

The Front Desk



December 2008

Dear Clients,

This month's newsletter comes to you from a chilly Costa del Sol. Moving into the Festive period there are lots of events up and down the Coast, particularly in the run up to Christmas. If you are going to be around and would like information, please don't hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to organise your social calendars!

Fiestas

The next dates to note in your diaries are Saturday 6th December (Constitution Day) and Monday 8th December (Immaculate Conception). Later in the month we are, of course, looking forward to Christmas. A little further ahead are New Year's Day and January 6th (Three Kings' Day) are also public holiday.

Over the Christmas and New Year period we shall operate the usual 24 x7 out-of-hours service, but will only operate a "skeleton" staffing of the office. If you are planning to visit your Spanish home during this period, and in order to minimise any costs, please give us as much notice as possible in order that we can prepare for your arrival and avoid the need to call staff in on public holidays or weekends.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Office Opening Hours</u>
8th December (Immaculate Conception)	Closed
24th December	9a.m. until 1.00 p.m.
25th & 26th December (Christmas & Boxing Day)	Closed
29 th , 30 th & 31st December	9 a.m. until 1.00 p.m.
1st January	Closed
2 nd January (Puente)	Closed
5th January (Puente)	Closed
6 th January (Three Kings Day)	Closed

Something Completely Different

As short drive inland from Estepona takes you within minutes into the Alcornocales Natural Park. The views up and down the coast and towards Africa are spectacular, particularly in the cool and clear autumn air – great for the photographers amongst you.

A little further on you reach the deep and narrow V-shaped valleys ("canutos") of the Park, forested with pines and the famous cork oak. Nestling into the mountainside are numerous tiny white villages, all offering hospitality whether you are looking for tapas or lunch – try the Mesón La Pozuela in Jubrique (famous for its chestnuts) for an excellent roadside meal at 1998 prices! This is a visit to undertake at leisure – the roads bend every few metres so don't be in a hurry and go easy on the vino!

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Customer Service – Qué?

Michael was in a bank in Marbella recently and asked directions to a local insurance agency. The bank manager –yes, the manager – took him by the arm and led him to the agency about five minutes walk away!! It took Michael a few days to recover from this excellent display of customer service. The bank is the Halifax and the manager is Juan Carlos Castellón.

Michael made a return trip to see Juan Carlos and to discuss the bank's customer service training and service standards, as well as finding out about the products and service. The fact that he has business and personal accounts with the bank in Spain and the UK may also have had something to do with it.

However, the benefits of no-cost funds transfer between the UK and Spain are very advantageous (as well as being fast) and the service is second to none – all front line staff speak and write English. If you are at all dissatisfied with your current Spanish bank, it is worth thinking about the Halifax and Michael will be happy to introduce you to Juan Carlos.

Marbella – More Than Just Puerto Banus

Although Marbella has a rich and varied cultural heritage, its fame as a luxury tourist town has tended to overshadow this wealth of old buildings and archaeological sites. But now the Marbella Town Hall is making a serious effort to restore and improve the remains of its distant past. Most of the old buildings and historic sites in the town and its municipality have been listed as being of Official Historic Interest, and have undergone restoration work in the past, but not on the same scale as that currently planned. The basic aim, apart from conserving these buildings and sites for future generations, is to promote the cultural wealth of the town as an additional tourist attraction. The sites being restored are the Paleochristian Basilica, the Castle and walls, the San Juan de Dios Hospital and the Trapiche de Guadaiza, in San Pedro Alcántara. I have to admit, I am not sure where some of these are found, but I am sure the local Tourist office will keep us abreast of any developments.

More About Marbella

Another positive for Marbella is that it will be able to receive cruise ships in the future, medium sized ones if not the biggest. This is something which has been demanded for a long time, and an opportunity which was missed when plans to extend Puerto Banús came to nothing. Now, however, the project could come to fruition with the enlargement of La Bajadilla port, which is a port that some tourists do not even know exists at the East end of Marbella. If this does go ahead, it will be bound to be on the Cruise ships itineraries as a Port of Call, owing to Marbella's glamorous image.

Well that's all for now folks. Have a wonderful Christmas.

Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo.

Kind regards,

Beverley

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