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Our House Hunting Experiences in Andalucia Spain

By Geoff Forster

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Our House Hunting Experiences in Andalucia Southern Spain

Montefrio, Granada Province

We fell in love with a property in Montefrio Granada. We checked by phone if it was still for sale, flew out two days later only to find it had been sold six months earlier! The company was www.propertynetworkspain.com ... it is hard to find an excuse for their trying to mislead us into traveling halfway across europe for a house that had been sold six months previously, fortunately I had found www.parapandaproperties.com in the same town who advised me that they thought the property was no longer on the market. The only thing saving Property Network Spain is that properties in Spain are often advertised by a number of different agents and there is a chance they did not know that this property in Montefrio had been sold for six months! They do have an office in this small town but it is possible that they were not aware ...

The www.parapandaproperties.com agent Alan Russell said that they had a house Casa Pipi for sale in Montefrio and they sent me the details. It looked wonderful, rustic beams, garden, pretty shuttered windows, wonderful views so we flew out.

Alan kindly met us at Malaga airport (quite a trek from Montefrio ...full marks to this pleasant Scotsman) he drove us through increasingly barren yet beautiful Andalucian countryside. It was September '03 and there had been no rain since April ... We arrived nearly two hours later in Montefrio, a very beautiful town, with a castle on the hill towering above the white pueblo and a magnificent round church in the town centre, which is one of the most serene and atmospheric buildings I have had the pleasure to stand in. After a tostada and coffee Alan drove us to our latest Andalucian dream house ... Casa Pipi. Which in reality was a ramshackle hovel, the journey to the house was a series of seriously steep switchback bends. If anyone had been coming in the other direction reversing back would have been difficult for either party.

We entered the house, there was a pipe sticking out of the floor, we were assured it was a temporary problem and that the mains water pipe would be buried out of sight very soon! No problema!

There were two gypsy women Mother and daughter, attempting to do their washing in the kitchen (the owners!). The machine was in the middle of the floor washing and clothes everywhere, this perhaps explained the pipe sticking up by the front door!

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We had requested to be allowed to stay in the house for a few days to get a feel for the place. We were to pay a small rent if we did not buy else the stay was to be free. Despite numerous phone calls and assurances this had been agreed and sorted with the owners the presence of the two gypsies and their washing told us we were not really expected. I was already getting shivers down my spine telling me to get out fast ... I've heard about houses giving off vibes I was feeling them for real and it wasn't pleasant ... but before I could run to the front door we were taken to the beautiful landscaped and fenced garden. The agent had been specifically asked if this area was fenced and suitable for three border collies! The neighbours wall was about to collapse into the garden which was no more than an unfenced building site. The steps into the outdoor building site space/garden were crumbling and very unsafe. Figs were dropping and rotting in huge piles all over the so called patio, all I could hear was a previously very quiet inner voice shouting GET OUT OF HERE!

There was a family listening to a stereo (full blast!) in the street which was right outside the pretty

shuttered bedroom window. The chestnut beams on the internet pictures were bent and cracked, I learnt what rustic meant from this house! The view was only good if you leaned out of one particular window. The area was impoverished and very untidy. Accessible by trained rally drivers only in 4x4 vehicles! We left, fast .. a angry looking four year old boy in a Barcelona football shirt gave me a drop dead look as we left, very disconcerting from such a small child, I hope we never meet again when he's older!

We went back to the Parapanda Properties shop, Alan found us an excellent apartment to stay in and drove us there with our bags.

We did eventually find a dream property in Montefrio. After the let down in the (corra) gypsy area of town, We decided the town wasn't for us and we decided to view some country properties. The first was down a track through the local rubbish dump (not a good start)and it got worse, the track twisting up and down boulder strewn it was an amazing experience. The house was isolated and being worked on by a team of builders. The price had gone up considerably from that advertised in the agents shop as renovations had started. I did like the isolation but Jane wasn't having any of it. Looking back this was a wise decision!

Next we were taken to another larger cortijo with a well fenced garden of about 2000sq meters, there was a fig tree, lots of unpruned olives and a water well. The house needed a new roof (not urgently) but a bathroom extension had not been built properly and was moving away from the house. This needed demolishing and rebuilding. There were a few disconcerting cracks in walls but Paco (the builder) assured us these were 'no problemo' so we put down a 2% deposit before we left.

The owner of the cortijo was an elderly lady and her son Gregorio was selling it for her. The title deed (Yes there was one!!) also had about 60,000sqm of land on it but they only wanted to sell the house and the 2,000sqm in the 'compound' as we called it, as the barbed wire top fence had a Stalag 19 feel about it. So they we going to apply to the town hall for a legal segregation. Our lawyer said 'no problemo', Paco said 'no problemo' Alan the estate agent said 'no problemo' The Montefrio Ayuntamiento (Town Hall) Architect said 'mucho problemo' then 'no problemo' (we celebrated) .. then two days later 'mucho problemo' and after a roller coaster ride for over two months we pulled out after segregation was not granted. Our cheque for 2% was never cashed. the estate agent being honest but a little naive about dealing with town hall architects and what is and isn't irrigated land. (a well does not an irrigation system maketh ... pipes and pumps are also needed!)

He did drive us from Malaga airport to Montefrio and back! Quite a trek! He was also very pleasant to deal with via e-mail. On the downside Casa Pipi did not live up to his description. Numerous phone

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calls had assured us we could stay there during our visit. The gypsy women and their washing told us this request had not been relayed to the owners as we were told it had been.

The segregation problem on the cortijo was always 'no problemo' because it was irrigated land. It clearly wasn't irrigated. So we have mixed feelings about Montefrio and the agents there. It is a long way from the coast, it is very beautiful, but not a lot to do there ... 5/10?

So .. back to the searching the internet ... dreams shattered, minus airfare, accommodation costs and living expenses for the Montefrio trip.

Almeria Trip – Costa Tropical (Albuñol – Sorvilán – La Rábita – La Mamola – Castel de Ferro) – Ronda (Rio Guadiaro, Cortes de La Frontera – Estación de Cortes – Jimera de Libar – Benaoján – Rio Genal, Benarrabá)

So it was back to the internet, armed with a little more knowledge about estate agents descriptions and how a well chosen camera angle can turn a pit into a palace, we searched Andalucia from village to village!

We could now look at the photographs on the internet and having seen the type of housing stock in Andalucian towns and villages we had a far better idea about the quality and type of house that was being presented. (We thought?)

We decided we needed to be nearer the coast but our budget of £70,000 meant we were priced out of the Costa del Sol. We were now looking for either a large house with two entrances or two smaller properties, as we had decided we needed an income and renting part or a whole property on a self catering basis seemed the answer.

I had recently read 'Sierras of the South' by Alastair Boyd and the area around Ronda fascinated me, it seemed ideal.

A few searches found a number of sites and we saw a property in the Genal Valley village of Benarrabá that fitted the bill. A large village house with two separate entrances, it needed a bit work ... but was priced in our budget. The views were fantastic (on the internet ... surely they would be in real life!)

We also scoured the coastline for cheap property. we thought about Almeria. Almeria is quite cheap but very barren, the coastal properties are lower priced than the Costa del Sol but the value has gone. The area is covered in hundreds of square miles of ugly DIY polythene greenhouses, this is very unsightly. They stretch down the coast as far as Castel de Ferro. We have also seen a few between Malaga and Velez–Malaga but not on the same scale as in Almeria / Costa Tropical.

We found some sites for the Costa Tropical, a quite under developed coast between Adra to Motril, neither of these large towns had anything that would appeal to us. Adra is a port, not very pretty! Motril has some good beaches but is a large town and its closeness to Granada means prices are quite high. The coastline in between is quite pretty La Rabita and La Mamola (esp) are both lovely places. We searched the internet night after night and found a number of interesting possibilities.

There was a beautifully tiled house in Albuñol for £42,000 and another for £32,000 we could just about afford to buy both. Then there was a house in the coastal town of La Rabita for around £65,000 that had 3 entrances and three kitchens and three bathrooms an obvious source of income. Live in the biggest part and rent out the other two!

My favourite was a country house with a bit of land great views to the Mediterranean near Sorvilán it had a huge chimney in the kitchen/living room and a bread oven on the patio. It was about £63,000 I

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liked the idea of self sufficiency and of the Good Life which we could have. It looked wonderful. We had seen another site in the area with some very cheap properties. It was too good to be true so we changed our plans. Benarrabá was put on the reserve list and the Costa Tropical became the main area of interest.

Although I did contact agents in Coin, Yunquera and Antequerra about some very interesting properties. Yunquera was a serious contender for quite a time.

The tale will continue but after we have to move to Spain.

More to come author Geoff Forster

<http://www.property-in-the-sun.com>

lots of photos and blog – self catering apartment for rent in mountain village Andalucia Spain

45 yr old Englishman gives up his cosy existence in the SE of England to take his new wife Jane, three Border Collie dogs and three old black cats on an adventure in Andalucia.

www.property-in-the-sun.com – Our new life in Benarraba, Andalucia, Spain

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A 45 year old Englishman leaves comfortable life in sleepy seaside town. To renovate a village house in Andalucia Spain, taking his wife three border collies and three old black cats.

Description of first six months.

Hundreds of photographs of the towns & villages around Andalucia plus visit blog.

All available at <http://www.property-in-the-sun.com>

A 45 year old Englishman – Web designer Lives in Benarraba, Andalucia, Spain. Learning Spanish fast!



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