RELOCATION · FREE CHECKLIST FROM ALBA

How to choose the right area to live in Spain

A practical checklist to help you find the neighbourhood that really fits your life, not just the one that looks lovely on holiday.

Choosing where to live is one of the biggest decisions of your move, and one of the most personal. Two streets in the same city can feel completely different, and the perfect area for one family can be exhausting for another. Take this checklist with you when you visit, tick what you've checked, and use the scorecard at the end to compare up to three areas side by side.

How to use it: start with section 1 at home, before you travel. Use sections 2–9 on the ground, ideally on more than one day and at different times. Finish with the red flags, the scorecard and your decision questions. You don't need to tick every box: just the ones that matter to you.

1 Before you start: what really matters to you

- [ ] Who is moving, and what does each person need day to day (work, school, health, hobbies)?
- [ ] My maximum monthly rent, including community fees and bills: € _____
- [ ] The size of home I need (bedrooms, home office, outdoor space): _____
- [ ] My three non-negotiables (for example walking to school, no car, quiet nights, near the sea): _____
- [ ] Things I'd like but can live without: _____
- [ ] Will I work from home, commute, or both? Maximum door-to-door journey I'd accept: ___ min
- [ ] Do I want to live without a car? Do I need parking?
- [ ] Do I prefer a lively centre, a calm residential area or a town nearby?
- [ ] Spanish only, or am I happy in a region with a second official language (Catalan, Valencian, Basque, Galician)?
- [ ] Any accessibility needs (lift, no steps, ground floor, near a health centre)?
- [ ] Pets: will the landlord and the building accept them?
- [ ] How far do I want to be from an airport or a train station to visit family?

2 Budget and the rental market

- [ ] There are real long-term rentals in my budget in this area (not only holiday lets).
- [ ] I've compared at least five current listings for the size I need.

- [ ] I know what's included: community fees (gastos de comunidad), water, heating, internet.
- [ ] I understand the deposit: by law, one month's rent (fianza) for a home, plus any extra guarantee the landlord asks for (for long-term leases, no more than two months). Check the current rules.
- [ ] I know that agency fees for a residential lease are paid by the landlord, not by me. Check the current rules.
- [ ] I've asked which documents the landlord or agency will want from a newcomer (contract, payslips, savings, guarantor, NIE).
- [ ] I've looked at the energy certificate rating and how the home is heated and cooled.
- [ ] Furnished or unfurnished? What does each option really cost me?
- [ ] I've checked whether many flats in the area are tourist rentals (it affects noise, prices and community life).
- [ ] I've estimated my monthly bills, groceries and transport for this area, not just the rent.

3 The home itself

- [ ] Natural light and orientation (exterior or interior flat, sun in winter).
- [ ] Insulation, windows and signs of damp or mould.
- [ ] Heating and air conditioning that actually work.
- [ ] Which floor? (ground floors can be darker or noisier; top floors hotter).
- [ ] Lift, stairs and access with a pushchair or shopping.
- [ ] Noise from the street, neighbours, bars or the building's installations.
- [ ] Water pressure and hot water.
- [ ] Phone signal inside the flat.
- [ ] Fibre internet available at this exact address.
- [ ] Storage, laundry space and somewhere to dry clothes.
- [ ] Parking or a storage room (trastero), if needed.
- [ ] The condition of the building and shared areas.
- [ ] I can register my address here (empadronamiento).
- [ ] The person renting it is the owner or has the right to rent it.

4 Getting around

- [ ] I've timed the real journey to work, school or the centre at rush hour, not from a map.
- [ ] Bus, metro, tram or train stops within a short walk; how often they run and the last service at night.
- [ ] Safe walking routes: pavements, crossings, lighting, shade in summer.
- [ ] Cycle lanes or bike-sharing, if that's how I'd like to move.
- [ ] If I'll drive: traffic at peak times, parking on the street, regulated parking zones and low-emission zones.
- [ ] Distance to the airport, the main train station and the motorway.
- [ ] Step-free access at stations, if anyone in the family needs it.

5 Everyday life and services

- [ ] Supermarkets and a local market within walking distance.
- [ ] Pharmacy nearby (and one open late or on duty).
- [ ] The public health centre (centro de salud) you'd be assigned to by address.
- [ ] Nearest hospital and emergency department.
- [ ] Bank and cash machine, post office.
- [ ] Parks, green spaces and places to walk.
- [ ] Playgrounds and family areas, if relevant.
- [ ] Gym, sports centre, pool or classes you enjoy.
- [ ] Cafés, coworking spaces or libraries to work from.
- [ ] Shops open at the hours you need them.
- [ ] Vet and pet-friendly spaces, if you have pets.
- [ ] Places of worship or community groups that matter to you.

6 Schools and family life *(if you're moving with children)*

- [ ] Which public schools can we apply to from this address, and how are places allocated (proximity, siblings, points)?
- [ ] State, state-funded (concertado), private and international options nearby, and their fees.
- [ ] Language of instruction and support for children who are new to the language.
- [ ] Real places available for my children's ages this year (asked directly to the school or the education office).
- [ ] Nurseries (escuelas infantiles) for little ones, and their waiting lists.
- [ ] The daily school run: walking, school bus or car, and how long it takes.
- [ ] After-school activities, sports clubs and summer camps.
- [ ] Other families with children around: parks busy in the afternoon, family-friendly streets.
- [ ] For teenagers: secondary schools, exam path (Bachillerato or international programmes) and recognition of their previous studies.

> **Good to know:** living next door to a school doesn't guarantee a place there. Always ask the school or the local education office about your specific address before you sign a lease.

7 Noise, safety and how it feels

- [ ] I've visited on a weekday morning, a weekday evening and a weekend night.
- [ ] Bars, terraces or clubs on the street, and their closing times.
- [ ] Traffic, delivery lorries, rubbish collection hours and building works nearby.
- [ ] Local fiestas and events (lovely, but sometimes very loud for a week!).
- [ ] Flight paths, railway lines or main roads close by.
- [ ] Street lighting and how comfortable I feel walking back at night.

- [ ] Cleanliness of the streets and upkeep of buildings and parks.
- [ ] I've looked at official local information and talked to people who live there, rather than relying on online rankings.

8 Climate and comfort

- [ ] Average summer highs and winter lows (official AEMET climate data for the nearest station).
- [ ] How hot the home gets in summer: orientation, top floor, air conditioning, shade from trees.
- [ ] Humidity and damp, especially near the coast and in the north.
- [ ] Wind, rain and how the area feels outside the sunny season.
- [ ] The likely cost of heating or cooling this particular home.

9 Community, language and lifestyle

- [ ] An international community, mostly local life, or a mix: which would I enjoy?
- [ ] How much the regional language is used in daily life, schools and local services.
- [ ] Language classes, social clubs, volunteering and ways to meet people.
- [ ] Culture, food, markets and the things I love doing at weekends.
- [ ] Access to the beach, mountains or countryside.
- [ ] Does the pace of life here match mine?

10 Thinking long term

- [ ] Planned building works, new transport lines or big developments nearby.
- [ ] How rents have changed in the area over the last few years.
- [ ] Would this area still work if my family or work situation changed?
- [ ] Is there enough housing here to move to a different flat later without leaving the area?

11 Red flags before you sign or pay anything

- [ ] Someone asks for a deposit or "reservation fee" before you've seen the home or the contract.
- [ ] The person renting it can't show that they own it or are authorised to rent it.
- [ ] The price is far below every similar listing in the area.
- [ ] You're pressured to decide or pay today, or asked to pay by untraceable methods.
- [ ] You can't register your address there, or the contract is only a short "seasonal" one when you need a long-term home.
- [ ] The contract is vague about the term, deposit, extra guarantees, bills or repairs.

> **A friendly reminder:** keep a copy of every message, receipt and contract. If something feels wrong, it's always fine to walk away. There will be other homes.

12 Your scorecard

Give each area a score from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) for what matters to *you*. Add a short note to remember why.

What matters	Area 1: _____	Area 2: _____	Area 3: _____
Homes in my budget			
The homes I've seen			
Getting around / commute			
Everyday services			
Schools and family life			
Noise and how safe I feel			
Climate and comfort			
Community and lifestyle			
Total			
How it felt (in one word)			

13 Before you decide

- [ ] Can I picture an ordinary Tuesday here, not just a sunny Saturday?
- [ ] Does it meet all three of my non-negotiables?
- [ ] Does the real monthly cost (rent + bills + transport) fit comfortably in my budget?
- [ ] What do I still not know, and how can I find out before signing?
- [ ] What's my plan B if this area doesn't work out?

My notes:

Would you like a hand finding your area or your new home? My team and I are here whenever you need us: sworntranslationspain.com/relocation.

Free planning tools: city finder, cost-of-living map, visa cost planner and moving calendar. General information, reviewed 12 November 2026; rental rules and local conditions change, so always check them for your situation. © Sworn Translation Spain · Alba Fernández Carrasco.