



REMOVALS GUIDE

HOUSE REMOVALS TO SPAIN

So you have decided to move to Spain. Whether you are moving to the green of The Basque Country , to the heat of Malaga , the ruggedness of the Sierra Nevada or the famous plains there are some factors that remain constant. Some relate to your removal to Spain and some relate to what you need to do when you arrive.

It may sound obvious but if you are planning a house removal to Spain, then the first thing to consider is just how much stuff should you take with you! I say this as, with European Removals and particularly with removals to Spain, Size does matter!!

If you have an attic full of boxes that you have not brought down in five years, do you really need to take them with you? In essence a removal to Spain should be no different to a removal within your own home town. The only difference for removals to Spain is that you need to cross a stretch of water and go a bit further!!

If you have a look at the rest of the site and in particular the moving articles that I wrote for the French Property News you will see in detail all the steps that you should take that relate to the move to Spain (or France, or anywhere in Europe), which should show you that removals to Spain should be as simple as falling off a log! Mind you beware as some companies would have you believe otherwise, especially Spanish ones!

Please also note our sister company in France, CODEMFRANCE. This company can assist you to move smaller items both within Spain and from the UK to Spain as well. Small part loads to Spain as well as single items such as Tables etc can be moved to Spain at surprisingly little cost. Our sister company can also arrange for you to have Paint shipped to Spain!!

Please also be aware that once you have completed your removal to Spain, or even whilst you are still planning your Spanish removal (or even removals) you can ask us to assist in finding you Medical Insurance In Spain, House Insurance in Spain and Motor Insurance in Spain. We are also very well placed to arrange your currency transfers. Why save money on your house removal to Spain, and then waste it on Bank charges!!!

If you would like more details on any of our services following your house removal to Spain or if you would like more details on our total relocation package to Spain, then please speak directly to Martine in our offices.

With multi lingual offices in Europe ET BROKERS has the advantage being able to find you the best price and service for your house move to Spain. We specialise in removals to and from all parts of Spain and have been brokering successful moves across the whole of the European Union for the past 4 years. With thousands of reliable English, Spanish and European removals companies on our database we can send hundreds of requests for your specific moving needs simply through the click of a mouse. (See testimonials from our satisfied customers)

We receive quotations on your job, and then let you know what we have found, taking all the hard work out of the process. As we are independent we can also let you know exactly how each company on our data base has fared over the past year or so with moves for other clients moving to Spain. Each job is tackled as an individual removal to Spain (which is why we can not give immediate exact quotes) All this research on your house removal to Spain is done without obligation of any type! You are not obliged to accept any of our recommendations, AND we do not charge you unless you do accept one of our suggestions!

HOUSE REMOVALS TO FRANCE

So you have decided to move to France. I myself moved to France several years ago for all the same reasons that you probably are and have not regretted the move one little bit!

But whether you are moving to the green of Brittany, to the heat of Perpignan, the ruggedness of the Massif central, the flowing Gers or planning a removal to the luscious Dordogne there are some factors that remain constant. Some relate to your removal to France and some relate to what you need to do when you arrive.

french scene

It may sound obvious but if you are planning a house removal to France, then the first thing to consider is just how much stuff should you take with you! I say this as, with European Removals and particularly with removals to France, Size does matter!!

If you have an attic full of boxes that you have not brought down in five years, do you really need to take them with you? In essence a removal to France should be no different to a removal within your own home town. The only difference for removals to France is that you need to cross a stretch of water and go a bit further!!

If you have a look at the rest of the site and in particular the articles that I wrote for the French Property News you will see in detail all the steps that you should take that relate to the move to France, which should show you that removals to France should be as simple as falling off a log! Mind you beware as some companies would have you believe otherwise, especially French ones!

Please also note our sister company in France, CODEMFRANCE. This company can assist you to move smaller items both within France and from the UK to France as well. Small part loads to France as well as single items such as Tables etc can be moved to France at surprisingly little cost. Our sister company can also arrange for you to have Paint shipped to France!!

Please also be aware that once you have completed your removal to France, or even whilst you are still planning your French removal (or even removals) you can ask us to assist in finding you Medical Insurance In France, House Insurance in France and Motor Insurance in France. We are also very well placed to arrange your currency transfers. Why save money on your house removal to France, and then waste it on Bank charges!!!

THE BEGINNING

Today there are over one million people a year moving between EU member states, and most of them take their home contents with them. Prices for these removals can vary dramatically and service levels likewise. So how can the unwary avoid the pitfalls?

Firstly you should be aware that there is NO fixed price for a removal and the unwary can end up paying well over the odds for a service that should just not cost that much. But is there a REAL difference in the service offered by the expensive companies and the cheaper ones? What everyone wants is a reliable, efficient, friendly service. A company that will turn up when they say, not break all your china, be courteous, and deliver your worldly possessions at the time agreed and in one piece.

The problem is 'How to choose your removal Company'. To some extent, that depends on your budget and what you desire. Some companies offer complete dismantling services, cleaning services, pet transfer services and more still. These services you will pay for! If, though, you just want to move house and do not want a gold plated delivery van outside your front door, the options are almost limitless! Or rather they can be. So before you even start to look for a company, decide what level of service you actually need. Once that is done your search can begin.

Magazine and newspaper adverts and the yellow pages are all good starting points. If you are computer literate any good search engine will provide you with lists of companies that work within Europe. Once this has been done you can begin your whittling down process. Price will obviously help here, as will the attitude of the person who takes your call. Personal recommendations are the best, but failing that there are a number of Internet forums where you can ask others on line for their moving experiences. These forums can be very illuminating with some frank comments on various companies.

Research is the key. All companies claim an excellent service and the truth of the matter is that 98% of removal companies DO provide an excellent service. The only question is how much should I pay? But nothing is ever simple and all too often what sometimes initially looks like a good deal can work out to be very expensive.

The rate that you will be quoted, is arrived at after a number of factors are taken into consideration. The load size, the distance to be traveled, the type of furniture, the number of men required for the job and of course an operator's overheads. To be able to give you a quote that will not vary, you have to be able to provide the removal company with as much detail as possible, and here an inventory is essential. In many instances a visit by the removal company to the house is suggested and can be a good idea. It is not however, compulsory - an experienced estimator will know after talking to you, roughly how much you have to move, and a full inventory will make this even easier. Above all, RESIST the temptation to 'forget' a few items when telling the removers of the load size. The price differential is minimal - and there may not be space on the vehicle for any 'non declared' items!

An inventory achieves four important things. Firstly it allows the removal company to know exactly what is to be taken. Remember here to include such items as pianos (that may need three men to move them), snooker tables and items such as ride-on lawn mowers and other fragile, bulky, heavy or strange objects. Secondly, in the event of an insurance claim you can PROVE with an inventory that the removal company had the items concerned. Thirdly, it helps you on unpacking to see where each numbered box should go in the new house. Using a simple spread sheet will make this even easier, and of course you can then use the same sheet when sorting out your home contents insurance. Lastly an inventory allows you to re-assess just what you need to take with you. There is, perhaps, little point in taking boxes that have not seen the light of day in years simply to gather dust in another attic.

However, load and distance are not the only elements that affect price. Please remember to let any remover know of any problems at either end that could affect delivery or pick up. If you are moving to or from a flat, indicate how many flights of stairs have to be negotiated. Also consider things such as narrow

roads (or even “no roads”) at either end. It is also as well to check if there any overhanging trees or wires that could prevent lorries passing underneath.

THE “DIY” OPTION?

Sometimes costs can be lowered by moving yourself, but often this is not the case. Aside from the cost of Vehicle hire, diesel, and Tolls there are the ‘Hidden costs’ to be factored in,: taking time off work, ‘Paying’ for relatives to assist,(food, beer/wine etc), the bruised fingers, the aching backs, the dropped items of furniture, the flaring of tempers, the boredom of driving at 50 mph on a motorway, and finally having no one to blame for any damaged items. Obtaining insurance for a self move is virtually impossible.

But DIY can be an option if you have a small load, plenty of time and are not worried about some seriously hard work. To hire a ‘Luton’ size van and move say 15m³ of furniture from Birmingham to Porto will cost you about £1500 all in. This includes hire charges, diesel, ferry and motorway tolls and meals. To ask a removal company to do the same job will cost anything from £1400 to £2500, depending on who you ask.

One of the questions we continually get asked concerns packing. The easiest and cheapest way is to pack yourselves, especially if you have time. But be aware that goods that you pack yourself may not be covered under certain insurance policies. This is because insurers can not be sure that a) The items were in good condition prior to packing and b) That they were correctly packed.

As for the actual packing all companies offer a packing service. This service can extend to cover the ‘packing’ of all of your small items, but you can negotiate to have only some of the goods packed and most companies will provide all the materials you need for this. Please note that items of furniture that are packed for European moves are generally ‘blanket’ wrapped on the vehicle. This is adequate for non-container moves. However, if you are moving ‘deep sea’ and your goods are to be placed in a container then an ‘export’ pack is highly recommended. Here the furniture etc is all bubble wrapped and extra protection afforded to delicate items. The reason for this is that containers on ships move about and damage to contents is not uncommon. Finally, if packing yourself, please do not overload boxes...

TO GO OVER ALL THE ABOVE:

1. Complete an inventory and be sure that what you are moving really is needed.
2. Check prices at your destination (maybe it’s cheaper to buy a new sofa rather than moving the twenty year old one!)
3. Research your removal company carefully and/or use a brokerage service.
4. Establish exactly what a quote includes (VAT, Insurance, Packing etc)
5. Be sure to let the removal company know of any heavy or bulky items in the load
6. Do let the removers know of any access difficulties (ie: eighth floor with no Lift, or up a small dirt track!!)
7. Start your search for a company between seven and ten weeks before the move date.
8. Ask as many questions as you like from a company or a broker. After all you are entrusting all your possessions to the chosen company!

HOW CAN A BROKERAGE HELP YOU?

In essence the broker does exactly the same as you, in that he solicits quotes from removal companies. The difference is that whereas you ask maybe ten or twenty companies for quotes, he will ask a few thousand, all over Europe, to quote on your move. Further, the Broker knows when and where companies are going. He is able to approach them directly and suggest that they may like to quote on a job to fill the spare capacity on a vehicle that is passing your front door. Removal companies, like airlines, prefer to travel with full vehicles rather than ones that are half empty. The trick is finding them. This is where the broker can help you to save time, effort and money.

Further an independent brokerage can give you the real story on just how good any one company really is

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR REMOVAL COMPANY...THE QUOTE

Peter Driscoll of European Transport Brokers (www.etbrokers-removals.com) takes you through some of the trials and tribulations associated with moving to Europe and explains away some of the mystery associated with moving. In this article he will go on to some of the pitfalls that can trap the unwary as well as providing a sometimes amusing view of an industry still trying to drag itself into the 21st century.

'Hello I am moving to France can you give me a quote to ship my furniture please?'

A simple phrase that can often lead to clumps of hair being pulled from the roots, cardiac arrests (on getting the quotes) and sleepless nights worrying about scratches on the dining room table. After Death and Divorce, moving house is recognised as one of the most trying and stressful times that anyone can endure, yet we all do it and often approach this potential minefield with Ostrich like abandon. Yet does it have to be like this?

Today there are over one million people a year moving between EU member states, and most of them take their home contents with them. All that appears to have changed over the past two hundred years is the number of people moving and the distance they travel. BUT furniture is still carried down flights of stairs and still placed on various forms of transport and moved from A to B. Why then has it all got so complicated and by extension, so expensive, especially for European moves?

So you have bought your house in the sun and decide to contact a removal company. Ten calls later you are wondering why half the companies you call don't do Europe and why the other half have completely misunderstood your enquiry and are giving you quotes that would enable you to buy a third home in Romania. Not only do the quotes seem large but the one low quote you have got seems so low that now you are worried that there is something wrong with the company!

But why do you ask are there such differences in the quotes you do get? In April this year we acted for a family moving from South Wales to near Bergerac. The family themselves had obtained quotes to have their three bedroom house contents moved to their new home in France. The cheapest quote they had come across was £2500. We acted on their behalf and received 47 quotes from companies all over Europe to do the move. We found the family a firm to do the move for an all inclusive price of £1558. A saving to them of just under one thousand pounds.

The point here is that there is NO fixed price and the unwary can end up paying well over the odds for a service that should just not cost that much. But it must be remembered that not all removal companies have the same fixed costs to cover, not all provide identical service and not all work on the same profit margins.

So is there a REAL difference in the service offered by the expensive companies and the cheaper ones? Well there is one story going around which reads like this:

'With the cheaper companies, they throw all the stuff in the back of a van and when it gets to the other end its all matchwood. With the more expensive companies they wait until you are not looking and...' Here I would ask you to consider what is, in reality, happening. Your furniture is being carried out of a house, placed in a vehicle and is eventually unloaded and placed in the new house. Rocket science it is not!!!

Lets face it what everyone wants is a reliable, efficient, friendly service. A company that will turn up when they say, not break all your china, be courteous, and deliver your worldly possessions at the time agreed and in one piece. Surprisingly the smaller, cheaper family run firms provide just this type of service, and after all, when it comes down to it, will your washing machine feel any happier in an expensive removal van?

The problem is 'How to choose your removal Company'. To some extent, that depends on your budget and what you desire. Some companies offer complete dismantling services, cleaning services, pet transfer services and more still. These services you will pay for! If though, you just want to move house and do not want a gold plated delivery van outside your front door, the options are almost limitless! Or rather they can be! So before you even start to look for a company, decide what level of service you actually need. Once that is done your search can begin.

Magazine and newspaper adverts and the yellow pages are all good starting points. If you are computer literate any good search engine such as Google, will provide you with lists of companies that work within Europe. Once this has been done you can begin your whittling down process. Price will obviously help here, as will the attitude of the person who takes your call! Personal recommendations are the best, but failing that there are a number of Internet forums where you can ask others on line for their moving experiences. These forums can be very illuminating with frank comments on various companies abounding!

Research is the key here. I have yet to find a single company that states 'we will be late and break your goods!' All claim an excellent service and the truth of the matter is that 90% of removal companies DO provide an excellent service. The only question is how much should I pay? But nothing is ever simple and all too often what looked initially like a good deal turns sour!

REMOVAL DAY

Peter Driscoll of ET Brokers Limited (www.etbrokers-removals.com) takes you through some of the trials and tribulations associated with moving to Europe and explains away some of the mystery associated with moving to France.

Contrary to general belief, removal companies are not the money grabbing organisations they are sometimes made out to be, well not all of them! The rate that you will be quoted, in general terms, is arrived at after a number of factors are taken into consideration. The load size, the distance to be travelled, the type of furniture, the number of men required for the job. To be able to give you a quote that will not vary, you then have to be able to provide the removal company with as much detail as possible, and here an inventory is essential. In many instances a visit by the removal company to the house is proposed and can be beneficial. It is not however, compulsory, as after years of experience the remover will know, after talking to you, roughly how much you have to move, and a full inventory will make this even easier.

You have no idea at all how much space your household contents will take up on a van and until now, no idea, as to how the companies prepare their quotes. BUT you do have a sneaking suspicion that when you tell the company that you think you have 35m³ that it is going to cost you more than if you tell them you only have 31m³. Above all RESIST this temptation.

Firstly, in reality the extra 4m³ of load should not significantly change the price, after all the lorry is going to its destination anyway and the only additional cost will be the extra hours needed to load and unload. Secondly, if on the day of the move the removal company announce that there is more than declared then you will be asked to pay more. When your belongings are already on the van and you have to move, you are not in a very good bargaining position! Thirdly, if the company has been told that the load is 'X' and in fact it is 'X' plus 5m³ there is a good possibility that something will have to be left behind, simply because there is not enough room on the van!

Not two months ago a client of ours (who had refused to give a clear inventory), was waiting in Montpellier for the removal van to take him back to Shropshire. He had stated quite clearly that his load was 'No more than 15m³', and had paid a reasonable sum of £650 for the move. On the day, the removal company arrived with a Van capable of carrying 35m³, upon which they had already loaded 15m³ from another Client. Our Montpellier Client had over 28m³ of furniture!!!. The result, a second trip for another van. The client's belongings were left in a leaky garage for ten days and the client had to pay an additional £700 to

another company to have the final load shipped back! It does happen, which is why the INVENTORY is so important.

An inventory achieves three important things. Firstly it allows the removal company to know exactly what is to be taken (especially if you note the size of each item). Remember here to include such items as Pianos (that may need three men to move them), Snooker tables and items such as Sit on Lawn Mowers and other fragile, bulky, heavy or strange objects. (We have had to get quotes for Boats, cars, and 48 Fragile Garden Gnomes who were going to Spain). Secondly in the event of an insurance claim you can PROVE that the removal company had the items concerned! Thirdly it helps you on unpacking to see where each numbered box should go in the new house. Using a simple spread sheet will make this even easier, and of course you can then use the same sheet to when sorting out your home contents insurance. The inventory itself should be detailed, but not to extremes, one of our customers diligently reported 247 pieces of 'Leggo'!!!

The inventory also allows you to re-assess just what you don't need to take with you. There is after all very little point in transferring from one attic store, boxes of items that have not seen the light of day in years to sit in another attic store. Now is the time to have that clear out that you always wanted. One client's load constantly changed from an initial 34m³ to 26m³ and then back to 32m³ and was eventually finalised at 28m³. The reason was Mr 'X' was finally persuaded to abandon most of the 'Home Gym' that had been purchased in 1996 and never used!

It is however not only load and the distance that can affect your quote. Please remember to let any remover know of any problems at either end that could affect delivery or pick up. If you are moving to or from a Flat PLEASE indicate how many flights of stairs have to be negotiated. I recently had a call from an irate remover complaining that although the flat was a first floor one, the client had 'forgotten' to say that there were six flights of stairs to get to the first floor!!! You guessed it, the price went up and the last thing any one wants is a debate about prices on the day of the move. Please also consider things such as narrow roads (or even 'no roads') at either end. Some large lorries do not act like 4X4s!! It is also as well to check if there any overhanging trees that could prevent lorries passing underneath, although there is one company that we use that always carries a chain saw with them' just in case!

PACKING

Peter Driscoll of ET Brokers Limited (www.etbrokers-removals.com) takes you through some of the trials and tribulations associated with moving to Europe and explains away some of the mystery associated with moving to France.

As always its all about size, and when moving size IS important! "Well sir, it looks to me that you have about 45 cubic metres here, but I'll have to get back to the office to confirm that". "Ah" you say " but the last company told me I had 1365 feet. Is there a difference?" In this case there is a difference, about six cubic metres!..Mystified? Welcome to the world of metric and imperial cubic capacities, designed to completely baffle and confuse anyone who simply wants to move house.

In the UK we have traditionally measured volume in cubic feet, easily calculated by taking the height, width and depth and multiplying the three together. Hence a washing machine that is say 3ft by 4ft by 3ft, measures 36 cubic feet. If you measure in metres then it is 0.9m by 0.9m by 1.2 m, which gives 0.98m³. To convert from cubic feet back to cubic metres just divide the cubic feet by 35 to give you the cubic metres. So 1365 cubic feet becomes 39 cubic metres!!

"Ah" you say, "My dining room table is 3 foot tall by 6 by 4 which gives a total of 72 cubic feet, but what about all the space under the table"? As I said in previous articles, moving house is not an exact science and precise measurements are not needed. After all one "box" could contain one saucepan or 25 cuddly

toys! What is being sought is simply a guide as to what space will be required on the vehicle and how much time is going to be needed to pack load and unpack. As for that space under the table, well that is used, probably by the boxes of bed linen that you didn't count in the first place!

Remember here that if you use a Brokerage for your move then whether you have 20m³ or 24m³ it is not going to make a difference to the price you pay, as the broker is looking for spare capacity on a vehicle. Removal companies if approached directly, will charge more for 24m³ than for 20m³, but they will in general terms be fairly flexible! The important thing is not to underestimate what you have got as this only causes problems.

Having arrived at your total volume and after receiving horrendous quotes to move your belongings, a flash of clear thinking suddenly raises its head and you say "Lets do it ourselves and save a fortune"

Five years ago I was looking to get my own house contents moved to the South of France. I received (as usual) quotes that were in the region of four to five thousand pounds. I then decided to "DIY" the job. Two brother in laws and the rest of the family were roped in to help and a 7.5 tonne lorry was borrowed (no expense). With Air Brakes hissing and Yorkie in hand, I promptly banged the rear end leaving the depot. My excuse being that I had never driven a 30 foot long vehicle. That should have been my first clue to see reason, but blinded by the desire to save money I continued! To cut a very long story short, it took us over 22 hours to drive down to the South of France, I did save some money. But that is not the whole story!

I actually took time off work. My brothers in law also took five days off their holiday allowances. If they had had to be paid, or if I had paid myself for the hours worked then the story would have been different. Then we come to the "invisible" costs. The bruised fingers, the aching backs, the dropped items of furniture, the flaring of tempers, the boredom of driving at 50 mph on a motorway!!! True I saved money but at what cost!! And it could have been FAR worse, for as I discovered later, my home contents insurance policy did not cover the goods in transit to France. One accident and I would have lost everything. Further, I have a sneaking suspicion that the vehicle may have been a 'tad' overweight. Had I been stopped the entire load could have been seized! Never again!

One of the questions we continually get asked concerns packing. The easiest and cheapest way is to pack yourselves, especially if you have time. BUT (there is always a but!) be aware that goods that you pack yourself may not qualify for the 'full' accidental insurance cover that some companies offer. This stands to reason as no insurer could be sure that a) The items were in good condition prior to packing and b) That they were correctly packed. If you do pack yourselves then your insurer will normally only cover "Total Loss", which in reality is probably enough cover, but as always think carefully about what level of cover and service you actually need.

As for the actual packing most companies offer a packing service for European loads. This service can extend to cover the "packing" of all of your small items, but you can negotiate to have only some of the goods packed and most companies will provide all the materials you need for this, albeit at a small charge. Of note is that in general terms items of furniture that are packed for European moves are "blanket" wrapped on the vehicle. This is adequate for non container moves. However, if you are moving "overseas" and your goods are to be placed in a container then a "Full export" pack is highly recommended. Here the furniture etc is all "bubble wrapped" and extra protection afforded to delicate items. The reason for this being that containers on ships do move about and damage to contents is not uncommon!

Finally, if packing yourself, please do not overload boxes! All too often a box is picked up and the contents promptly fall through the bottom. However one of the companies recently reported to us that upon arrival at a clients house every room was neatly stacked with boxes. The clients appeared to be very well organised and all the boxes were numbered and all sealed. The removal men lifted a box each and everything in the boxes simply slipped out the bottom of the boxes. The client had made up the boxes, sealed the tops and totally forgotten to seal the bottoms of every single box!