



Press Release

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VILLA WATCH – KEEPING AN EYE ON THE ALGARVE

How safe do you really feel in the Algarve? This is a question that Villa Watch, with a unique and focused approach to home and business security, has asked many people. So many in fact they decided to formalise it in a survey with the leading online luxury lifestyle guide Inspirations Algarve (www.inspirationsalgarve.com). The results make for interesting reading.

Conducted in December 2010 amongst a cross-section of full-time Algarve residents and holiday home owners, only 18.5% of respondents said they had experienced domestic burglary personally. However, the figure shoots up dramatically to 72.7% when asked if they knew of someone who HAD experienced domestic burglary. Whilst a personal feeling of safety rates highly for the Algarve as we would hope, with 68.2% of people feeling reasonably safe in the region, 79.1% of people feel less safe than 12 months ago. This is no doubt a reflection of the growing reported and logged crimes statistics released from the Direcção-Geral da Política de Justiça, which show an 8.7% increase in domestic burglary in the Algarve from 2005 until 2009. This is in stark contrast to the UK, which has shown a steady reduction in house crime since 1995's peak.

The survey also found that 77.3% of respondents feel that ex-pats are targeted in the region, yet 56.5% of homes have no security installed. Over 50% of the respondents lived outside security-controlled resorts in villas, and over 50% still had no security systems installed.

After arresting a burglar in the UK, Avon & Somerset police released this statement from him:

“ Alarms do put you off, you just go somewhere else. I never used to break in somewhere with a light on, or anywhere with an alarm. For every house with an alarm there are another nine without. ”

Villa Watch cannot guarantee your home will not be targeted, but a secure home is a safer option, and as domestic burglary increases in the Algarve, a protected home will give you added security. To set property owners' minds at rest, Villa Watch offer a free security survey.

Carl Nixon from Villa Watch recommends the following checklist, as recommended by the UK police, to help you find the best solutions for your home.

Before deciding on a particular system, are there any questions I should ask the security company?

1. Before you disclose any personal details, ensure that you have checked the credentials of your chosen company and request proof of identity from the representative.
2. Does the alarm system reach the required European Standard?

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3. Is the equipment you are installing in the language you require? For instance, many alarms fitted in Portugal have all the instructions in Portuguese including voice activated instructions. (Villa Watch install UK systems with everything in English)
4. Are there any maintenance and/or monitoring contracts, or additional hidden extras, such as call-out charges?
5. Do you own or rent the system?
6. What period of time does the guarantee last for, and what happens if there is a problem after that?
7. Ask if there is a 24 hour call-out service, and emergency attendance within 4 hours.
8. Ask the installers for adequate training on how to operate the system. If in doubt ask again.
9. Do not accept verbal contracts. Ensure that any agreements between you and the company are written, and that you or your representative read the contents carefully before signing.

Villa Watch has successfully installed a wide variety of security systems in commercial and private properties across the region since its launch in the Algarve in 2009, working in conjunction with leading property management companies including James Villas and Owners Abroad, together with a variety of individual home owners.

The company was formed by Managing Director Carl Nixon, who came to Portugal with an extensive background in the UK security market, working with leading blue-chip companies such as KPMG and Barclays on access security and CCTV, and overseeing the installation of major security systems in London venues as diverse as Battersea Power Station, City Hall, the London Bridge Hilton and Westminster Abbey.

Villa Watch has also launched an access control system which is unique in Portugal. It allows an owner to control access to a property in the smallest detail, using a pin-code system uploaded via a mobile phone sim card. Access can be controlled by the hour, day, week or month to authorise access to management companies, tenants, holiday guests, cleaners, gardeners and maintenance workers, and is backed by a complete reporting system. Access can be given to the entire property or specific points such as a gate, a door or individual rooms.

Costs are from €450 installation (+ €45 per month management) to €1100 (+ €28.80 per month management), on two-year contracts.

Villa Watch also offers free security assessments for private properties, supplying a detailed report together with a recommendation and quote for the supply of a variety of other security equipment and systems, including intruder alarms and entry systems, security gates, CCTV and security lighting.

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