



Crime and Advice

Despite Spain having a lower crime rate than many countries, being one of the world's most popular tourist destinations makes it a prime target for criminals especially during the summer season, so it is vital to remain vigilant. Neighbourhood Watch in Spain aims to prevent crime by building stronger communities where people look out for their neighbours and report anything that appears suspicious or out of the ordinary.

Thefts

Thefts are the most common crimes in Spain, representing about 70% of total crime with over 168,000 reported thefts in the first quarter of 2018, a decrease of 3,000 from the same period in 2017. A stronger community spirit with neighbours keeping an eye on each other's properties and reporting any suspicious activities has the potential to make a big difference in preventing petty crime in your local area.

It is recommended that you keep all of your bags and possessions close to you and in sight when out and be vigilant when in crowded places like local open-air markets where pick-pocketing and bag theft is more common in summer. There has been a spike in crime involving criminals distracting unsuspecting or vulnerable individuals and taking their watch. If someone grabs your bag from your shoulder, you should let it go as hanging on may cause significant injury to yourself, and call the police immediately. Often two criminals will work together, one will distract whilst the other takes your possessions. If any body comes up to you asking for directions or showing you a phone or map, just check that they are alone and keep hold of any bags or keys you have.

Scams

Many elderly and vulnerable people are targeted by criminals each year through various scams, whether it be face to face, on the phone, or online. There are scams involving competitions such as fake lotteries or scratch cards, in addition there have been reports of people pretending to collect money for charity. Be careful not to hand over money unless you are sure that the cause is definitely genuine. You should never give any bank details or your address over the phone, and if you can't verify the person who is calling, end the call without giving your full name or any other person details. Before replying or clicking links in emails, make sure that it is a genuine email and not a phishing scam. Your bank will never ask you for your password or bank details via email and are likely to include your full name on any emails they do send to you.

Home security

Whenever you are outside of your house, in the garden or by the pool, make sure that you keep your windows closed and doors locked. Keep valuable items out of view at all times and where possible put jewelry and cash in a locked safe or other secure place, the average thief is an opportunist who is unlikely to take the time to break into a safe, they will often just quickly grab whatever they can see so making sure valuable possessions are locked away out of sight can limit the opportunities of a thief.

It is advised you should upgrade any door and window locks to security locks if they are not already and make sure you double lock your door, it is very easy for criminals to gain entry if you only single lock your front door. You should not give a key to workmen or builders working on your property as they could easily have your key copied and a new one cut without you even knowing. If you lose a key, or a key goes missing, you should change your locks to prevent it falling into the wrong hands.

Advice

The main advice is should you see someone, whom you believe is doing something illegal, **immediately call 112 to report it**. There are operators available on this number who speak Spanish, English and German. Without putting yourself in danger – try to obtain the registration number of any vehicle they may be using and/or a description of the person – especially any scars or tattoos. Try taking a photograph with your mobile phone so this can be sent to the Security Agencies.