

The Front Desk



March 2010

Dear Clients,

The March newsletter is coming out a little early as I am taking a few days' holiday in England at the end of February and into early March (26th – 5th inclusive). I am leaving Jamie and Michael to run the show. During this period the office will normally be open in the mornings if no urgent work arises, but Michael may be out and about in the afternoon.

Fiestas

This month we have public holiday (Día de Andalucía) on 28th February, but as this date falls on a Sunday the holiday is carried over to 1st March, when banks, offices (including ours) and shops will be closed. The next public holidays will be Jueves Santo and Viernes Santo (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday) on 1st and 2nd April respectively.

Rain in Spain

The rain has returned with a vengeance with no clear sign of a return of the sun. Interestingly, however, the micro-climates along the coast have produced different weather conditions within a few miles of each other, with more sun and drier weather inland from the coastal mountains. So a trip to Ronda, for example, is worth thinking about when the weather is not so good on the coast.

Winter Temperatures and Heating Systems

This month our half term visitors have had mixed fortune with their heating systems. In one case the system required a service and re-gassing and in the second the property needed 24 hours to heat up. This is a reminder, therefore, of the importance of ensuring that your air conditioning system has an annual service. Additionally, many clients currently ask us to put on the heating in advance of their arrival, but we only do this when instructed. If you do not currently ask us to do this, you might like to give it some thought particularly if you have commercial lettings.

Spanish properties do not, of course, have the same insulation characteristics as those in Northern Europe. So, in the winter months guests need to ensure that they bring warm clothing to wear in the house, even with the heating on, as well as outside. Additionally it is worth thinking about providing some form of alternate heating, e.g. a small oil-filled radiator to take the chill off the bedroom.

Air Conditioning Regulations

We have been advised that with effect from 1st January this year it will no longer be permitted to use the R-22 HFC (hydrofluorocarbon) gas in air conditioning systems. No new gas will be supplied from manufacturers and the only R-22 available will be that which is already stockpiled or is recycled. We understand that this dates back to regulations passed by the EU in July 2006 related to the impact of HFCs on the ozone layer.

Our air conditioning engineer advises us that alternative (eco-friendly) gases can be substituted, but that these might require additional work to be carried out at the time of a service. We are investigating further. As always, we continue to advise that you have an annual a/c service and that wherever possible this is done before you and your guests start arriving for the summer months.

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Electricity Tariffs

Following on from last month's comments about the requirement to sign a contract with Endesa if you have contracted for more than 10 kW of electricity, we are now beginning to build up a profile of our clients. Interestingly we have neighbours in identical properties who have contracted for widely differing "potencias" ranging from 4.4 kW to 9.2 kW in adjacent properties. In some extreme cases we have clients whose three-bedroomed apartments have the same contracted "potencia" as four and five bedroomed villas.

Of course most (if not all) of us did not know what we were signing up for – we just left it in the hands of our lawyers or the developers. At the moment we are just gathering information and are beginning to calculate the theoretical "potencia" that you should have contracted for. If you have been overpaying in our view, we will advise you of this and of the steps that you can take to reduce your charges, although there is no prospect of recovering any overcharge from the electricity company. Where you are underpaying, we will advise you of this, but think that it is probably best to keep this to ourselves!!

The critical date to make any changes is 1st July, since this is the date by when those clients with potencias above 10 kW are required to sign a contract. However, at the moment we are taking a steady and cautious approach, calling Endesa on more than one occasion with the same enquiry to ensure a consistency of response. Sadly, consistency is not one of their strong points.

Michael is a specialist in this area –having formerly been the MD of an energy company in the UK with expertise in metering and billing. He is overseeing this project with me. We will be in touch with you individually as the project progresses.

Chinese New Year

Valentine's day rather overshadowed the arrival of the Chinese New Year. As you may know, this is the year of the Tiger. Michael is a Tiger. Heaven help us!!! Jamie on the other hand is a Monkey, whereas I am a Rooster. Does this mean anything?

San Pedro Cultural Centre

The Cultural Centre in Plaza de la Libertad (the square behind Alfredo's restaurant) has been refurbished and was officially opened recently by the Mayor, Angeles Muñoz. The centre includes a cinema.

On Stage

I am pleased to say that the play reading on 9th February directed by Jamie was a success. Michael and I were, of course, like putty in Jamie's hands and consequently performed like Oscar winners. Some of the other actors appeared to have left their reading glasses at home and included several unscripted "er, ers..." and "oh, dears...", but this all added to the excitement on the night.

Oman and Beyond

The Front Desk goes out around the world each month – and one of our readers in Oman has mentioned that he enjoys the updates on the famous San Pedro A7 Tunnel road works and that he was somewhat disappointed to only have the Málaga ring road mentioned in last months edition! So for all of you roadwork fanatics out there, this is for you... We had a meeting at the Mayor's office this week and understand that the project is likely to continue for a further 12 months. The plans show that when travelling from the Marbella direction a new fly-over will take you across the Cortijo Blanco roundabout at the junction with the Ronda road. Shortly after this the road will enter the new tunnel on the edge of San Pedro and continue under the town emerging just beyond El Ingenio (Centro Comercial La Colonia, which has the McDonalds). Just before reaching the Guadalmina Centro Comercial a series of roundabouts and underpasses will give access to Guadalmina Baja (Sea-side). More news to follow, when we have it.

I will now have to go and have a Siesta, with so much excitement! Until April. ¡Hasta Luego!

Beverley

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