

**Webmaster's notice:** In addition to Marg's Roberts' report below which was written in January 2010, there was a detailed article in The Costa Blanca News (June 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> 2010). You can read the article by clicking this link: <http://www.u3amoraira-teulada.org/misc-pages/drivinglicences.jpg>

## Information regarding Driving Licences

I know that there is a lot of concern among U3A members about the medical certificate/driving licence issue. This is what we did, and why; I thought it might be of help to others.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January, Don and I began the change over to Spanish licences, as we had heard of an English couple (driving on an English Licence) being fined for not possessing a medical certificate, which is a requirement of ALL Spanish national drivers.

We obtained our medical certificates in Benissa, but they do not do the actual change over of licences. Once a Spanish licence has been obtained, they will deal with the renewals every 5 years.

The office for the medicals is situated near the cathedral, but is not the old office near the Consum supermarket, and is called simply Centro Médico, Benissa. From the old town (not N332), if you face the cathedral and look to your left, you will see on the first floor, the name of the centre. You need to register that you are going as these certificates are only issued between 5 – 6.30pm on Thursdays. Registration that you are attending can be done at any time during normal office hours, but they are closed in the afternoons. The receptionist will book you in for a Thursday, usually the same week. If your Spanish is good enough you can phone, the number is 965732470. They don't make a specific appointment so early attendance is advised, even as early as 4.45pm. We arrived at 5pm and were fifth in the queue. You need to take one photo.

The "medical" consists of taking a reaction test, then a simple eye test, and then a visit to the doctor where he asks if your hearing is good, are you currently seeing a doctor for anything, have you any prosthetics and then he takes your blood pressure. He speaks good English, but the other staff do not, though with signs etc I think you could manage without Spanish, they are all very friendly. The cost of the certificates is between 40 and 50 euros. The whole thing took just over an hour.

Once the certificates have been obtained we went off to El Trafico in Alicante, for the next step. I can't say specifically how to get there, but we followed the signs for the Railway Station (Renfe) and parked there. It wasn't cheap, but there were plenty of spaces and it's only a 5 minute walk to El Trafico. I think even with limited Spanish you could ask the way.

The things you need to take to El Trafico are:

Passport, UK Driving licence (both parts), NIE document (or card), Padron Registration, Medical certificate, 2 photos (one signed on the back), and also include two copies of each thing (including the back of the UK plastic licence).

At El Traffico you go to the information queue first. Then you will be directed to the Caja queue to pay any fee. Licences cost about 26 euros. Having obtained your ticket, wait for the number to appear on the board, and go to the appropriate desk. Although there were hundreds of people there they do clear the queues quickly as a lot of people are there just to register the sale or purchase of a car. It's probably best to take a translator, unless your Spanish is good. There is no need to make an appointment, but you need to allow plenty of time, 15 minutes for the information queue, 20 minutes for the Caja queue, then up to an hour waiting for your number to appear. They close at 2pm. We arrived at about 10am, and were out at around 11.30.

Our new licences will be ready in a couple of weeks and we will have to go back to collect them, and at this point we will hand in the old UK licence. Meanwhile we have a paper that says we have applied for a Spanish licence, and for the moment we have our UK licences back, while they ask DVLC about whether we have any points or are banned!

You now sign a declaration that you hold no other current licence; this is part of the new Law.

**To Summarise:**

**It is voluntary to change from a current licence. But when it expires, then it is compulsory to change it to a Spanish one.**

**To drive legally with a UK licence you MUST OBTAIN a medical certificate, but ALSO you must REGISTER your UK licence with El Trafico.**

These changes will not apply to non residents, or hire cars (unless you are resident); the normal UK licence is sufficient.

These were the answers to the questions I asked on 15<sup>th</sup> January, but obviously the rules can be subject to change at any time.

Margaret Roberts  
(January 2010)