

The Front Desk



March 2011

Dear Clients and Friends,

I am sending this a little earlier since I am travelling to England for a week's holiday and will be out of the office from Friday 25th February to Thursday 4th March. Monday 28th February is Día de Andalucía. Our office will be closed. However, our 24-hour emergency helpline **(00 34 606 97 58 33)** will be manned as usual to deal with urgent enquiries for clients in residence.

News from the Office

Our office operation has run smoothly this month, in spite of not yet having an official internet connection from Vodafone – hopefully, when the official transfer from Telefonica (now Movistar) takes place, we will not experience the dramas which occurred in January. However, there really is a mess in the telecoms market here, with Movistar (apparently) doing its best to make things difficult and Vodafone (and other new providers over-committing on their promises to perform).

One of the highlights of the month has been Michael's visit to Barcelona – not because of the magnificence of the old city and modern architecture, but because he broke his foot while gazing up in wonder at the famous Sagrada Familia church, rather than looking where he was going. Fortunately he was able to test the Spanish health services to the full and was given a Rolls Royce (well, wheelchair) service at both Barcelona and Malaga airports. I am pleased to report that his foot is not in plaster and that he is no more grumpy than usual...

Golf

Over the past few years the pattern of our business has changed – much less holiday and related activity and more property management. In particular income generated from organising rounds of golf has, with the exception of one or two major events, evaporated in the face of fierce competition from golf specialists based upon the coast or operating via the internet. Additionally many courses now offer extremely good rates directly to players.

Golf courses expect an appropriate level of referred business in order to offer contracts for discounted rates to us and we are now clearly unable to meet their requirements. We have therefore withdrawn the golf pages from our website and will no longer be producing a price list or offer a golf booking service. Golf courses will continue to be interested in arranging mini-tours, so we will be able to continue in this niche area of the market.

“Seven Out of Ten Spaniards are Tired”

The result of a recent survey in Spain showed that 70% of those questioned would like an extra hour of leisure time each day. Of these half said that they would use the time for physical exercise, the remainder said that exercise was the first thing that they would get rid of. I leave you to draw your own conclusions...

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

Web site: www.spanishrentalholidays.com E-mail: enquiries@spanishrentalholidays.com
Home Profesional System (SL), Urb. El Alto N° 16, Los Arqueros Golf, Benahavís, 29679, (Málaga), España.
CIF N° B – 93089878

Malaga Ranks Top for City Breaks and Tourism

According to a recent report Malaga City is the favourite destination of cultural tourism and City Breaks in Andalucía. Nationally it ranks ahead of Madrid, Cordoba, and Seville and comes second only to Barcelona. Most non-Spanish visitors come from Great Britain followed by Germany. On the downside the air pollution levels in Málaga were above EU levels on 55 separate days in 2010 – so, air quality is something that the city has to improve!

Unemployment in Spain

Whilst the level of unemployment throughout Spain is worrying enough at around 20%, in Malaga province it has now reached over 30% - the highest level in 13 years. This comes at a time when many basic household commodities are increasing in price and the Eurobor rate, the index most commonly used to calculate mortgages in Spain, has risen for the fifth consecutive month.

Going “Green” in the Supermarket

“¿Bolsa quiere? Cuanto?” Do you want a shopping bag? How many? This is a new question that you will be hearing in many supermarkets, where the cost of a plastic bag will be added to you bill. The Plan Nacional Integrado de Residuos (National Integrated Plan for Waste) places limits on one-use bags and is proposing to apply a 5% tax on these bags with effect from May. Excluded from the tax are reusable and biodegradable bags or those used to wrap fresh food. Additionally some supermarkets are offering more resilient re-usable bags made from raffia and cotton.

Smoking Ban

The Marbella restaurant owner who mounted a high profile campaign of disobedience against the new law has landed himself a fine of 145,000 €. The Málaga Hotels association claims that there has been a drop of around 40% in trade. However, terrace areas outside your favourite hostelry may now be taken over by smokers as more and more premises apply for pavement licences. Uncharacteristically this seems to be one law that most Spanish people are observing – what will be next? Safe driving?

Boarding Passes

Charging passenger for issuing boarding passes is illegal according to the Junta de Andalucía. The regional government explained that airlines must issue a ticket for free as the service is included in the flight reservation. Many budget airlines charge for this service in order to encourage on-line check-ins. The statement by the government followed a court ruling in Barcelona in January against Ryanair, which is appealing against the decision. Needless to say Ryanair has responded characteristically with the statement that the Junta “does not know what it is talking about!” Watch this space.

Car Parking in Marbella

Plans to build a new 500 space car park in central Marbella are moving ahead slowly. It is hoped that the project will start towards the end of the year and take two years to complete. If this reflects the timescale of the San Pedro tunnel, do not start queuing yet.

Until Next Month, ¡Hasta la vista!

Beverley

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