

Buying property safely in Spain



Hola

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Letter from the Managing Director

We created Hola Properties after our experiences trying to move to the country were fraught with difficulty. The big differences between legalities in our home country and here made it a bit hard to navigate at times! We found it hard to get information about properties on the market and those that were soon to be available, even from the estate agents in the area. Having run estate agencies in the UK for 25 years and worked alongside those in Australia, Europe and the USA, we wanted to make it easier for people like ourselves who were making this big move.

Over the last twenty years, Spanish law has tightened in order to prevent the cowboys that had scammed so many people in the past. It has made it safer but there are still things to be cautious of. Is the property properly built? Are you signing a legal contract? What healthcare do you need? What about your pension? Don't panic though – we have been there and done it. You don't need to get the T-shirt, you can borrow ours!

With reliable, honest and up-to-date information, we can help you through the whole journey. From ruminating on the pros and cons at your current house, finding somewhere over here, and working through the process, we can hold your hand throughout. With the best lawyers and great translators in the area on hand, you'll be able to understand costs, timelines and the language all the way to moving in. We'll even be able to help you to lock in the exchange rate so if things change that are out of your control in the financial landscape, the price you end up paying for the property is the one you agreed.

Dreaming of moving can become a reality sooner than you think. For more information on properties and local information, please visit our website or give us a call. For regular updates, find us on Facebook and Instagram where we share local titbits and sneak peeks of upcoming properties. If you have any more questions, please feel free to get in touch.

Have fun out there!



Why Spain?



Why Spain?

The first thing is of course the sunshine! For example, the UK gets 1,500 hours of sunshine on average each year but the Costadel Sol averages 3,000. That means better weather for swimming, golfing or just G'n'Ts into the evenings. Living costs here are lower, the roads emptier, the health service is superb, as are the food and wine and the people are so friendly.

Easy access

Flights to Spain are not expensive when compared to some other countries, especially if you're flying in from the UK. Flights are available from most British airports to most Spanish ones all year round. Some countries seem to become ghost towns after the summer rush but not so with Spain. You can also drive, take the train or the ferry so all preferences are catered for.

Living costs are lower

Spain is cheaper to live than the USA, Italy, Australia and France. Compared to the UK, for example, restaurants here are 30% cheaper and supermarkets 16%. This all helps the pennies and pensions stretch much further.

Sense of community

The weather allows for a completely different way of life here. Instead of shops shutting at 5pm and everyone spending their evenings huddled up indoors, here places reopen at that time. Evenings are spent shopping, socialising, letting little ones enjoy the time to play and general spending time as a member of an active community.

Come for the sunshine

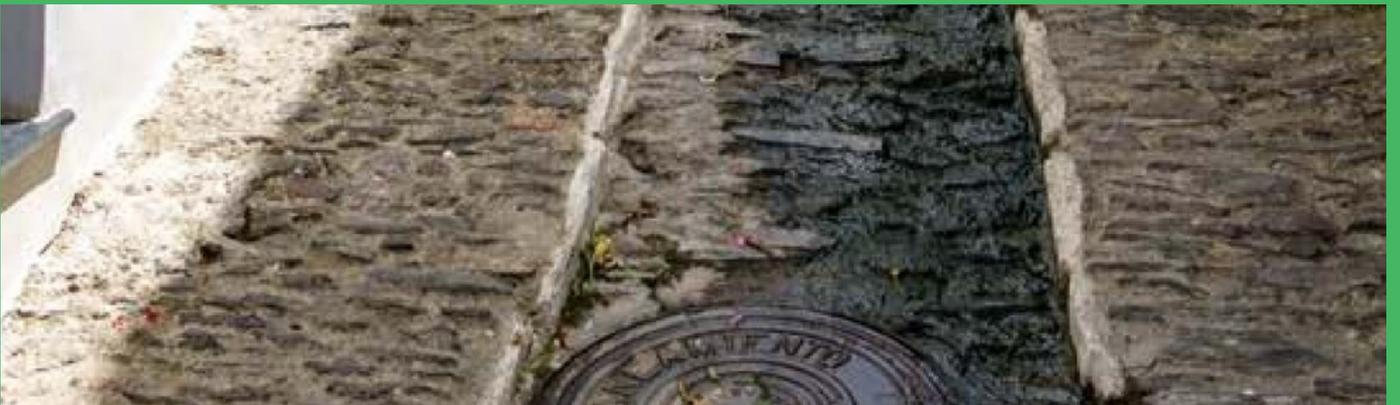
There is more sun here on average and it is also spread more equally throughout the year. This means that there is two extra hours of sunshine each day, even during winter. We all know how much a part of a healthy lifestyle Vitamin D is. There is a real positive impact to one's mental health and with the warmer weather, it's much easier to be motivated about physical activity too. A post-lunch round of golf, anyone?

Good for children

The Programme for International Student Assessment evidenced Spanish children are less stressed and happier than nearly all other countries. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development assessed happiness and well-being across 34 major industrialised countries. In terms of work-life balance, community and safety, Spain ranked 'above average'



Step 1: Beginning at the beginning



At the beginning

Moving home even within your own country is a process through which your dreams shift and your needs/wants to rise and settle. Bear this in mind to allow flexibility and start with an initial outline. There are five crucial questions that can help channel your thinking and give you something to work from as you go along.

01 Why Spain?

You know you want to buy here but can you express 'why'? This analysis is so important as it defines your direction from the very outset. Some examples of other people's experiences:

- We wanted to have more sunshine to improve our mental health and get outside more.
- My pension stretches further with the Spanish cost of living.
- We often holiday there and would like more family and friends to be able to come too.
- Empty nest syndrome turned into a silver lining!
- Not confident with property investing back home but Spain is in a different position.
- I just don't want to ever regret not having done it.



02 What's the function?

What is the function your property will need to serve? Is it for weekends, a couple of weeks, or twice a year, does it need to make you money, e.g. having space for B&B, is it the new family home or just for two in your retirement? If you won't use it for short breaks or won't have many visitors, you can look further away from airports. If it's a move of the heart, don't worry about investment or rental income.

03 What's your budget?

You may still have more money to raise but you need a sense of your budget from the outset. Include within that budget, 10% on top for fees. Some estate agents charge the buyer a fee and you'll need to pay the lawyer and perhaps a translator too. With the currency exchange, you can be sure you'll get a point or two below the FX or news sites. There is possibly some opportunity for negotiating on the house price too.

04 What do you NEED?

Wants and needs are very difficult to separate when house hunting, especially if it's not just you to consider. Identifying your 'musthaves' may be subject to change as you go along but focusing initially gives you direction. Think about: the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, city or rural, coast or mountain, garden or land, swimming pool or beach nearby? (There's more prompts on our checklist on PAGE 9)

05 What will you avoid?

Knowing what you definitely don't want is sometimes easier to answer so try thinking about these things too.

Consider: hate queuing for hire cars? You'll need to be near public transport (which is really very good over here!) Do you hate crowds? You'll need to avoid the more tourist-orientated areas. Hate cleaning? Better be near a beach rather than being lumbered with the maintenance (and expense) of a private pool.

Perfect Home Locator Checklist

The location

	Essential	Preferable
Which costa?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Region, province?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expatarea or Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
City, town, village, country?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum distance to shops?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max distance to airport?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max distance to hospital?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max distance to beach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Need public transport?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other location requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The property

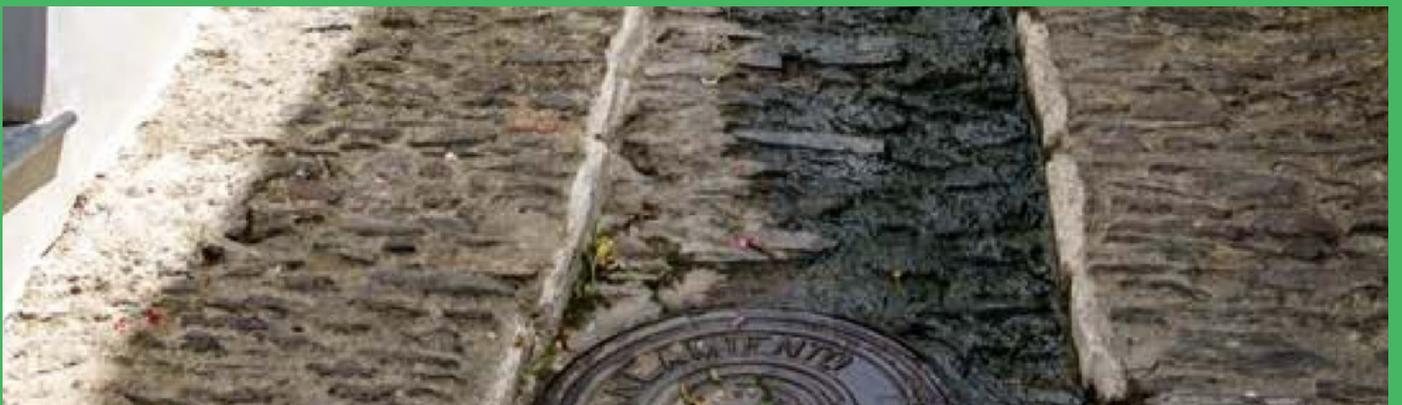
Budget?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Old or modern?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
House, flat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detached, semi or neither?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bedrooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bedrooms with en-suite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bathrooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living area – open plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separate dining room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wheelchair accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rough square metres?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
View?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State of repair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outside space

Budget?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Old or modern?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
House, flat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detached, semi or neither?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Timescale and schedule



Timescale and schedule

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. With that in mind, let's take a look at the likely timescales involved in the journey to becoming a Spanish property owner. Set a date that you want to be in your new home by and then use this roadmap to check off each stage on the way.



Hola Properties tip!

Don't wait until the busy periods to house hunt. In Spring and Autumn, there is more demand which in turn pushes prices up. You can look at the property all year round and are perhaps more likely to bag a bargain outside of peak times.

Six months away from owning in Spain

- Assess your needs and wants thoroughly. Use our checklist above and discuss with your family.
- Discuss your financial situation in depth with someone who understands. We can put you in touch with the best advisor based on your situation. Just get in touch. Remember, the currency rates will be slightly lower than what you see advertised so this step is unmissable to ensure you're looking at the right price bracket.
- Discuss mortgage options if required.
- Set your accurate budget.



Five months away

- Start searching in more detail for the right property.
- Open communications with the right lawyer for your needs. We can help put you in contact with the best person. They can then advise on how you can structure the deal for when you find The One.

Four months away

- Start search in more detail for the right property.
- Decide on a shortlist of places for a viewing trip (be very realistic about how many you can see in a trip. Ideally no more than 3).
- Book the trip.
- Check in with financial advisor and lawyer in order to keep communication lines open and up-to-date.

Three months away

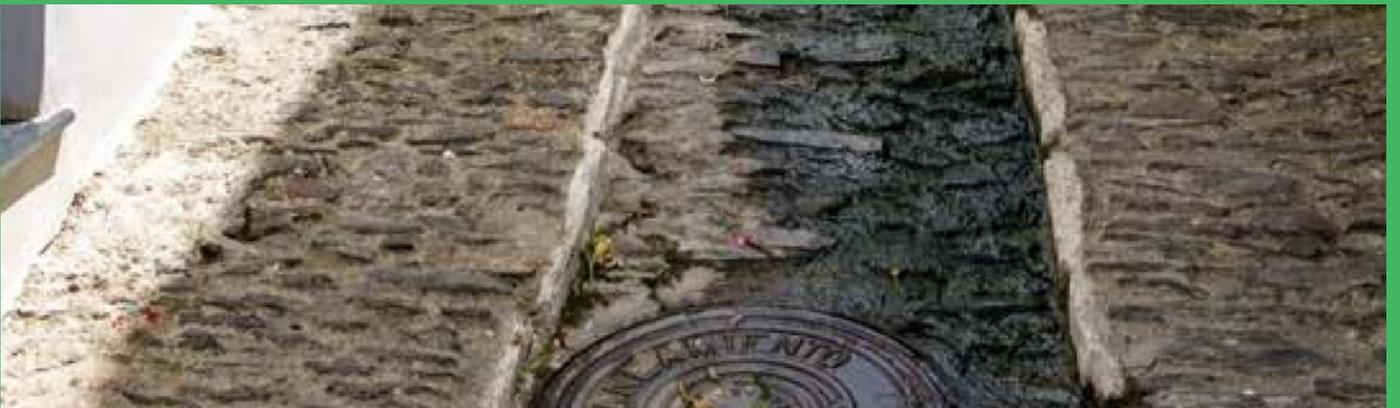
- Viewing properties.
- Get your NIE number.
- Make an offer on The One.
- Ensure your budget is safe and consider a forward contract.

Two months away

- If required, sign the reservation contract to begin the process of buying.
- Pay deposit after signing the deposit contract
- Contact notary
- Plan removals
- Plan decoration/renovation strategy with local tradespeople (we can assist you with putting you in touch with some of our trusted traders).
- Ensure utilities are connected.
- Final sale contract to be signed alongside final payment
- Get the keys and move in!



Location,
location, location



The Alpujarras

The region of mountain villages known as Las Alpujarras clings to the southern flanks of the Sierra Nevada, cloven by deep, sheltered valleys and gorges which run down towards the Mediterranean. The Alpujarra, as it is popularly known, in the singular, is famous throughout Spain because of its unique mini-ecology. Its terraced farmlands are constantly watered by the melting snow from above, constituting a high-altitude oasis of greenery which stands in dramatic contrast to the arid foothills below. This is ideal hiking terrain for adventurous travellers, provided you take along a tent and well-padded sleeping bags - the average altitude is 4,000 feet above sea level.

The cultural interest of the region lies in its fifty-odd villages, which were the last stronghold of the Spanish Muslims, or Moors. Soon after the Castilians took Granada in 1492, all the city's Moors were forced to convert to Christianity. Those who refused took to the hills, settling in this remote, inaccessible area. Constant pressure on the Christians led to a bloody uprising, the Morisco Rebellion of 1568, which was ruthlessly crushed out, with the public execution of the leader, Ben Humeya, in the main square of Granada. Soon followed a royal decree expelling from the Kingdom of Granada all people of Arab descent, since the "new Christians", as the converts were called, were all suspected of being "crypto-Muslims" in secret...The villages of the Alpujarra were resettled with some 12,000 Christian families brought by King Philip II from Galicia and Asturias in north-western Spain. However, these unique hamlets have retained their traditional Berber architecture - terraced clusters of grey-white box-shaped houses with flat clay roofs - which is still common in the Rif and Atlas mountains of Morocco.

Perhaps the most picturesque villages are the famous trio which cling, one close above the other, to the slopes of the Poqueira Valley, where red peppers and tomatoes are still set out to dry on the flat clay roofs, among the tall round chimney pots.



Pampaneira, at the bottom, bustles with crafts shops and restaurants, as does Bubión, halfway up the slope, with its massive square church tower standing on a plaza of rough paving stones. But to savour the authentic Alpujarra, go to Capileira at the top of the valley – the name is an Arabic derivation of the Latin word for head or top – and walk down from the road into the lower streets of the village, where the rocky streets, overhanging passageways and sagging, stone houses have still not been remodelled and prettified for contemporary living...

If you stray from the beaten path, you will be sure to catch sight of the region's abundant wildlife, such as the Cabra Hispanica, a mountain goat which roams the mountains in herds and is often seen standing on pinnacles, silhouetted against the sky. But as soon as it flairs the scent of man it will bound up the steepest slopes with amazing speed... The Alpujarra is also famous for its excellent birdwatching – the colourful Hoopoe with its stark, haunting cry, is a common sight. The capital of the region is Órgiva, on the lowlands, and the village of Trevélez – famous throughout Spain for its superb mountain hams, or jamón serrano – is, at over 4,840 feet above sea level, the highest village in Europe, overhanging a fast-flowing river and plunging mountain valley.



Lanjarón

Around 50 km from Granada city and the first town you come to in the Western Alpujarras, Lanjarón is considered the gateway to the region. It is famous for its mineral water which is sold throughout Spain, while its spa waters have been celebrated for centuries for their curative properties and are considered to be some of the best in the country. Try them for yourself at the town's Balneario where you can indulge in a whole range of treatments. While the Balneario is open (March to December), the town is full of visitors who come from all over Spain to take the waters.

The area produces some excellent wines and caves of dry and sweet varieties, attracting wine enthusiasts from all over. Honey is also locally made and sold in many villages of the Alpujarras. Being part of Granada province, complimentary tapas will arrive with every drink ordered in bars so do not be surprised when you get more than you asked for!

Overlooking the town is a rocky outcrop capped by a ruined Moorish castle. Legend has it that the Moorish ruler of Lanjarón threw himself from the castle tower, rather than surrender, when he realised that the Christian army, led by the Catholic King Fernando, was going to be victorious



Stretched out along the A348, the main street of Avenida de la Alpujarra (which is also known as the Avenida de Andalucía), are many places to stay and bars and restaurants, as well as a tourist information office.

Órgiva

In the fertile valley of the Guadalfeoriver is the largest town of western Alpujarras, Órgiva. At 450m, Órgiva has a milder climate than many other places in the Alpujarras and is surrounded by olive, lemon and orange groves.

Chris Stewart of Driving Over Lemons fame lives in the vicinity and his books have done much for the local tourist industry and for attracting more northern Europeans – mostly from Great Britain – to settle in the area. At the last count, foreign residents from EU countries outside of Spain numbered around a tenth of the town's 5,000-strong population.

Órgiva has a somewhat bohemian atmosphere since it is also a magnet for those seeking an alternative lifestyle; a well-established settlement of teepees is on the outskirts of town, while at the town's weekly market a whole variety of New Age goods are on sale.

Bars are plentiful along the main street and many have outdoor tables. Just off this street is the Baroque 16th-century church, with an impressive altarpiece and an image of Christ considered being the work of the renowned religious sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés.

Órgiva has many accommodation possibilities, from hotels to B&Bs, as well as a campsite with an excellent restaurant and weekly live music. It also rents bungalows and cabins.

The tourist information office in town can also offer further suggestions.

Its main fiestas are San Sebastián on 20th January and the Feria Grande at the end of September and beginning of October.

Lecrin Valley

This area is mainly formed by small villages, which, in some cases, have less than 200 residents. These are tranquil and unspoilt and are ideal destinations for lovers of rural tourism and outdoor sports such as hiking, fishing, caving, mountain climbing or hunting, amongst others.

Padul

The town of Padul is an ideal destination for lovers of nature and adrenalin sports. Located in the Sierra del Manar, the foothills of Sierra Nevada, the area offers visitors activities such as hiking, horse-riding, mountain biking, paragliding and hang-gliding. Padul also has the advantage of being very close to the capital city of Granada.

Along the various routes leading to the Sierra del Manar, you can see a number of viewpoints over the Sierra Nevada and the Valle de Lecrín, such as Cruz de la Atalaya. Other interesting stops are the Barranco de las Rajas, Silleta de Padul – a pine tree with five trunks and el Puerto de las Carabelas. La Laguna is an important wetland and contains peat bogs where scientists have discovered the remains of prehistoric animals.

For hang-gliding or paragliding, one of the best places to go is Prefabricados La Romera, which you can reach from the N-323. In the Turberas de Padul area, there are designated landing areas. From an architectural point of view, there are various buildings in Padul which might be of interest to tourists. The Iglesia Parroquial de Santa María la Mayor is one of these, built in the 16th century with a Moorish-style doorway. Inside, there is a beautiful baroque-style altarpiece from the second half of the 18th century and another in renaissance style. Also worth visiting is the Castillo de Los Condes de Padul, a stately home from the 17th century which is similar in style to the Palacio de Carlos V in the famous Alhambra palace in Granada.

Visitors might also be interested in the Fuente de Los Cinco Caños, an arcaded fountain and communal washing area from the mid-16th century, and the popular Calvario, with its large stone crosses made in the 18th century.

The residents are very proud of their old train station, which formed part of the line from Granada to the coast. A plaque commemorates the first day a train arrived in the village: 10th February 1923.

Lovers of traditional crafts will enjoy the handmade glass products made in the village.

Visitors who want to get a typical taste of the paduleña diet should try choto al ajillo (veal with garlic), chuletas adobadas (marinated pork chops), embutidos (cured meats and sausages) and the many different types of tortillas, including collejas, onion or traditional ones made with potatoes or ham.

Las Fiestas Patronales de San Sebastián, the patron saint's days, are on 19 and 20 January and are usually marked with a procession to the bonfire. Carnaval is in February and the Real Feria del Ganado is in September. Semana Santa is marked with the procession of the 12 stages of the cross on the night of Viernes Santo, representing some of the most important scenes from the Passion of the Christ.



Dúrcal

The village of Dúrcal is a perfect location for lovers of rural tourism, hiking and other sports; it also has a rich historical heritage for those who prefer a more cultural type of tourism.

The village is located in the Dúrcal River valley, on the slope of the Sierra Nevada and in the fertile Valle de Lecrín. The land in Dúrcal was used for growing sugar throughout the Arab occupation, along with orange and lemon orchards which still remain today.

At one time, the largest cable car railway in Europe was located here; however, it was taken down at the end of the 1950s. An iron bridge remains, known as Puente de lata, which was built by a disciple of Gustave Eiffel (designer of the Eiffel tower) and was constructed at the same time as the cable car network. This bridge, over the deep bed of the Dúrcal river, is now one of the best areas for bungee jumping.

From an architectural point of view, other monuments of interest are the Puente Romano, a bridge dating from the 1st century; El Molino, a one-hundred-year-old mill that now houses the Museo Gastronómico Andaluz; La Ermita de San Blas, from the 16th century; El Fuerte de la Alcazaba, known as the Torre de Márgena (tower of Márgena) which is found at the foot of the Cerro del Zahor; the ruins of the Castillo Medieval (medieval castle) situated on the Cerro del Peñon del Moro and known as El Castillejo; El Pilar de la Plaza, constructed at the time of Isabel II of Bourbon in the 19th century and La Iglesia Parroquial de la Inmaculada Concepción, built in the 16th century.

Dúrcal has a few other sites of possible interest to tourists, such as a clay pigeon shooting field, a motocross circuit, a farm school and two thermal springs: Baños de Urquizar and Vaca Mía.

The main attraction of the diet in Dúrcal is the locally sourced ingredients that they use to make traditional dishes, for example, aceite de oliva (olive oil), cereales (cereals), almendras (almonds), carnes provenientes de la caza mayor y menor (meat which has come from hunting), naranjas (oranges) and limones (lemons).

The fiesta calendar in Dúrcal is marked by el Día de San Blas, celebrated in February, el Día del Hornazo, between March and April, la Romería de mayo, in May, and la Fiesta de San Ramón Nonato, in August.

MAP



The Lecrin Valley

Padul

Dúrcal

Las Alpujarras

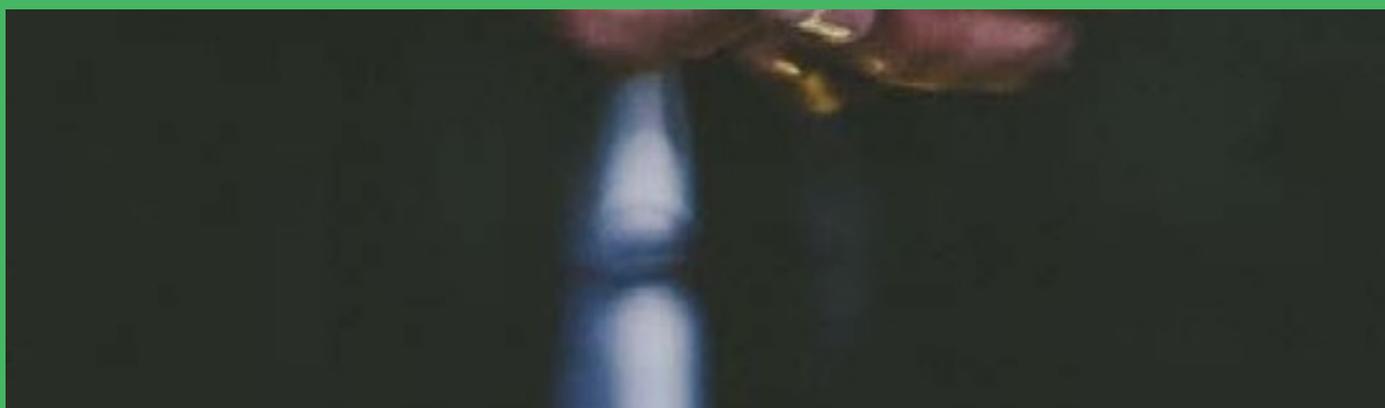
Lanjarón

Órgiva



Hola Properties

Plan Viewings



Ideas to help your plan your best viewing trip:

1

You can then ensure you avoid those peak times.

Then you can avoid visiting then! Not only will you avoid the crowds but also save money on hotels and flights. Research what it is like during peak times too to ensure you'll still like the area then.

2

Embrace the tech.

There are so many ways now to carry out your own research before choosing which properties to view. Google Streetview can be so useful and when you're at the property, take photos and videos as you can't just pop back once you get home. However, bear in mind that Google Streetview isn't always populated with recent images so do check with the agent if you have any questions.

3

Don't do too much research.

This sounds contradictory, of course, but 83% of buyers go on to buy a property they would not have chosen when looking on paper/on-line! It's a shocking statistic but as estate agents, we have so much experience looking around properties and helping people interpret their needs and wants. This is why "the mystery house" scenario on TV shows is more often than not The One. With the right estate agent, you'll be in safe hands.

4

Be aware of estate agents.

Another tip to contradict the last! Avoid any estate agent who doesn't return your calls within a week; who tries to take over your schedule while you're over here; who will charge you a buyer's premium. Going back to Tip 2, there are plenty of ways to do your research before you arrive – try contacting various estate agents and seeing what sort of replies you receive and in what timescale. Weed out those who are slow or uncommunicative. Helping you by asking questions about your search or offering to help with hotels or restaurants are all excellent signs when they are equally happy to let you explore alone too.

5

Dream a little.

If the property you're looking at doesn't have anyone living in it, even part-time, things like the swimming pool can become an uninviting puddle. You need to stay realistic but it may be that with just a few hundred euros and some Farrow & Ball, you could turn that ugly duckling into a John Lewis catalogue show home.

6

Make sure if you see The One, you're ready.

You need a few thousand as a reservation deposit so make sure you have your money in the right currency for a fast transaction. Ask us how we did it to avoid the potential pitfalls and ensure you secure your dream home when you see it.

Hola
PROPERTIES



How to buy a Spanish property



Paying for your your house in Spain

As we have already discussed, the importance of working out your budget cannot be underestimated. With the help of the right financial advisor, you can identify your financial sources whether it is your pension, re-mortgage, savings and so on.

What are your available funds?

Not only do you need to consider your liquid assets but also those that may not be so easy to get hold of, like selling your current house or some investment property. What do you need to do in order to access the money you need for the move? Some people draw down their pensions early, use equity release and others buy with family or friends. If you're thinking about any of these options yourself, let us know, and we will be able to help direct you to the right people or information source so you can sort it all smoothly.



Can you access additional funds?

It could be worth discussing with a financial advisor the possibility of getting a mortgage. There are lots of different products available and most people think age can be a negating factor but this isn't always the case. Find out what options there are, what deposit you'd need, the monthly payments and what backup you have in an emergency, like a sudden serious illness. Perhaps you have a property back home you could sell or release equity from.



Ongoing finances

Owning a property in Spain incurs the normal home-owning costs – maintenance, tax and travel expenses getting there. It's important that your budget forecast looks at the long term as home ownership is rarely a brief affair. Are your pension or investments locked into a specific currency exchange rate? If not, you can find the rates change and your financial situation suddenly becomes a little bleak. Don't panic though; we know how to help with this and can secure it for you.



Investing

As we have mentioned pensions, it may be worth exploring this a little further. If you are moving to Spain on a more permanent basis, you can move your pension into a self-invested personal pension (SIPP) or a Qualifying Recognised Overseas Pension Scheme (QROPS). These can give you greater control over your pension and can even reduce your tax bill. There are certain conditions and criteria though so speak to us beforehand and we can help you through it.



Hola Properties tip!



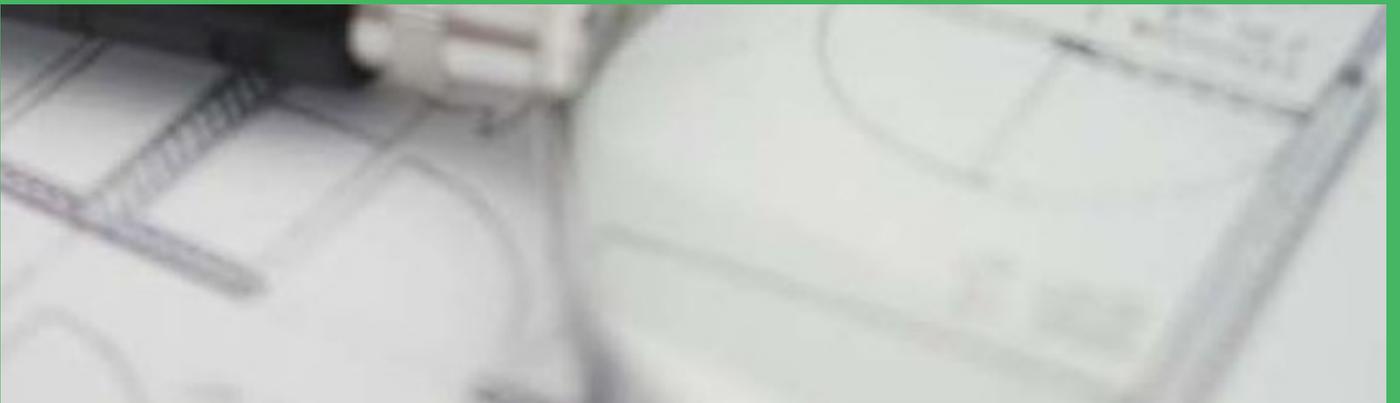
To apply for a mortgage, there are certain documents you'll need of course so they're worth getting prepared just in case.

1. Passport copy
2. Last two years' income tax declaration
3. A year's worth of bank statements
4. Last six months' proof of income, e.g. payslips
5. A list of mortgage loans already held
6. A statement of your assets and liabilities, confirmed by an accountant.

Your lawyer should ensure that your mortgage takes into account consumer protection legislation. The contract of sale and signing of the mortgage will normally happen all together, with a staff member from the bank present at the signing of the deeds in the notary office, and forwarding the money to the seller.



Other costs



Other costs

Many of the costs involved in buying a property depend on the price of the property you're buying. However, an easy calculation is to budget 10-12% of the purchase price to ensure you are covered. There may be differences depending on if you are buying using financial products, like a mortgage.

- 1 Transfer tax.**

This is commonly known as ITP (pronounced EEE-TE-PE) and applies to property that is not a brand-new build. This can be between 8-10%. If you are buying a new build, you'll pay around 1% in stamp duty instead of the transfer tax. This figure can depend on the area in which you're buying though.
- 2 Notary**

The notary fee can be from 0.5-1% of the house price but is split between buyer and seller. The buyer's half covers the issuing of the deeds.
- 3 Land registry**

The fees to the land registry are around 1% of the property purchase price.
- 4 Lawyer**

Lawyers can set their own rates and can be between €1,500 to €3,000. With a complicated situation, fees will go up accordingly.
- 5 Mortgage fees**

You'll have to pay the mortgage company around €350 for valuation fees. There is also stamp duty which is around 1.5% of the mortgage deeds and also a lender's fee. The latter is usually around 1% of the capital loans.

The other thing you will need as a Spanish non-resident in order to buy any property here is a tax identification number. Called the número de identificación de extranjero (NIE – pronounced NEE-AY), this document is issued by the General Directorate of the Police. It is not possible to purchase property without this number so you must have obtained it prior to completion. If you then go on to apply for residency, you will use this number then too. For more information on the best way to get your NIE, just get in touch.



How to recognise a good estate agent



How to recognise a good estate agent

Communicating in Spain can be difficult when you don't know the language. There are some estate agents who have learned different languages or are bilingual. Make sure you're working with someone with whom you can communicate but not only in language terms. Does the estate agent understand the market, the politics of where you're coming from and most importantly, do they know the area you want to be in? Most estate agents here are not registered Professional Agents. You should always look for an agent who is a member of SIRA (Spanish international realty alliance) or is a registered Realtor. They will have a code of ethics and you can buy safely with them. Avoid those who are not!!

In Spain, the lawyers deal with the notary and this is how the paperwork gets completed. In rural areas, there is a gestor role too. Due to high illiteracy in more rural areas, the gestor helped people with the bureaucracy and although illiteracy is greatly diminished nowadays, the gestor is still sometimes part of the process. They can help you with paperwork and bits like utility companies but not in lieu of your lawyer.



All professionally registered agents should be able to help you get your NIE as, without it, the transaction can't take place and they won't get paid. They are also likely to help you with surveys, lawyers, and tradespeople but you want someone really good. The really great local estate agent is the local experts they deal with so many people from so many walks of life. They can help you with the best jamon shops, the best schools, doctors, and anything else. You can always ask agents for past buyers' feedback. This way you can get a feel for how the service really is from that agent.





Making an offer



Making an offer

Once you've viewed your shortlist and decided on the property that meets your needs as well as tickles your fancy, you need to start negotiating. It can be hard to know what is a fair price in your own country but abroad, this can feel far more difficult to assess. Use these tips to ensure you stay in control of this part of the process.

1. Research of your own

Review recent local sales and conduct general market research. You should be then able to have an idea of the current economic microclimate in the area where your desired property is located. You can then ask the right questions and show that you're not able to have the wool pulled over your eyes.

2. Leave your poker faces behind.

Read the situation before you are either too enthusiastic or too non-plussed. If you're dealing with a seller directly, it pays to stay businesslike and polite without letting emotions rule the conversation. With an agent, you can be more relaxed, however. Although they work for the seller, it is you who will be moving into the area so they want you to be a happy new neighbour, not cursing them every time you cross paths in the street.

3. Be kind.

Don't forget what it's like when you're selling your property. It's not just bricks and mortar but something someone loves. If you're too aggressive in your offer strategy, you can cause offence and we have had some sellers refuse to then sell to those individuals on point of principle. If you're aware that there is some fierce competition for the property, a letter of introduction written to the seller directly explaining why you love their home too can sometimes charm them and help you stand out.

4. Don't delay.

Respond to any counter-offers within a few hours wherever you can. You just don't know what else is happening at the other end, like other viewings happening or previous viewers coming back to make an offer. Don't leave the seller room to consider other offers.

5. Be in control of your finances.

Make sure you've got your deposit ready and the rest of your money secured. Otherwise, the exchange rate can shift and leave you in a very difficult position.





The legal system



The legal system

The legal processes for buying property, even within the EU, are often quite different from country to country. Invest in a lawyer with whom you can easily communicate. They are there to arrange the purchasing process for you but also can advise on tax or inheritance issues as well. It is important that the documentation clearly states who is the legal owner of the property and (especially for unmarried couples with children from previous relationships) who will inherit it.

The first part of the legal process is the reservation agreement. Having agreed on a price, you'll sign with the agent to take the property off the market for 2-4 weeks. The fee will be from between €3,000 to €10,000 or more, depending on the price of the property. The terms of the agreement will define whether or not this money is refundable if you change your mind. If the agreement is subject to preliminary legal checks, mortgage loan availability on the property and a building survey, if there are any problems then the deposit should be returned. The legal documents will need translating unless your Spanish is very good already so both language versions will need signing by the seller and buyer.



The next part, if you've not already put it in motion, is to get the NIE. You need it for opening a bank account, buying a property, and getting financial products and utilities. It's easy to get but can take anything from one day to over a month. We can help you get this sorted and ensure you have all the right paperwork to take with you on the day

In Spain, the lawyers deal with the notary and this is how the paperwork gets completed. In rural areas, there is a gestor role too. Due to high illiteracy in more rural areas, the gestor helped people with the bureaucracy and although illiteracy is greatly diminished nowadays, the gestor is still sometimes part of the process. They can help you with paperwork and bits like utility companies but not in lieu of your lawyer.

Before the reservation agreement time has ended, you will sign the deposit contract (contrato de arras) or something similar. From this point, neither you nor the seller can pull out of the transaction. It also means, unlike places like the UK, that you cannot be gazumped or, indeed, gazundered. This contract details the property transaction details, like where it is, what it is, what's included in the sale, price, payment method and completion date. As the buyer, you'll now pay 10% of the purchase price and if you breach the agreement from this point, you'll lose that money. If the seller breaches, this deposit is doubled and then returned. The deposit will be stored by the lawyers and not given to the seller until completion.

The sale contract itself (the escritura pública) means you've reached completion. You can sign it at the notary's office although your lawyer can do that if you're not available. A signature on this represents the formal handover of the property and once you've paid the balance, you get the keys to your new home.

WELCOME HOME!

