

Navidad 2006

Feliz Navidad desde España...

We have now just completed our first year in Spain and what a year it has been! Our initial focus on arrival was to improve our Spanish, start a business and find a permanent home. Quite a lot to achieve but within 3 months we had signed an agreement to start our watersports business, found the house we wanted and spent many hours working on our Spanish.



We moved into our new home in February and then

headed back to England for a month to tidy up our affairs and pick up boats and equipment for the business.

In April the business opened, rather slowly, as we were only just ready. We were shocked to find our first sailing lessons had to be taught in



Spanish. We are working with the Cartagena Council to provide youth activities and teach two courses per month for them. The lessons actually went very well, all those hours reciting verbs were worth it after all!

The business remained pretty quiet until July, we did some work but would have liked a lot more. However, the school holidays were a different story. During July and August we were working flat out 12 hours a day and could only just keep up with the demand. We earned more in one day than we had in the whole month of April and more in a week than in the whole of the first 3 months!

July and August went by like a whirlwind.



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We would leave the house at 10am and return at 10pm, often eating the sandwiches we had made for lunch at 9 or 10pm at night. Since the weather was very hot and the work very physical we didn't feel like eating much and didn't have time to stop anyway. We kept going on pan au chocolate and ice creams!



Once September hit things suddenly went quiet and we weren't quite sure what to do with ourselves, apart from sleep (as we were pretty exhausted). The work built up again towards the end of Sept and throughout October



due to school half term holidays. The lower temperatures and slower pace of work were a welcome relief.

We are now officially closed for the winter and will re-open in April. We have a number of maintenance jobs to do and need to update all our publicity before we re-open in the spring. This doesn't mean we are off the water, as this is now our time to get out and enjoy ourselves (Julian is out windsurfing as I am writing this). We took the kayaks out last weekend and paddled over to the Med where we stopped for a picnic lunch. Not bad for the end of November.



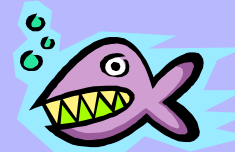
We have just had a meeting with the rowing club, whose facilities we work from, to sort out our agreement for next year. Everything is pretty much tied up, so it looks like we will be opening again in April as planned.



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We started the year with 2 sailing boats and 2 kayaks. We now have 5 sailing boats, 6 windsurfers, 6 kayaks and a small power boat - the shipping container we use for storage is pretty packed!

All that may seem like quite a lot for one year, however we have done quite a number of other things as well...

Our House and B & B

Our house has also kept us quite busy as it is quite a few years old and has only ever been used as a holiday home before. We have put in some double glazing and have just had a conservatory built. Julian is currently installing a wood burner to keep us cosy this winter. We have also set up the house as a B&B so we have occasional paying guests to look after. We are only doing this in the very low season as we can't manage a B&B and do the watersports at the same time.

Rental House

We still have our house in Estrella de Mar which we rent out to holiday guests. This has been very successful, however it is a bit of a distraction when you have issues that must be dealt with and you are busy out on the water with clients. One holiday weekend we had a call from

the tenants at the property saying the drains were blocked. So, after a days work on the beach, we had to go over and start wading around in sewerage. Since it was a holiday weekend no-one was working so couldn't call a plumber.

We have now decided to try and sell the house as we can't cope with both it and the watersports during the summer. However, since there is so much new build property out here, it can take quite some time to find a buyer.

Newspaper Articles

I (Lesley) have also been busy writing articles on the local birds for an English language newspaper out here. It gave us extra advertising and means I learn a lot about the local wildlife, which helps when I lead kayak safaris. I am continuing this throughout the winter. See www.aqua-adicta.co.uk/editorial/

Music

I have also been very busy doing a lot of music, which is great as I had very few opportunities while living in Hampshire. I joined a ladies barbershop chorus last November, just after Christmas their Musical Director left and they asked me to take over. I have now been running

the group since January and really love it. The ladies are all great fun and we get out and perform several times a year.



We only had 5 members in January and we now have 14. The picture above was taken in May just before a concert (or "Sing Out" as Barber-shoppers like to call them)

See www.aqua-adicta.co.uk/spangles/

A new English speaking church has just started up in the next village and I am involved with organising the music for that. I also play the flute and sing at the services. I have also started teaching private singing lessons, so there is no time for slacking!

House & Garden

I mentioned before that our house was a little tired and needed some TLC. Well, this keeps Julian occupied, (when he isn't windsurfing

or working) he always has a long list of jobs. Fortunately, due to previous experience, he can put his hand to pretty much anything, whether it be plumbing, electrics, carpentry etc. etc.

The garden also needs a lot of work, the trees are overgrown and there were virtually no plants when we arrived. As you can well imagine, I am making a change to all that. I am aiming for the jungle look, with palms, bougainvilleas, agaves, cactus and anything else which survives intense heat and very little water. I have made a start to the garden, however, due to the lack of rain the ground is so hard I can't dig it at the moment. A pick axe is about the best tool around here!

And finally

It would be good to hear all your news. We always enjoy receiving your Christmas letters and emails so keep them coming!

We are going to be in England over Christmas and for most of January so we hope to catch up with you then.

*Saludos
Julian & Lesley*

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