

# The Front Desk



June 2011

Dear Clients and Friends,

The weather in May has continued to improve, but there have been one or two surprises. In fact the night of 18<sup>th</sup> May will be one to remember. A severe localised thunder and lightning storm accompanied by torrential rain inundated much of the municipality of Benahavís and the surrounding area. Extensive damage due to lightning strikes and rainfall occurred to a number of properties, including those that we manage. Rest assured that if we have not been in touch with you, your property is safe!

As we move into the busy season, here are a few important reminders:-

## **Emergency Phone Numbers**

We are still finding that some owners and visitors do not have the 24-hour helpline programmed into their mobile phones **(00 34 606 97 58 55)**. This phone is contactable for emergencies 24 hours a day throughout the year. The only time it will not be answered is if it is in use or temporarily out of range. If you mislay the number for any reason, it is recorded on the office answer phone message.

## **Office Hours**

The office is normally staffed on Monday to Friday only, from **9.00 – 13.00** and from **15.00 – 17.00** (Spanish time). Outside these hours please email or telephone the 24-hour helpline, if the matter is urgent. If you would like to call in to discuss any matter, please always telephone beforehand. I am frequently away from my desk and would not like you to waste a visit, if I am not in the office or need to leave for an appointment.

## **Travel Plans**

Please inform us as early as possible of your travel plans and cleaning requirements – however tentative these plans might be. It is always easier for us to cancel provisional cleaning arrangements than to respond at the last minute. We have had a couple of very close scrapes in the past few days. I am often asked why I need to know your flight arrival and departure times. This is simply so that I can programme work in the most effective way

## **Direct Debits**

I am spending an increasing amount of time arranging for the reconnection of electricity, water and telephones services due to failed direct debit payments. This often involves visits to the utility offices, banks and post offices to arrange reconnection and this, of course, becomes an added cost to clients. Please ensure that you do regularly check that your bank account is topped up and that regular payments are in fact being taken on the due date. If a payment is missing, it could well be because of a failed direct debit, which you might not otherwise be alerted to. Remember, the Spanish do not

**Tel: (0034) 952 78 49 83, Fax: (0034) 952 78 34 08, Emergency Helpline: (0034) 606 97 58 33**

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recognise the concept of carrying forward an unpaid invoice to the following month's statement. So, you have to be on top of what is going out of your account.

### **Fiesta**

The feast of San Bernabé, the patron saint of Marbella, takes place on 11<sup>th</sup> June. Sadly, we then have an uninterrupted spell of work until our next public holiday on 15<sup>th</sup> August.

### **HPS Website**

We have suffered something of a catastrophe. The company that hosts our website, Hostway, has had a hard disk crash on the server that supports HPS. Hostway has been unable to restore the information that relates to the rental marketing pages. What this means in practical terms is that all the information about properties on our website has disappeared. This problem cannot be easily solved on the website without a considerable amount of work rebuilding the web pages from scratch.

Whilst this inhibits our marketing of properties for some clients, realistically almost all bookings come via owners themselves or via "owner only" websites, which are much more effective. Bookings that we have taken directly this year are almost all due to repeat business and to personal recommendation. We will keep you updated on this.

### **Municipal and Regional Elections**

22<sup>nd</sup> May marked the municipal and regional elections. The result was an anticipated anti-government swing, which means that the political map has turned from red to blue throughout Spain and significantly in Andalucía. The political parties have been very keen to charm the expatriate vote and Michael has been to several political meetings – tempted no doubt by the free wine, tapas, and...the free wine!!! Benahavís returned a council composed mainly of Partido Popular ("right-of-centre) candidates. The Partido Popular are calling for the General Election to be brought forward from next year, but there is no sign of that happening.

### **Unemployment**

The high level of unemployment and Government austerity measures prompted a number of peaceful demonstrations in major city centres throughout Spain. Of particular concern is youth unemployment which is running at levels of up to 40% in some parts of the country, with the overall level being 20%.

### **Bribery**

Apparently 30% of executives working for major listed companies in Spain consider bribery to be an acceptable practice to improve their business and there is evidence of it increasing during "La Crisis". This is according to the European Fraud Survey carried out by Ernst & Young. Cash bribes are apparently more attractive than gifts...no surprises there!! I wonder what the survey would have shown if it had been conducted amongst politicians!!

### **Summer Entertainment**

Look out for this summer's entertainment in the area: George Benson and Earth, Wind and Fire in Marbella. Remember that you can check the Sur in English website on-line (<http://print-edition.surinenglish.com>) and view the virtual copy of the newspaper.

Hasta la vista!

*Beverley*

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