



Home Security Tips - Living in Spain

The primary responsibility for household security rests with you the householder. The threat of break-in to houses varies from location to location but don't let it ruin your life, just be that bit extra vigilante, do all you reasonably can to protect your property. Our advice is to take as many simple and cost-effective precautions as possible and then get on with enjoying your life. This should include;

- 1) **Insurance**. Take out good insurance and make sure you read an English translation of the policy before you buy. Some policies do not provide cover for robbery if you live in the campo and others require all manner of security measures to retain policy validity.
- 2) **Join the Neighbourhood Watch** and keep a good lookout for strange or suspicious people and vehicles. Make a note of descriptions and registration numbers and advise your coordinator. Photographs can be very useful.
- 3) **Alarm**. Fit an alarm (independent or connected) as high-up on the property as possible and make sure the box or a sign is visible from the road. Criminals know that a screwdriver hammered through the siren in the box will silence it. Keep any ladders or other equipment that would assist gaining access to the alarm hidden or locked away. Test the alarm and all the sensors regularly, but with full knowledge of your neighbours. Batteries usually last for about a year, but can fail early. Make maximum effort to avoid false alarm soundings. Make sure your immediate neighbours (at least 3 if possible) know what your alarm sounds like.
- 4) **Identify your NHW coordinator**. Exchange mobile phone numbers with them and your neighbours and keep each other informed about your whereabouts & plans when appropriate. Try to devise a simple but secret visible signal that you are out, that can easily be seen by your neighbours from a distance. Agree with them that you will all respond to an alarm by first calling the owner and then carefully but noisily investigating the property from a safe distance before calling the guardia (062 or the emergency number 112). Direct contact with criminals can be dangerous. If appropriate leave an alarm control or the code and a house key with a trusted neighbour so that false or repeated alarm signals can be dealt with.
- 5) **Sliding windows & shutters**. Fit and use additional window bolts on sliding windows. Two types are available, screw-in & key-locking, and both are easy to use. Fit anti-lift screws to sliding windows. Without them criminals may be able to lift out your windows. Use shutter bolts or clips to make lifting them more difficult.
- 6) **Keys**. Keep car and door keys out of reach & out of sight from windows and doors
- 7) **Small valuables**. Do not leave valuables or money in obvious places. A really good hiding place is priceless. Buy a safe and bolt it into the house or an outbuilding in a hidden position.
- 8) **Builders Nearby**. Be especially careful if there are builders working near your home who can observe your comings & goings. Many such houses have suffered break-ins.
- 9) **Signs of occupancy**. When you do go out, leave a person or a car at the house whenever you can. During the day leave washing on the line and/or other exterior signs of occupancy. Leave lights and TV or radio on at night. Use electrical timers for lights & radio and ask for increased neighbour vigilance during long spells away (to test if the owners are away, criminals often leave stones, gravel or bricks in obvious places that would be removed by owners).

- 10) Exterior lights. Fit standard or light & movement sensitive exterior lights. Most houses have exterior power points and the lights are not expensive.
- 11) Gates & Doors. Keep gates closed and locked at all times. If you are outside, lock any door you cannot see. Criminal audacity is well known.
- 12) Dogs. Beware of placing too much reliance on dogs for security. Criminals can subdue all but the largest and most ferocious dogs, using chemicals or brute force. Their barking can provide a valuable early-warning alarm, but neighbours need to respond with careful investigation and phone calls to owners, the NHW coordinator and/or the guardia.
- 13) Vendors. Beware of vendors selling fruit etc. door to door as this might be someone observing your property for criminal purposes.
- 14) Rejas. Window and door rejas (grilles) are usually quite strong but often poorly fitted to the walls. Crowbars, chisels, wooden or steel poles and car jacks can all too easily remove even quite well-fitted grilles. Make sure you do not leave any material about that could assist a criminal to remove your grilles.
- 15) Strangers. Think very carefully before allowing strangers into your grounds or house. Criminals have been known to pose as builders quoting for work to survey possessions and security measures. Supervise all strangers closely and have your alarm "panic" button at the ready.
- 16) Vehicles. Keep cars fully locked, even inside locked gates. If you have 2 cars you could also consider using the cheaper one to block in the more expensive one. Keep keys secure.
- 17) Document Security. Keep originals or copies of important documents and phone numbers in a safe place in case your bag or car is stolen. To help with insurance claims, keep receipts and serial numbers for household goods & valuables and photograph those items with no serial numbers