

SPANISH IMMIGRATION TERMS

Your new country's administrative jargon, defined



Extranjero / Extranjera

Spanish for "foreigner."

This is you, if you've moved to Spain from another country. You'll see this word often — including at the Oficina de Extranjeros (Foreigner's Office) inside the National Police station, where you'll handle your documents and ID. Most foreign resident ID types in Spain also include this word.



TIE (Tarjeta de Identidad de Extranjero)

Identity card for foreigners

This is a physical card, and it's your primary ID if you're officially residing in Spain. The number printed on it is your NIE. It also includes your photo, address, and other key personal details. You'll be asked for it frequently, and you're required to always keep it on your person.



Ayuntamiento

Spanish for
"town hall/city hall"

Your go-to place for anything related to your local area: registering your address (empadronamiento), requesting building permits, or dealing with any and all community matters. Each municipality has its own Ayuntamiento and website.



NIE (Número de Identidad de Extranjero)

Identity number for foreigners

This is a unique identification number assigned to foreigners in Spain. It's originally issued on a piece of A4 paper, but you don't need the paper itself — just the number. You'll need it for just about everything: opening a bank account, signing a lease, buying a house, getting a SIM card, or even receiving a package. You can apply for a NIE at your nearest Spanish consulate abroad or in person within Spain, but it is also issued to you on your approval sheet for the digital nomad residency. *NOTE: THIS IS NOT A CARD, JUST A NUMBER*

Cita Previa

Spanish for
"previous appointment"

Many administrative tasks in Spain require an appointment in advance. If you see this term, it means you must book an appointment (no walk-ins!) You'll usually do this through the relevant website. But it's safest to always assume that you need a cita previa to apply for or otherwise approach any official office in Spain.



Certificado de Empadronamiento

(Padrón)
Proof of address certificate

This document proves you're registered as living in your local address in Spain. To get it, you'll need a cita previa at your local Ayuntamiento (defined here also), and required documents often include your passport, NIE, rental contract or deed, and IDs for any household members. This also acts as the census for your city, and lets the town hall know how much to allow for services like garbage collection and road maintenance. It's very important to know how many residents there are, to keep our cities running smoothly.



Certificado Electrónico de Ciudadano (Certificado Digital)

your Digital Certificate, also called a digital signature

This is a downloadable file for your computer that acts as a secure digital ID for government websites. You'll activate it one time in person (with your passport), after which you can use it to access various online services — such as submitting taxes or requesting documents — without visiting offices. Your initial certificate is good for 4 years before needing renewal.



Inspección Técnica de Vehículos (ITV)

Vehicle inspections

If your car is less than 4 years old, it does not need one. Once your car is between 4 and 10 years old, ITV testing must be done every two years. Over 10 years, ITV is yearly. Motorcycles are exempt for the first 4 years and then done every 2 years.



Autónomo

Spanish for "freelance"

In Spain, autónomo refers to legally registered freelance workers or sole proprietors. Unlike in some countries, the process is formal and involves registering with Social Security and the tax authority. You'll be responsible for filing and paying taxes quarterly (plus annual filings). You'll also pay monthly Social Security (which earns you public healthcare for yourself and any dependents, and a pension).



Impuesto sobre Vehículos de Tracción Mecánica (IVTM)

Road tax on your vehicle

All vehicle owners in Spain must pay this yearly tax, regardless of whether the vehicle is new or used. The payment window is typically between April and June. Not to be confused with ITV, which is your vehicle inspection (every 2 years).



**Agencia Estatal de
Administración
Tributaria (AEAT)**

The Spanish Tax Authority

This is the official body for all tax-related matters in Spain. The term “Hacienda” is more commonly used in conversation. They have a mobile app (“AEAT”) — but it may require a Spanish Apple or Google account to download. You’ll need to register with AEAT to pay most taxes, and their app and website are loaded with all of your personal information. Use your Digital Certificate to create and log into your account - it’s probably already there waiting for you!



**Dirección General
de Tráfico (DGT)**

The Spanish
Road/Traffic Authority

DGT is the central body in Spain that oversees all matters related to road transport and traffic. They’re responsible for road safety, traffic laws, vehicle movement, and providing administrative services related to all of these areas. They also manage driving licenses, traffic control, and handling traffic violations. If you get caught going too fast on a speed camera - your citation will show up in the mail, from DGT. They have an app, too!



**La Red SARA (Sistemas
de Aplicaciones y
Redes para las
Administraciones)**

Help with changing your
address if you move

If you decide to move once you have settled into a home and done all of your paperwork for that address, you’ll need to change it with a whole host of agencies! Luckily Spain has the Red SARA system all ready for you. This website will help you get that address changed with many official government agencies (but don’t forget things like your own bank, and to get a new Empadronamiento!)

[CLICK HERE: LA RED SARA](#)



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