

# Funerals In Spain

**How to proceed if you need to report the death of a family member or arrange the burial, cremation or the repatriation of remains outside Spain...**

## **In the Event of a Death**

Call the police (Policía Municipal). Tel: 092

Contact a doctor (if the police do not do this) who will certify the cause of death and issue a certificate of death

A funeral parlour (*tanatorio*) will be contacted to remove the body (identification must accompany the body in order for it to be moved)

Register the death within 24 hours at the Civil Registry (***Registro Civil***) which is located in the local Town Hall

In most regions of Spain a body should be buried or cremated within 24 to 48 hours of death

If the death occurs in a hospital, the administrative authorities will manage the process.

Undertakers (*pompas fúnebres*) are licensed to manage funeral arrangements and the burial or cremation of a body. They will be able to assist with much of the process.

## **The Death Certificate**

In the event of a death, the last doctor to treat the deceased (or one who confirms death and identification of the body) issues the certificate of death. This document certifies a person's death.

If the death occurred in suspicious circumstances or involves an investigation, an order from the judicial authority may be issued to confirm the death.

The death certificate (***certificado de defunción***) will be issued by the Civil Registry office. Multiple copies can be requested.

To request a death certificate from the Registros Civiles

## **Registration of a Death**

Within 24 hours of a death, the certificate of death must be taken to the Civil Registry to formally register the death. The registration includes the date, time and location of the death.

Anyone with knowledge of the death is eligible to make the registration, although this is normally done by a member of family, a friend or neighbour of the deceased. In most cases the death should be registered with the Civil Registry office of the area where it occurred. The certificate of death stating the cause of death must be presented in order to make registration.

### ***Contents of the registration***

The registration of death form is free of charge. It should contain the following information:

Name and surname of the deceased

Names of the deceased's parents

Marital status

Nationality

Date and location of birth

Birth registration details

Last known place of residence

Date, time and location of the death (as documented in the death certificate)

Place of burial or cremation, if indicated on the death certificate or the certification from the authority or civil servant in charge of the cemetery

When the death registration has been completed a **burial license** is issued and a formal funeral can take place.

### **Funerals in Spain**

Burial or cremation should take place within 24 to 48 hours (although this can be extended on arrangement with the morgue).

If the deceased has made specific arrangements for a religious service, burial or cremation their wishes should be followed. Burial or internment is most common in Spain. If the deceased or next of kin request a cremation this must be made known to the doctor in charge of certifying the death as it will be noted on the certificate.

Funeral insurance is available in Spain or funeral expenses can be paid in advance to the undertakers.

### ***Burial***

Each municipality has a cemetery. Spanish cemeteries have a system where a coffin is inserted in a recess, or niche (*nicho*) (rather than buried in the ground). A niche can be rented for a pre-determined number of years. The remains are interned in the niche and once the period expires the body is moved to a common burial ground. Each cemetery has different procedures, periods available and prices.

Most municipalities have communal burial facilities.

### ***Cremation***

Cremation is not widely practised in Spain (although it is on the increase) and not all areas have crematoria. Prices vary depending on location.

### **Organisation to Contact**

In the event of a death it is important to contact certain institutions:

Any public or private institution for that the deceased worked for or received payment from

The **Director General of the Public and Personal Pensions** (*Dirección General de Costes de Personas y Pensiones Públicas*), or the Institute for Social Security (*Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social* INSS) as appropriate. Pension payment can then be altered accordingly, to widow's pension or orphan allowance for example

Banks and insurance companies (life insurance). Banks often insist that an accident policy is taken out when an account is opened

To find out if the deceased made a will or to obtain a copy of the will, contact the **Registry of Last Wills of the Ministry of Justice**, (*Registro de Últimas Voluntades Del Ministerio de Justicia*)

### **Repatriation of a Body**

If the deceased or their next of kin requests that the body is repatriated to the country of origin this must also be communicated to the attending doctor when the death certificate is being completed. If a body is to be repatriated the passport should be kept with the body, it cannot cross international borders or fly without it.

Repatriating may be covered by travel or life insurance. If this is the case, the insurance company will make arrangements.

A body can be cremated in Spain and the ashes flown to the home country. Ashes must be accompanied by a certificate.

Embassies and consulates can provide advice but not financial assistance with regard to repatriation.

### **Death of a Non-Resident or Tourist in Spain**

In the event of the death of a short-term visitor to Spain:

Contact the travel insurance company. It will take over many of the arrangements

If there is no travel insurance the family will have to cover all the expenses

Contact the deceased citizen's Embassy in Spain

### **Last Will and Testament**

As soon as possible after purchasing assets (property or otherwise) in Spain it is very important to make plans for what should happen in the case of a death. Make a will (*testamento* or *última voluntad*) with the advice of a Spanish notary.

A basic will document can be purchased from the tobacconist (*estanco*). In Spain, tobacconists are licensed to sell official government forms.

The will is registered at the Registry of Last Wills and Testaments (***Registro General de Actos de Última Voluntad***), where it is given a certification number.

The will can be applied for 15 working days after the death by anyone who is able to produce the relevant documentation.