

After Your Move: Spain Arrival Checklist

First week, first month and first 90 days — organized by phase and category

The first weeks after arriving in Spain involve more administrative tasks than most people expect. Some are time-sensitive — you have 30 days to apply for your TIE card. Others can wait but are easy to defer indefinitely without a structure. Work through this checklist in order and the administrative side of your arrival will be sorted well before the novelty wears off.

! Time-sensitive: You have 30 days from arrival to apply for your TIE card.

Book your cita previa appointment in the first week — appointments are scarce and fill up fast.

First Week — Immediate Priorities

The first week is about getting the essentials in place before anything else. These items either have hard deadlines or make everything else easier.

Legal

- ☐ Register your arrival with your local town hall ([empadronamiento](#)) — this establishes your official address in Spain and is required for many subsequent steps including your TIE appointment
- ☐ Book your [TIE](#) appointment (cita previa) immediately — you have 30 days from arrival to apply and appointments can be scarce. Book before you do almost anything else
- ☐ Confirm your [NIE](#) is active and accessible — you'll need it for banking, property transactions and most official processes

Accommodation

- ☐ Confirm your short-term or long-term accommodation is set up and functional

- ☐ Get the address of your accommodation in writing — you'll need it for empadronamiento and your TIE application
- ☐ Locate the nearest pharmacy, supermarket and medical center to your accommodation

Communications

- ☐ Get a [Spanish SIM card](#) and phone number — you need a local number for almost every Spanish service and appointment system
- ☐ Set up WhatsApp with your Spanish number — it's the primary communication platform in Spain
- ☐ Confirm your [internet connection](#) is working or arrange a temporary solution

Practical

- ☐ Locate your nearest town hall (ayuntamiento) — you'll be visiting it more than you expect
- ☐ Get local currency and confirm your cards work at Spanish ATMs and point of sale terminals
- ☐ Identify a local [gestor](#) or gestoría if you don't already have one — they handle most administrative processes and are worth finding early

First Month — Legal & Administrative

The TIE application is the most important administrative task in your first month. Everything else in this section follows from having your residency documentation in order.

TIE Application

- ☐ Complete [Form EX-17](#) (for NLV holders) before your TIE appointment
- ☐ Pay the TIE fee via [Modelo 790 Código 012](#) before your appointment
- ☐ Attend your TIE appointment — bring passport, visa, completed EX-17, passport photos, proof of address, proof of health insurance and proof of financial means
- ☐ Note the expected processing time (typically 4-8 weeks) and collect your TIE card when notified

Empadronamiento

- ☐ Complete your empadronamiento registration at the town hall if not done in the first week — bring passport, NIE and proof of address (rental contract or property deed)
- ☐ Request a copy of your empadronamiento certificate (volante de empadronamiento) — you'll need it repeatedly for administrative processes

Address & Notifications

- ☐ [Update your address](#) with all US institutions — banks, brokerages, Social Security, IRS, pension providers
- ☐ Set up mail forwarding or confirm your US domicile service is handling US mail correctly
- ☐ Update your address with any Spanish institutions you've already engaged ([lawyer](#), [bank](#), [insurance provider](#))

Legal

- ☐ Confirm your Spanish lawyer has all current contact details and your Spanish address
- ☐ If you [purchased property](#), confirm the deed (escritura) registration is progressing and utilities are transferring correctly
- ☐ Review any ongoing legal matters with your Spanish lawyer and confirm next steps

First Month — Banking & Finance

A Spanish bank account is required for almost every financial transaction in Spain — utility direct debits, tax payments, community fees and more. Get this set up early and confirm your international transfer arrangements are working.

- ☐ Open a [Spanish bank account](#) if not already done — required for almost every financial transaction in Spain including utility direct debits and tax payments
- ☐ Set up direct debits (domiciliación bancaria) for utilities, community fees and any recurring Spanish expenses
- ☐ Confirm international transfer arrangements are working — test a small transfer between your US and Spanish accounts
- ☐ Set up online banking for your Spanish account and confirm access works from your devices
- ☐ Notify your US bank of your permanent Spanish address if not already done
- ☐ Confirm Social Security or pension payments are reaching your US account correctly
- ☐ Set up a currency alert or monitoring service for the EUR/USD rate if you're regularly moving money between account

First Month — Healthcare

Confirm your health insurance is active and start establishing care with local providers early rather than waiting until you need an appointment urgently. If you're eligible for the public health system, begin that process now.

- ☐ Confirm your private health insurance policy is active and you have your insurance card and policy documents accessible
- ☐ Register with a local private clinic or doctor under your health insurance policy
- ☐ If eligible for public healthcare, begin the process of registering with the Spanish public health system (Sistema Nacional de Salud) — eligibility typically begins after registering as a resident
- ☐ Locate the nearest hospital and emergency services to your home
- ☐ Transfer any ongoing prescriptions to a Spanish pharmacy — bring your prescription documentation and note that some US medications have different names or equivalents in Spain
- ☐ Register with a local dentist if dental care is part of your insurance or ongoing needs
- ☐ If you have any ongoing medical conditions, establish care with a Spanish specialist early rather than waiting until you need an appointment urgently

First Month — Housing & Utilities

Whether renting or owning, get utilities confirmed, direct debits set up and introduce yourself to your neighbors and community early. Finding out about a problem with your water or electricity supply on a Friday afternoon is significantly less stressful if you already know your local plumber.

If Renting

- ☐ Confirm your rental contract is signed and you have a copy
- ☐ Confirm [utilities](#) are either in your name or included in the rent — electricity (luz), water (agua), gas if applicable
- ☐ Set up direct debits for any utilities in your name
- ☐ Confirm internet service is set up or schedule installation
- ☐ Introduce yourself to neighbors and the building community (comunidad) if applicable
- ☐ Locate the fuse box, water stopcock and any other essential controls in the property

If You Own

- ☐ Confirm all utilities have transferred to your name — electricity, water, gas if applicable
- ☐ Set up direct debits for utilities, IBI (annual property tax) and community fees if applicable
- ☐ Confirm home insurance (seguro de hogar) is in place

- ☐ Introduce yourself to neighbors and the community president if in an urbanization
- ☐ Register with the Comunidad de Propietarios if applicable and get the community statutes
- ☐ Locate essential controls — fuse box, water stopcock, pool equipment, alarm panel
- ☐ If the property has solar, confirm monitoring access and system operation

General

- ☐ Set up rubbish and recycling collection — confirm collection days and bin locations for your area
- ☐ Register with the local town hall for IBI if you own property — your gestor can handle this
- ☐ Note emergency numbers — local police, plumber, electrician, locksmith

First 90 Days — Driving & Vehicles

Driving in Spain on a US license is possible for a limited period after establishing residency but the clock starts ticking from the moment you become a resident. Understand your timeline early and don't leave the license exchange or conversion process until you're already out of time.

- ☐ Confirm how long your US driver's license is valid in Spain — typically you can drive on a US license for a limited period after establishing residency
- ☐ Research the [Spanish driver's license](#) exchange or conversion process — Spain has reciprocal agreements with some US states; others require a full written and practical test
- ☐ If you brought a vehicle from the US, begin the importation and re-registration process — this involves ITV inspection, homologation and re-matriculation. Use a specialist
- ☐ If [buying a vehicle in Spain](#), confirm your NIE and Spanish bank account are in place first — both are required for the purchase
- ☐ Research [car insurance](#) (seguro de coche) options — third party is the legal minimum but fully comprehensive is worth considering especially in the first year
- ☐ If you plan to use public transport regularly, get a local transport card for your area

First 90 Days — Daily Life & Integration

The administrative tasks will keep you busy in the first weeks but don't let them crowd out the things that make Spain feel like home. Getting oriented, making connections and starting on the language all pay dividends quickly.

- ☐ Open accounts with key Spanish online services — Correos (post office), local delivery services, supermarket online shopping if available in your area
- ☐ Register for any local expat groups or community organizations — useful for practical information and social connection
- ☐ Begin or continue Spanish language study — even basic Spanish makes daily life significantly easier and opens doors that stay closed otherwise
- ☐ Identify local tradespeople and service providers — plumber, electrician, handyman (manitas), pool service if applicable
- ☐ Set up a Spanish email address or additional phone number for Spanish-only services if your current setup causes issues
- ☐ Explore your local area — markets, walking routes, beaches, restaurants, services. Getting oriented makes everything easier
- ☐ If you have pets, register them with a local vet and confirm EU pet passport is in order

First 90 Days — Tax & Financial Planning

The first 90 days is when your tax situation starts to crystallize. Whether you become a Spanish tax resident in your first year depends on your arrival date. Understanding this early — and the Beckham Law window — can have significant financial implications.

- ☐ Confirm with your [expat tax advisor](#) whether you are now a Spanish tax resident — depends on your arrival date and days in Spain
- ☐ If you arrived after July 2nd, confirm your first full Spanish tax year will be the following calendar year
- ☐ Research whether you qualify for the Beckham Law — you must apply within six months of registering with Spanish social security if eligible
- ☐ Confirm your FBAR obligations for the current year — if you hold more than \$10,000 in Spanish bank accounts at any point you must file
- ☐ Confirm your Form 8938 obligations with your US tax advisor
- ☐ Find a Spanish gestor or asesor fiscal if you don't already have one — you'll need one for your first Spanish tax filing
- ☐ Begin organizing financial records for both your US and Spanish tax filings

Ongoing — Things to Keep on Top Of

These items don't have a specific deadline but need attention on a regular basis. Missing any of them can create complications that are time-consuming to untangle.

- ☐ TIE renewal — your initial TIE is valid for one year. Begin the renewal process well before expiry — your gestor can handle this
- ☐ NIE address update — update your NIE address if you move within Spain
- ☐ Empadronamiento — update if you move to a new address in Spain
- ☐ IBI — annual property tax, typically due in autumn. Confirm direct debit is in place or confirm payment dates with your gestor
- ☐ Spanish tax filing — due April 1 to June 1 for the prior year. Your gestor handles this but you need to provide your financial information in good time
- ☐ US tax filing — due April 15 with automatic extension to June 15 for Americans abroad. FBAR due separately by April 15
- ☐ Health insurance renewal — confirm annual renewal and that coverage still meets your needs and visa requirements
- ☐ Vehicle ITV — Spain's equivalent of an MOT, required periodically depending on vehicle age. Your gestor or local garage can advise on timing

For more detail on any of these topics visit us2es.com

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