSES / CAR OWNERSHIP / ROAD RULES**

# A guide you can use.

Read your route first. Return to the checklists when it is time to act.


| | |
|---|---|
| 03–04 | Find your route and your deadlines |
| 05 | Exchange an eligible foreign license |
| 06–07 | Get a Spanish license and plan the cost |
| 08 | Points, renewal and your documents |
| 09–10 | Buy carefully and budget for ownership |
| 11–12 | ITV, environmental zones and parking |
| 13–14 | Road rules and the 2026 changes |
| 15–16 | Sell the car and prepare for road trips |
| 17–18 | Action plan, glossary and official links |


**Start with the license in your wallet**
Use the license’s issuing country, category and original entitlement date. A citizenship label or a new card’s printing date can lead you to the wrong route.

**Who this is for:** adults moving to or living in Spain and planning ordinary passenger-car driving (category B). The examples apply broadly; no country is treated as the default. Professional categories and unusual license histories need route-specific checks.

**How to read it:** numbered steps explain the process; shaded notes show a useful decision or a common trap. Fields and boxes can be filled in a compatible PDF reader or on paper. Source numbers open the directory on page 18.

**From the video:** Mitch and Dillon’s older Audi helped with trips and their vending business. Repairs, ITV and parking later added strain. The lesson: plan your everyday life first, then decide whether to own a car.

# Which route applies to you?

Identify the issuing country before spending money on an exchange or a school.

**QUESTION 1**
Is your license issued by an EU or EEA country?

**A**

### Yes → recognized license

A valid EU / EEA license is generally valid in Spain. The EEA includes Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Exchange is usually voluntary; Spanish renewal rules can still apply. See page 4.

If the EU license was itself issued by exchanging a non-EU license, recognition after moving is not always automatic. Tell DGT about the original license history.

**QUESTION 2**
If not: is the issuing country on DGT’s exchange list?

**B**

### Yes → check the agreement

Many agreements allow eligible standard car licenses to be exchanged without tests. The country, category, issue date, residence history and prior exchanges all matter. Open the current DGT country instructions, then use page 5.

**C**

### No → Spanish licensing process

For standard private-car driving, plan for the medical assessment, theory exam and practical test. At review, the US, Canada, Australia and Mexico are not on the ordinary exchange list. The same logic applies to any unlisted country. See pages 6–7.

**Avoid the shortcut assumption**
A passport from one country does not convert a license issued elsewhere into an exchangeable license. Truck/bus categories, diplomatic routes and professional-driver exceptions are outside this ordinary-car guide.

Official references: 1, 2, 3, 26 • open the source directory on page 18

# The dates that matter.

A valid card and a legal right to drive in Spain are separate questions.

## For qualifying non-EU / EEA licenses



**START**
Normal residence

**ACT EARLY**
Exchange / training

**6 MONTHS**
General driving limit

The general maximum is six months from acquiring normal residence, provided the foreign license is valid and meets Spain's age and document requirements. An IDP is normally valid for a year, but it does not replace the license or extend Spain's residence-based limit.

**Confirm the start date**
Normal residence is a licensing concept based on where you usually live and your ties. Do not assume the clock starts when you collect the plastic TIE, receive a letter or first rent a car. Ask DGT to confirm the date if your situation is unclear.

**If the six months have passed:** stop relying on the foreign license to drive. An eligible license may still be exchangeable; the six months concern driving validity, not a universal ban on applying later. Confirm your agreement's conditions. A pending request does not extend driving permission.

## For EU / EEA licenses

A valid license is generally recognized. For car/motorcycle licenses with no expiry or a validity longer than 15 years, renewal in Spain is generally required after two years of normal residence. Ordinary-expiry licenses need attention when due; use the Spanish resident renewal route.

**Issuing country / category**

**My confirmed driving or renewal deadline**

Official references: 1, 2, 4, 9 • open the source directory on page 18

# Exchange: follow this order.

Use your country’s live instructions. This is the usual third-country sequence.

1. **Confirm eligibility**

   Check the agreement, category and original issue date. Licenses first obtained after Spanish legal residence are generally not eligible; country-specific exceptions exist.

2. **Gather the evidence**

   Prepare ID, residence evidence, a valid license and any required issue-history certificate, translation, photo or declaration.

3. **Get the required medical report**

   Use an authorized Centro de Reconocimiento de Conductores. Confirm the correct report group and submission timing.

4. **Submit through the correct route**

   Use DGT’s digital process where offered, with Cl@ve, a certificate or an authorized representative. Follow any prior issuing-authority verification.

5. **Follow up and surrender the original**

   Save the reference. Respond to requests. Attend DGT when instructed to hand over the original and collect the provisional authorization.

6. **Check the provisional, then the card**

   Read dates and restrictions before driving. Confirm address/category details on the final card. Ask DGT about missing delivery or incorrect information.

**DGT NO-TEST EXCHANGE FEE**
€28.87

Medical checks, translations and optional assistance are separate. Categories requiring tests have different fees.

**YOUR FILE**
ID / passport
Residence evidence
Valid foreign license
Medical report
Country-specific proof
Fee receipt
Application reference

Before handing over the original, retain a copy for your records. A copy is not permission to drive.

**Plan around the wait**
Authority verification times vary. Plan transport if your driving-validity period ends while the application is pending. EU / EEA voluntary exchange and renewal have different procedures.

Official references: 3, 4, 5, 7 • open the source directory on page 18

# A Spanish license, step by step.

Experienced drivers still need to learn what the Spanish examiner expects.



1

## Confirm eligibility and choose your route

Category B normally requires age 18 and residence eligibility. Compare authorized schools; theory can also be prepared and applied for independently.

2

## Complete the psychophysical assessment

The authorized center checks relevant health, vision, hearing and coordination. Bring ID, glasses/hearing aids and relevant medical information. Submit within the report’s 90-day application validity.

3

## Prepare and apply for theory

Use current materials and DGT sample tests. The standard theory test has 30 questions and allows up to 3 errors. Request the desired exam language in advance and confirm arrangements.

4

## Pass theory, then train for the road test

A passed test remains valid for two years. Your school can build practical lessons around observation, speed, lane use, signs and pedestrian priority.

5

## Pass practical and obtain the provisional

Theory alone does not authorize solo driving. After all required tests are passed, use the issued provisional within its dates and restrictions; it is for Spain, not foreign driving.

6

## Receive and check your Spanish card

Confirm identity, categories and restrictions. The permanent card arrives by post; keep your delivery address current and contact the school/DGT if it fails to arrive.

**Need adaptations or learning support?** Speak with the recognition center, school and DGT before paying for lessons or modifying a car. Appropriate support and adaptations may be available.

Official references: 6, 7, 8, 9, 28, 30 • open the source directory on page 18

# Get the whole quote.

The number and length of practical lessons drive much of the final cost.

| Item | Amount | Basis |
|---|---|---|
| DGT exam application | €94.05 | Official fee |
| School enrollment / theory | €150–€300 | Video estimate* |
| Medical assessment | €30–€50 | Video estimate* |
| Each practical lesson | €25–€50 | Video estimate* |

*The video's indicative planning ranges are not a nationwide price survey. School, location, lesson duration, repeats and extra charges change the bill. Its €700–€1,500 overall range is a planning reference, not a maximum or a promise.

**Build your own budget**
Example only: €200 enrollment + €40 medical + €94.05 DGT + 15 lessons × €35 + €80 exam-car/admin charges = **€939.05**. If more lessons or repeat fees are needed, the total rises.

## Manual or automatic?

An automatic practical test can result in code 78, restricting the license to automatic vehicles. A manual test keeps both options available. Ask about current restriction-removal requirements before choosing; do not assume a short course automatically removes it.

## Ask the school these six questions

1. How long is each lesson, and what is its full price?
2. What are enrollment, exam-car and administration charges?
3. Which theory and teaching languages are available?
4. What is the practical-test waiting time?
5. What happens to unused lessons if I change schools?
6. What do a repeat attempt and rescheduling cost?

**Repeat fees:** After two failures, in one test or across theory and practical, a new DGT application/fee is required. The school may charge extra too.

Official references: 6, 10, 29 • open the source directory on page 18

# Keep the license useful.

Getting the card is the start of maintaining it.

## The points path

| 8 | 12 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Novice / qualifying reinstated | After 2 clean years | After 3 more clean years | After 3 further clean years |

The general balance starts at 12. Novice and qualifying reinstated drivers start at 8 and can follow the clean-driving progression above. Serious offenses can remove 2, 3, 4 or 6 points. If validity is lost, a fine alone does not restore it; follow DGT’s recovery procedure. Check your actual balance in miDGT.

## Renew before the expiry becomes a problem

Spanish category B is normally valid for 10 years until age 65 and then 5 years. Health conditions can shorten validity. An authorized recognition center can normally manage the medical check and renewal. Do not drive on an expired license.

**Three documents, three jobs**
Your permiso de conducir authorizes you. The permiso de circulación identifies the vehicle’s registration. The tarjeta ITV / ficha técnica records its technical and inspection details. Keep the required documents available.

**miDGT:** it provides license/vehicle information and legally valid digital documents for use in Spain. Keep physical documents for foreign trips and confirm destination requirements. Maintain your DGT contact and address details so notices and the renewed card reach you.

**My license renewal date**

**My car’s next ITV date**

Official references: 11, 12, 25 • open the source directory on page 18

# Buy the car in six steps.

Start with the report, not with the seller’s promise that the paperwork is fine.

1. **Match the seller and the vehicle**

   Compare identity, ownership and VIN/registration details. Ask for registration, technical record, service invoices, keys and inspection information.

2. **Read the DGT report**

   Check administrative status, recorded mileage and ITV history. A clean report is useful evidence, not a mechanical guarantee. Confirm the previous year’s IVTM is paid and any transfer-blocking sanctions are resolved.

3. **Get an independent mechanical check**

   Ask a mechanic about warning lights, leaks, tires, brakes and likely work for the next inspection. Check ZBE access for where you will use the car.

4. **Sign a complete contract**

   Identify buyer, seller, vehicle, price, condition and agreed terms. Include the date and time; both parties sign. Keep payment evidence and your copy.

5. **Deal with regional tax, then DGT transfer**

   For a private sale, ITP procedures commonly use Modelo 620/621. Prove payment, exemption or non-liability as applicable. Complete ownership transfer within 30 days; the standard DGT fee is €55.70.

6. **Arrange insurance and confirm completion**

   Ensure suitable cover is active before driving. Verify that the transfer is complete and the registration is correct. Save contract, tax, fee and transfer evidence.

**Do not group every warning together**
**Reserva de dominio:** recorded financing can block transfer until resolved.
**Embargo:** attachment can remain after transfer; do not treat it as harmless.
**Precinto:** an order restricting circulation is a separate issue.
Get a precise explanation from DGT or a qualified professional.

A gestor may handle the paperwork. Ask which taxes and fees are included and keep proof of completion. In the video, Mitch paid around €100 for assistance; that personal cost is not a national tariff.

Official references: 13, 14 • open the source directory on page 18

# Choose how to have a car.

The monthly payment is only one part of the decision.

| | |
|---|---|
| Private used purchase | Inspect carefully; arrange transfer and regional tax. Consumer dealer-guarantee rules do not apply in the same way. |
| Professional used dealer | Keep the invoice and written condition/guarantee terms. A reduced legal guarantee can be agreed for used goods, but not below one year. |
| Renting / long-term rental | Confirm maintenance, insurance, excess, mileage, permitted drivers, early termination and handback charges. |
| Leasing / finance | Read the total payable, interest/fees, final payment and ownership terms. Financing restrictions may affect resale. |
| Occasional rental | Useful to test whether a car is needed. Check driver eligibility, deposit, insurance excess, fuel and toll terms. |

## Turn yearly bills into a monthly figure

Monthly running budget = insurance ÷ 12 + IVTM ÷ 12 + ITV reserve + servicing/repair reserve + fuel/charging + parking + tolls. Add finance if applicable. Keep purchase/transfer costs separate; add depreciation when comparing total ownership with renting.

**Check the annual tax**
IVTM is municipal vehicle tax. The amount depends on the municipality and vehicle. It is generally due from the registered owner on 1 January; private cost-sharing in a sale does not change the municipality’s taxpayer. Keep the vehicle’s fiscal address current.

**My monthly fixed costs**

**Fuel, parking and repair reserve**

**Before buying:** compare this budget with your real weekly journeys. A license can remain useful even when owning a car does not.

Official references: 14, 15, 16 • open the source directory on page 18

# ITV: know the result.

It checks roadworthiness and emissions, not just exhaust pollution.

## Ordinary private passenger-car intervals

| | |
|---|---|
| Up to 4 years | Generally exempt |
| Over 4 and up to 10 years | Every 2 years |
| Over 10 years | Every year |

These intervals use the vehicle’s age and ordinary private passenger-car category. Different categories, services and specific cases have different schedules. Use the due date in the technical record.

## Prepare for the appointment

1. **Book the correct station and check the paperwork**

   Use an authorized ITV station. Ask which documents to bring and how payment/reinspection work. Confirm that your vehicle is currently authorized to travel there.

2. **Fix obvious issues first**

   Check lights, tires, windscreen and warning lights. Ask a mechanic about defects. A booked appointment does not extend an expired ITV.

3. **Read the result and act on it**

   Keep the report and follow its stated repair and reinspection deadline. Record the next due date after passing.

| Result | What it means |
|---|---|
| Favorable | Pass: correct any listed minor defects and follow the next due date. |
| Desfavorable | Serious defects: ordinary driving is not allowed; permitted travel is limited to repair and reinspection. |
| Negativa | Very serious defects: the car cannot move under its own power; use recovery transport. |

Official references: 14, 17 • open the source directory on page 18

# Can the car go where you need?

Check the destination’s actual rules before buying an older vehicle.

## Environmental categories are a starting point




Use DGT’s registration-plate lookup for the exact classification. These are category illustrations, not official sticker replicas. Age alone is not enough to identify every car’s class.

1. **Open the municipality’s current ZBE page**

   Find the actual boundary, schedule and phased rules. A national map helps locate zones; the city publishes access details.

2. **Check your vehicle and any exception**

   Look for resident permits, foreign-plate registration and limited-entry provisions where offered. A badge is not automatic permission for every area.

3. **Check parking separately**

   ZBE access does not grant parking. Read signs for payment hours, maximum stays, resident rules, loading zones and restricted spaces.

**Local rules, live check**
Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia do not have one identical access system. Rules change. The video’s Valencia discussion is a dated local example; verify the live municipal page rather than treating a past approval status as permanent.

**Parking budget:** price a monthly garage if daily street parking is difficult. Check height/width clearance and overnight terms. Informal attendants (gorrillas) are not an official parking service. Keep valuables out of sight; do not leave bags that invite attention.

Official references: 18, 19 • open the source directory on page 18

# Get comfortable with the roads.

Read posted limits. Leave room to make a calm, safe decision.

| 120 | 90 | 20 | 30 | 50 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Autopistas / autovías | Conventional roads | Shared-level streets | 1 lane each direction | 2+ lanes each direction |

General limits for ordinary passenger cars, in km/h. Specific signs, restrictions and conditions take priority. The urban figures depend on the street layout; do not assume every city street is 50.

## Roundabouts: four moves

1. **Approach and give way**

   Observe circulating traffic and yield unless signs/signals instruct otherwise. Slow enough to see pedestrians and cyclists.

2. **Use the lane appropriate to your route**

   Respect lane signs/markings. Any lane change must be safe and signaled; another driver’s speed or pressure does not create priority.

3. **Reach the outside lane before exiting**

   Check mirrors and blind spots. Signal your exit and leave from the appropriate outside lane; do not cut across another lane.

4. **If the move is unsafe, go around again**

   Missing an exit is preferable to forcing a crossing. Some specially marked roundabouts have different lane guidance; follow it.

**Make the first drives easier**
Learn an unfamiliar route outside rush hour and plan parking before leaving. If a manual transmission adds pressure, discuss training or an automatic with the school. Do not let horns or tailgating dictate an unsafe move.

Official references: 20 • open the source directory on page 18

# Enforcement and the new rules.

The video’s examples are a reason to check current rules, not rely on old habits.

## Alcohol, drugs and speed cameras

| | |
|---|---|
| General blood / breath limit | 0.5 g/L / 0.25 mg/L |
| Novice (first 2 years) and specified professional drivers | 0.3 g/L / 0.15 mg/L |
| Drivers under 18 | Zero alcohol |

No alcohol before driving is the practical choice. Legal thresholds are not a safe-drinking target. Preventive alcohol/drug checkpoints are used. Fixed/mobile cameras measure speed; radares de tramo calculate an average over a section. Slowing at one camera does not erase it.

## Cyclist protection from 1 October 2026

**1.5 m**
Minimum lateral clearance

**5 m**
Urban following distance

**−20 km/h**
Overtake outside towns

When overtaking cyclists, leave at least 1.5 m. Where there is more than one lane per direction, move fully into the adjacent lane. Outside towns, reduce to at least 20 km/h below the limit before starting and throughout the overtake. In urban traffic, leave at least 5 m behind a cyclist in your lane. Overtake only when safe.

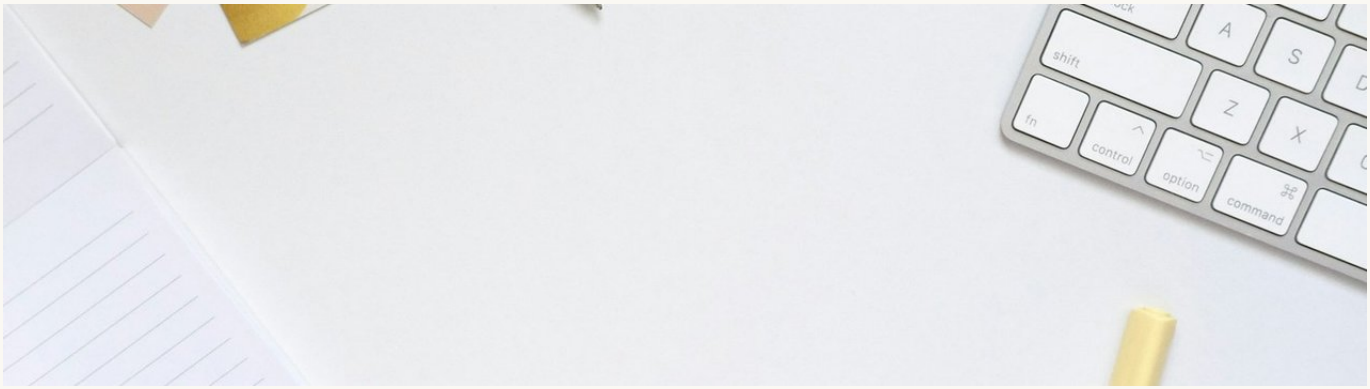
**Signs and other mobility rules**
The updated sign catalogue began on 1 July 2025; physical replacement is progressive. The October 2026 reform also changes rules for motorcycles, scooters and other vulnerable users. If you use those vehicles, check their separate equipment and circulation rules.

**Phone and seatbelt habits matter too:** arrange navigation before moving and keep attention on the road. Follow the current restraint rules for every passenger, including children.

Official references: 20, 21, 22 • open the source directory on page 18

# Sell the car. Close the file.

A sale does not finish with the keys changing hands.




1. **Sign and retain the evidence**

   Record both parties, vehicle details, agreed price and exact sale/handover date and time. Keep a signed copy and payment evidence.

2. **Notify DGT promptly**

   Do not wait and hope the buyer completes the transfer. Use the official sale-notification process and keep its receipt. The buyer’s transfer obligation still exists.

3. **Check the administrative outcome**

   Resolve any financing restrictions before the sale process. Verify what has been recorded. A sale notification is distinct from final registration in the buyer’s name.

4. **Contact the insurer and settle other arrangements**

   Ask which proof is needed to cancel, adjust or transfer cover. Discuss garages, toll devices and subscriptions. Keep written confirmation rather than assuming payments will stop.

**From the video**
In the video, Mitch’s insurer requested DGT documentation before closing things out. That is an example of why evidence matters, not a requirement shared by every insurer.

**Keep together:** contract, buyer’s information, transfer/notified-sale receipt, payment proof and insurer confirmation. Store copies securely. Ask the municipality about any outstanding IVTM rather than assuming the sale cancels that year’s bill.

Official references: 16, 23 • open the source directory on page 18

# Leave ready for the journey.

Check route costs, fuel and equipment before you set off.



**Tolls:** many high-speed roads are free, but some roads/sections charge. Check the route. Vía-T lanes require the appropriate electronic payment setup.
**Fuel:** gasolina is gasoline; gasóleo is diesel. Fuel is sold by the litre; 95 and 98 are common gasoline grades. Use the car's filler/handbook specification, not pump color.
**EVs:** plan charger access, connector and payment arrangements, not just distance.

## Connected V16: buy the approved version

Since 1 January 2026, the approved connected V16 is the roadside warning device for Spanish-registered passenger cars covered by the rule. Check the exact model on DGT's certified list and its service expiry. Older non-connected beacons do not meet the requirement. Foreign-registered vehicles in international circulation have their applicable exception rules.

**Do not confuse warning with a rescue call**
The V16 warns and reports the immobilized vehicle's location. It does not call 112 or a tow truck. Keep emergency and assistance contacts available.

**If you break down:** stop as safely as possible, activate hazard lights and use the beacon according to instructions. Avoid entering traffic. Follow the roadside safety situation; call your assistance provider, or 112 for an emergency.

**Before a foreign trip:** carry the full physical license and vehicle papers, verify insurance/roadside cover abroad, destination rules and any needed international permit. A Spanish provisional license is not an international driving document.

Official references: 1, 12, 24, 25, 27 • open the source directory on page 18

# Your next three actions.

Choose the boxes that apply. Official deadlines take priority over this planner.

**LICENSE**

- [ ] Confirm issuing country, category, original entitlement date and route.
- [ ] Confirm my right-to-drive deadline or renewal date.
- [ ] Prepare the exchange file or choose the school and transmission.

**VEHICLE**

- [ ] Check report, mechanical condition, ITV and local ZBE access.
- [ ] Compare the full ownership budget with renting or public transport.
- [ ] Complete tax/transfer and arrange valid insurance before driving.

**EVERYDAY USE**

- [ ] Check parking, current road rules and assistance contacts.
- [ ] Carry required documents and the approved equipment for my car.
- [ ] Keep points, renewal, ITV and sale records up to date.

## Make the plan concrete

**My next action**

**My deadline**

**Who I need to contact**

**Useful Spanish:** canje = license exchange; autoescuela = driving school; cita previa = appointment; gestor = administrative assistance professional; ficha técnica = technical record; ITV = vehicle inspection; ZBE = low-emission zone; IVTM = municipal vehicle tax.

**The video’s core lesson:** plan the life you want before adding a car to it.

# Official links + credits.

Reviewed 6 October 2026. Numbered references identify the sources used in this ebook.

**01** Foreign-license validity and international permits ↗
**02** EU / EEA recognition and renewal ↗
**03** Current exchange countries and category conditions ↗
**04** Third-country exchange requirements ↗
**05** Digital exchange procedure ↗
**06** Exams, fees and repeat applications ↗
**07** Medical checks and driver-recognition centers ↗
**08** Independent theory applications and validity ↗
**09** Licensing regulation: test criteria and restrictions ↗
**10** Manual / automatic and restriction code 78 ↗
**11** Points and clean-driving progression ↗
**12** Renewal and provisional authorizations ↗
**13** Buying a used vehicle ↗
**14** How to interpret a DGT vehicle report ↗
**15** Consumer guarantees for second-hand goods ↗
**16** Municipal vehicle tax: IVTM ↗
**17** ITV rules and inspection intervals ↗
**18** Environmental classes and plate lookup ↗
**19** Spain-wide low-emission-zone map ↗
**20** Current circulation rules ↗
**21** Changes effective 1 October 2026 ↗
**22** New traffic-sign catalogue from July 2025 ↗
**23** Selling and notifying the sale ↗
**24** Approved connected V16 devices ↗
**25** Vehicle documents to carry ↗
**26** EU recognition of converted non-EU licenses ↗
**27** V16: operation and common misconceptions ↗
**28** Adaptations and accessible licensing ↗
**29** Choosing a driving school ↗
**30** Theory-test format and risk-awareness questions ↗

## Photography

Stock photography is illustrative and cropped for layout. It does not show Mitch’s car, a Spanish test or an official procedure. All photos are used under the Unsplash License.

Daniela Cuevas — cover photo ↗
Marcelo Leal — medical assessment ↗
Jess Bailey — paperwork ↗
Henrique Ferreira — Seville skyline ↗

**Scope:** an educational guide for ordinary passenger-car driving, based on Mitch’s supplied video and official Spanish/EU material. It is not an official DGT publication or individual legal advice. Country agreements, fees and local rules can change. Personal observations and video estimates are labeled; illustrative budgets are not forecasts.

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