

THE POLICE IN SPAIN

Unlike the UK where we effectively have only one police force, here in Spain we have three distinct divisions within the police.

The **Policia National** whose main duties include dealing with very serious crimes, also demonstrations, crowd control. Other duties include guarding embassies, and other government buildings. The **Policia National** are normally situated in towns with more than 20,000 residents and based in a

Policia National

police station where there is a department dedicated to the issuing of residencias and other necessary documents required with Spain.

The **Guardia Civil and Guardia Civil Trafico** which patrol Spain's highways and rural areas. If you need to report any crime after the event such as a burglary, a mugging, an assault etc then you MUST report it to the **Guardia Civil.**

This is done by making out a denuncia. Many ex-pats are worried by the word denuncia, but it is only a police report, exactly the same process as in the UK. If no denuncia is made the crime cannot be investigated as without a denuncia there is no record of a crime being committed, therefore nothing for the Guardia to investigate. When you have completed the denuncia you will be given a unique number to be used when checking on the progress of any investigation and also for use in the event of an insurance claim. By making a denuncia the crime will also be entered into the crime figures, this is important as these figures are used to determine the numbers of police officers allocated to an area, it is therefore essential that all criminal acts are reported to the Police. If your Spanish is not very good it is advisable to take along someone who speaks reasonable Spanish to help you in reporting the incident. Some of the

Guardia Civil Barracks

do provide an interpreter service but it is advisable to check within your local area.

The **Policia Local** are employed by the local council and have very limited powers, but most importantly they CANNOT investigate a crime, so please do not get the impression that the Policia Local are not interested when you go to them to report a crime and they tell you to go to the nearest **Guardia Civil** Offices. The Policia Local will however attend a crime in progress and make an arrest. Historically the two agencies did not have a good relationship, however it is encouraging to note a closer working relationship and in some areas both agencies share accommodation.

SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE POLICE

In areas where the Security Agencies work closely with Neighbourhood Watch, we share information very effectively. NHW pass on information to the local police and where possible the Guardia Civil and this appears on their websites and sometimes the website of the Ayuntamiento as well. In turn, the police pass on information to Neighbourhood Watch. We show this information on the front page of our website in the section called "Security Agencies - Latest News". This section will be generated by and for the use of the Local Police Chief or Guardia Civil Commandant

We are working towards having this kind of exchange in all branches of Neighbourhood Watch.

If you are a Lead Coordinator and would like to set up the same information exchange with the police in your area get in touch with us and we will be able to advise.