

Moving to Portugal

Deciding where to live - Safety and Security checklist

Good choice – Portugal is a great place to live, with friendly people, good climate, good food and superb countryside.

In deciding where to live and what type of property to purchase, people take into account cost, whether to live in a town or in the countryside; whether to build a new property or live in a traditional Quinta for example. These are factors estates agents can advise in selecting a property. Other factors, not so frequently asked, are those concerning safety and security – after all your investment is important as well as your wellbeing and quality of life.

Portugal is one of the safest places to live in Europe, but it is important to take safety and security into account when choosing a home. As we get older this is more important.

Safe Communities Portugal, using our experience, has developed the following safety and security checklist to help you ask the right questions in deciding your dream home. We hope you find it useful.

Location

- Isolated luxury properties tend to stand out, so it is important to consider security factors.
- Distance from police, ambulance and fire services need to be taken into account in emergencies.
- English is widely spoken in the Algarve, Lisbon and Cascais, but less so in more remote areas.
- Larger towns often have 24 hour farmacias, but less so in smaller towns or villages.
- Is there a wireless signal in the area for mobile phones?
- Is internet broadband available in the area?
- Overlooking the coast is very nice, but is there an issue with coastal erosion if the property is very close to the sea.
- If you require private security, is it available in your area with a speedy response time?
- Proximately to public transport including taxis in case you are without your own transport.

Environment

- The area maybe fine in summer months, but is there a potential flooding problem in the winter
- Proximity to gypsy camps as this can give rise to feelings of insecurity.
- Are there many neighbour's houses empty during certain times of, or most of the year?
- What is the crime level like in the area? Check with neighbours. The local bar is a good place to find out this sort of thing.
- If in the rural Algarve, check with the local GNR police, if their Safe Residence Programme operates in the area. This ensures a fast response to crime emergencies. Are there adequate police patrols in the area?

- Getting to know the neighbours is important especially in the rural areas. Do they appear friendly and welcoming to foreigners.
- Has there been any disputes between neighbours and the previous owner over access routes for example?
- Is there a potential forest fire risk in the proximity of the property?
- In coastal areas, in particular, check the impact of tourism and any associated nightlife in the area.
- Are there many beggars in the area or signs of graffiti?
- Does it feel safe to be out at night time?
- Likelihood of local support in an emergency.
- Do dogs cause a disturbance? This can be very common in the rural areas and this often leads to disputes with neighbours.

Property

- Does it already have adequate security measures, such as alarm system if needed, good quality doors and windows or will these need to be installed?
- In older properties it can be more difficult to fit wireless alarms due to thickness of walls.
- Is there adequate access to the property particularly in the event of an emergency, and would access routes be useable in poor weather?
- If you are designing a home to be built, ensure that security factors are considered and built-in where necessary.
- Ask estate agents and locals if the property has previously been broken into?
- Does the property have its own water supply? If not you will need to rely on a local water supplier.
- There are certain safety laws concerning wooden properties in certain areas – your estate agent should advise if this is being considered.

When purchasing a property only go through recognized and registered estate agents and avoid “middle men” where commissions may be involved.

Once you have purchased your property and before you think about moving in, check the following Safety measures:

- If there is adequate lighting in the building or villa and in the surrounding areas;
- Whether garages are adequately protected and with remote-controlled door opener systems;
- Consider whether you need to install a security alarm system.
- If your new residence is equipped with fire detection systems;
- Find out about the local GNR Safe Residence Program if there is one;
- When you settle in a new residence that has already had other residents, change the locks;
- Keep all copies of your residence keys in a safe place;
- Have safety chains installed on the outside doors;
- Seek out and get to know all your neighbours and cooperate with them in all common security aspects of the building, especially in apartment blocks;
- Check that you have property and household insurance and that it is adequate to cover your contents;
- Make a list of all electrical and valuable items with serial numbers and supported by photos;
- Install a good quality safe and ensure it is properly fixed to the wall/floor.
- Include in your telephone directory useful contacts such as Firefighters, Emergency Medical Services and Security Forces in your area so that you can contact them quickly in any emergency situation.

The above should not give rise to concern, but instead serve as a reminder that in any country and environment there is crime and matters that affect security. So it's important to ask the right questions and do thorough research before making that big investment.

Finally Safe Communities Portugal is pleased to help where we can. Please visit our websites: www.safecommunitiesalgarve.com and www.safecommunitiesportugal.com for further advice.

We welcome you to our community

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