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Leaving the US Checklist

A complete guide to closing out your life in the US before your move to Spain

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You can never start too early. Even if your move is a year or two away, working through this checklist now helps you plan on a timeline that isn't rushed. Several items — apostilling documents, renewing your passport, finding a US expat tax advisor — take longer than people expect.

Use the blank lines at the end of each section to add items specific to your situation.

Mail & Address

You'll still need a reliable US address for legal, financial and government purposes after you leave. Most expats use a trusted family member's address or a dedicated US mail forwarding and domicile service. Be deliberate about what gets forwarded physically vs scanned and emailed — physical forwarding to Spain is slow and expensive.

- ☐ Set up a US domicile address — trusted family member or a mail forwarding and domicile service
- ☐ Brief your domicile service on what to scan and email vs physically forward
- ☐ Set up USPS mail forwarding from your home address to your domicile address
- ☐ Cancel magazine and newspaper subscriptions — forwarding them overseas is expensive and rarely worth it
- ☐ Update address with IRS
- ☐ Update address with Social Security Administration
- ☐ Update address with Medicare (if applicable)
- ☐ Update address with all financial institutions (banks, brokerages, credit cards)
- ☐ Update address with insurance providers
- ☐ Update address with pension providers
- ☐ Update address with any professional licensing boards
- ☐ Check for any pending deliveries to your home address and redirect or time them before your move date
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For more detailed guidance on each topic, visit **us2es.com**

Financial & Banking

Beyond updating your address, prepare your accounts for international use. US banks sometimes freeze accounts showing sudden foreign transactions — notify them in advance. Some US financial websites block foreign IP addresses, so set up a VPN before you leave. If you don't already have a US expat tax advisor, find one before you go — the planning they can do ahead of your move has real financial value.

- ☐ Notify all banks and credit card companies you're keeping that you'll be living abroad and making regular foreign transactions
- ☐ Set up international wire transfer access with your US bank
- ☐ Open a specialist international transfer account (Wise, Currencies Direct or OFX) for large transfers
- ☐ Cancel or consolidate US bank accounts you won't need
- ☐ Cancel automatic payments tied to US-only services
- ☐ Redirect direct deposits (Social Security, pension, investment distributions) to the correct account (i.e. to your US bank account, Spanish bank account or other)
- ☐ Set up a VPN before you leave — some US financial sites block foreign IP addresses
- ☐ Download or export important financial statements and records
- ☐ Close any safe deposit box and relocate contents
- ☐ Transition to a US expat tax specialist before you leave rather than after
- ☐ Arrange a US power of attorney for someone you trust to manage financial accounts and transactions on your behalf while you're abroad

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Subscriptions & Recurring Services

Go through your credit card and bank statements month by month and flag every recurring charge — you'll likely find several you'd forgotten about. Some streaming services work fine in Spain, some don't. Check each one individually. Some professional memberships have international equivalents worth transitioning to rather than cancelling outright.

- ☐ Audit all recurring subscriptions by going through credit card and bank statements month by month
- ☐ Streaming services — check which ones work in Spain or have international plans before cancelling
- ☐ Cancel gym memberships
- ☐ Cancel local delivery services (Amazon Fresh, meal kits, grocery delivery, etc.)
- ☐ Cancel Amazon Prime or switch to Amazon Spain
- ☐ Cancel local membership clubs or organizations
- ☐ Review professional memberships — cancel, downgrade or transition to international equivalents as appropriate
- ☐ Cancel any US-based software subscriptions you're replacing
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Home & Property

The key discipline here is timing — cancelling utilities too early creates problems during a final walkthrough, and cancelling home insurance before a sale or rental is complete leaves you exposed. Work backwards from your actual move or handover date and schedule cancellations accordingly. If you're renting rather than selling, confirm what transfers to a property manager or tenant vs what you remain responsible for.

- [ ] Cancel or transfer utilities — electric, gas, water, trash (coordinate timing carefully with move or handover date)
- [ ] Cancel home internet and cable
- [ ] Cancel or transfer home security monitoring service
- [ ] Cancel lawn, garden and pool services
- [ ] Cancel cleaning services
- [ ] Cancel pest control contracts
- [ ] Notify HOA of change of ownership, rental or vacancy
- [ ] Arrange storage or disposal of remaining belongings
- [ ] Cancel home insurance — coordinate timing carefully with sale or rental completion to avoid a gap in coverage
- [ ] Check for any pending deliveries to your home address and redirect or cancel anything that won't arrive before your move date
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Vehicles

Start the vehicle sale process earlier than you think necessary — private sales take longer than expected. If you're in a lease, check your contract early for early termination options and fees. Some manufacturers have lease transfer programs worth exploring. Coordinate insurance cancellation carefully with the actual transfer of ownership.

- ☐ Sell or transfer ownership of US vehicles — start earlier than you think necessary
- ☐ If leasing, check your contract early for early termination options, fees and notice periods — manufacturer lease transfer programs may be worth exploring
- ☐ Coordinate auto insurance cancellation carefully with the actual transfer of ownership — don't cancel before the vehicle is out of your name
- ☐ Cancel EV charging subscriptions if applicable
- ☐ Retrieve all personal items and documentation from vehicles before sale
- ☐ If importing a vehicle to Spain, research the importation and re-registration process well in advance

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Government, Legal & Domicile

This section has the highest stakes. State tax residency termination, domicile establishment, driver's license validity and estate documents all have real consequences if left too late. Your domicile state affects taxation, voting, driver's license and financial services — your mail address, license, voter registration and accounts should all point to the same state. Identify a trusted US contact who can intervene quickly if something urgent comes up once you're abroad.

- [ ] Identify a trusted US contact who can intervene quickly if needed and brief them on where to find your key documents and contacts
- [ ] Confirm your US passport is valid for at least 2–3 years beyond your move date — renew before leaving if needed
- [ ] Consider applying for a second US passport if your visa application timeline overlaps with international travel needs
- [ ] Check your driver's license expiry date and renew before leaving if it will expire within 2–3 years
- [ ] If establishing domicile in a specific state, make sure your driver's license reflects that state before you leave
- [ ] Confirm your domicile state aligns with your mail address, driver's license and voter registration
- [ ] Research state tax residency termination requirements for your state — requirements vary significantly
- [ ] File a final state tax return if required
- [ ] Maintain voter registration in your domicile state — US citizens abroad can vote via absentee ballot
- [ ] Notify Social Security Administration of your foreign address
- [ ] If receiving Social Security benefits, confirm international direct deposit is set up correctly
- [ ] Review your will and estate documents — update if needed before a major international move
- [ ] Arrange a US power of attorney for someone you trust to handle legal matters and official processes on your behalf while you're abroad
- [ ] Consult a US expat tax advisor before leaving regarding FBAR, Form 8938, state tax residency termination and exit planning

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Healthcare

Medical records requests and prescription transfers take longer than people expect. The most important timing issue is health insurance — your Spanish visa requires proof of valid private health insurance before you can apply, so the two coverages need to overlap. Don't cancel US coverage before your Spanish coverage is confirmed and active. Medicare coverage outside the US is extremely limited — understand what this means before you go.

- [ ] Request copies of all medical records from doctors, dentists and specialists — do this well in advance
- [ ] Request vaccination records
- [ ] Get copies of eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions
- [ ] Get copies of any medical device documentation (hearing aids, CPAP settings, implanted device specs, etc.)
- [ ] Transfer prescriptions or arrange an extended supply for the transition period — some US medications are harder to obtain in Spain
- [ ] Arrange valid Spanish private health insurance before cancelling US coverage — the two should overlap
- [ ] Cancel US health insurance only after Spanish coverage is confirmed and active
- [ ] Clarify Medicare rules for extended stays abroad if applicable — coverage outside the US is extremely limited
- [ ] If you have an HSA, understand the rules around using it once you're no longer enrolled in a qualifying US health plan
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Documents & Records

Several documents need apostilles for use in Spanish legal and administrative processes — birth certificates, marriage certificates and divorce paperwork among them. The apostille is obtained from the Secretary of State in the issuing state and processing can take several weeks, so start early. Maintain secure digital copies of everything in cloud storage so lost or damaged originals don't become a crisis.

- [ ] Locate and organize all original documents: birth certificate, marriage certificate, divorce paperwork, Social Security cards, citizenship or naturalization documents, passport
- [ ] Arrange apostilles for documents likely to be needed in Spain — at minimum birth certificate, marriage certificate and divorce paperwork. Allow several weeks for processing
- [ ] Scan and securely store high quality digital copies of all important documents in cloud storage — label clearly and make accessible from any device
- [ ] Store digital copies of property deeds, vehicle titles and any significant legal agreements
- [ ] Store digital copies of last 3–5 years of US tax returns
- [ ] Store digital copies of insurance policies
- [ ] Store digital copies of important receipts and financial records
- [ ] Make sure a trusted person in the US knows where to find your critical documents and how to access them if needed
- [ ] Back up all computers and devices to both an external drive and cloud storage before transit — verify the backup is complete
- [ ] If replacing devices before you leave, migrate and back up before the move rather than after
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Digital & Communications

WhatsApp is the default communication platform in Spain and across Europe — set it up before you arrive and make sure it's connected to the number your Spanish contacts will reach you on. Decide what to do with your US phone number — Google Voice is a low-cost way to keep it active. Set up a VPN before you leave so you know it works before you need it.

- ☐ Download and activate WhatsApp before you leave and make sure it's connected to the correct number you'll be using in Spain
- ☐ Decide what to do with your US phone number — keep via Google Voice, port to a new provider or let it go
- ☐ If keeping your US cell plan during the transition, downgrade to a lower tier of service
- ☐ Set up a VPN before you leave and confirm it works
- ☐ Back up all devices to cloud storage and an external drive before transit — verify the backup is complete
- ☐ Cancel or port your US phone number once your Spanish plan is active
- ☐ Notify key contacts of your new contact details and preferred communication method
- ☐ Cancel any US-based cloud storage or software plans you're replacing
- ☐ Download important documents and files to secure storage independent of any single device
- ☐ Check which streaming services work in Spain or have international plans before cancelling
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Practical Prep & What Not to Bring

Consumer electronics are generally cheaper in the US than in the EU — if you're planning an upgrade in the next year or two, do it before you leave. Most modern electronics are dual voltage (check for 100-240V on the label) and need only a plug adapter for Spain. Most US appliances with heating elements or motors are not worth bringing — plan to sell or donate these and replace them in Spain. Start the decluttering process early; it's a bigger project than most people expect.

- ☐ Upgrade electronics before leaving if needed — phones, laptops, tablets and USB-charged devices are generally cheaper in the US than in the EU
- ☐ Confirm all devices you're bringing are dual voltage — check for 100-240V input on the label or power brick
- ☐ Plan early for disposing of items you're not bringing — furniture, appliances, clothing and household goods. Don't leave it to the final weeks
- ☐ Most US appliances with heating elements or motors (coffee makers, toasters, blenders, hair dryers, etc.) are not worth bringing — plan to sell or donate and budget for replacing in Spain
- ☐ Stock up on any US-specific items you use regularly that are harder to find or more expensive in Spain — certain medications, specialty foods, personal care products
- ☐ Make sure anything ordered for delivery to your home address will arrive before your move date — redirect or cancel anything that won't
- ☐ Do a final sweep of safe deposit boxes, storage units and any off-site locations where you may have belongings or documents
- ☐ Confirm your travel insurance covers the move itself including any valuable items being shipped or carried

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