

# Life in Spain

My wife, Sylvia and I came to Spain in 1993 having bought a holiday home in 1988 just outside Mijas Pueblo, on the Costa del Sol.

Sylvia really introduced me to Spain, as she used to holiday here before we knew each other, with a girl friend who owned an apartment in Fuengirola.

On one of our visits, we discussed the idea of buying a holiday home. We were sitting in a chiringuito, a beach restaurant, and as I looked up from my plate of pil-pil and saw the beautiful bay in the distance and the palm trees nearby, I didn't need any persuasion. I remember thinking that this idyllic scene could be compared to almost any other similar major resort one could name and yet only two and half hours away from Gatwick.

We sold our business in the UK and decided to look for new horizons and challenges. We were pleased that we had invested in a second home in Spain and so loaded up the car and headed for Plymouth, together with our three Persian cats and Muppet, our tabby.

We found the pace of life and the weather a distinct contrast to the hustle and bustle of life in London. People were friendlier, had more time to talk with you and were very supportive in introducing us to their circle of friends.

There are so many advantages of living here, such as the cost of living being anything up to thirty percent cheaper than the UK, low crime rate and a wonderful atmosphere in which to raise children, but the most exciting aspect is that it brings me into contact with people from all walks of life.

I help people buy and sell their properties, build their villas and manage small development projects. This work enables me to meet clients that I would not deal with if I was still living and working in the UK. This tolerant melting pot of social and economic backgrounds and nationalities makes for a vibrant mix and could well serve as a template for other communities.

Those thinking of re-locating will find it much easier if they begin to build a relationship with friends and professionals in Spain as soon as possible.

An excellent way to expand one's social and business life is to join one of the many clubs and societies run by ex-pats.

A basic knowledge of Spanish is helpful and it's certainly worthwhile attending a beginners' course with like minded people, but regular practice is essential to progress. The lack of fluency need not be a barrier to living on the Costa del Sol, as so many locals have a good knowledge of English, either from school, or having lived and worked in the UK. The town halls have a designated foreigners' department to deal with queries and I've never met a lawyer who doesn't speak English.

The health service is excellent and there are several low priced private schemes to join, starting from just two hundred euros for a married couple, per year.

If you are beginning to feel the pangs of discontentment and yearning for a new start in another country, or just fancy a holiday home, why not join us here in sunny relaxed Spain? Nowhere is perfect, but this is as near as you'll get, which is why when British travel agents, having travelled the world, were asked in a poll where they would prefer to live, their answer was unreservedly – The Costa del Sol.