

The Front Desk



February 2011

Dear Clients and Friends,

The past month has brought us some pleasant sunny weather, but there have been some icy blasts on some days and it has been quite cold in the shade and at night. Guests have needed to wrap up well and it is a useful reminder that we do have a winter on the Costa del Sol. However, if we look back to the continual and torrential rain of last year, we can all heave a sigh of relief that we are not experiencing that again.

Fiestas and Ferias

As you will recall, in last month's newsletter I published the list of public holidays for 2011. The next will be Día de Andalucía which falls on Monday 28th February. This commemorates the day of the referendum in 1980 on the Statute of Autonomy of Andalucía, in which the electorate voted for the statute that made Andalucía an Autonomous Community in Spain. Under this, the central government devolved power the regional government for the administration of schools, universities, health, social services, culture, urban and rural development.

Our office will be closed from on Monday 28th February. However, our 24-hour emergency helpline **(00 34 606 97 58 33)** will be manned during this period to deal with urgent enquiries for clients in residence.

The Rain in Spain...

I often receive calls from clients about the weather forecast in for Spain. I like to give the impression that I am well informed, but in reality I go straight to <http://www.eltiempo.es/marbella.html>. If you take a look at this you will see that you can select the forecast to be shown hourly for the forthcoming few days or in less detail for up to two weeks ahead.

Changes at HPS

Michael has already been in direct contact with clients about some changes that we are introducing at HPS. In summary, Michael has formed a new company. The legal name of the company is Home Profesional System, S.L. ("profesional" is spelt the Spanish way – it is not a typo!) and we will trade simply as **HPS**. The previous company, HPS Property Services Siglo XXI S.L., will become dormant and the name will no longer be used for trading purposes or correspondence.. The portfolio of clients will be acquired by the new company, which will mean that there will be no impact on clients – it will be business as usual.

There are a number of administrative tasks involved in this change, which have been occupying much of our time during January. We still have to review the website and some of our correspondence. But hopefully all will be complete by the end of February.

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Change of Telephone and Internet Provider

We decided to test the competitive market for the provision of landline and internet services. Vodafone, our current mobile phone service provider offered us a good deal, so we decided to go ahead even though we knew that any change would bring some risks with it. As expected, the change has not been straightforward. Telefonica have been quite irresponsible and unhelpful – disconnecting our service without any notice – and Vodafone seem to be overwhelmed in dealing with this kind of problem.

The process has been going on for about four months so far and we opted to carry out this change during the winter months in order to minimise any adverse effects on clients. We are not out of the wood yet and there have been some operational problems (emails, on-line banking, etc). However, at the moment we are back to our normal level of service, but will not be recommending anyone to change service provider at the moment.

Water Supplies

Regional water supplies appear to be in good shape at the moment with reservoirs almost 86% full across the Malaga region. This is more than double the average level of the last 10 years.

Electricity Charges

The Spanish government has approved an electricity price increase of 9.8% with effect from 1st January. This is calculated to represent an additional 3.2 € on the average monthly bill and will affect around 17 million domestic and small business users.

Gas Exploration

Gas exploration companies have sought permission from the government to carry out test drillings about 10 km off the coast of Malaga and Mijas. This has raised many voices in protest, particularly from the tourist and fishing industries, where concerns have been expressed about the Costa del Sol becoming an industrial rather than a leisure zone.

Air Traffic Control

The air traffic control at 13 Spanish airports is to be sold off as part of the first phase of a privatisation programme. Malaga is not included at this stage, but it is expected to be part of the programme when the remaining 34 airports are included. Successful bidders will have to commit to service and punctuality standards.

And Finally...

La Cañada fashion store, Disigual, introduced a novel shopping promotion during the recent sales. The campaign involved queuing in your underwear and coming out of the store with a new outfit. Michael seems to be wearing the same old tat, so I suppose he was not attracted by this campaign.

Until next month. ¡Hasta la vista!

Beverley

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