

LATEST TRENDS

Changes to make the most of your home's light and space P3



ENVIRONMENT

Sustainability and efficiency down to the very last detail P6



MARKET

Advice when searching for a new home on the resale market P7

Construction, real estate and home improvements

PROPERTY

April 2020





Some Costa del Sol towns have seen considerable increases in numbers of new development property transactions. Shutterstock

GROWTH FIGURES. The Costa del Sol is still up among the top areas in Spain in terms of construction and property sales, despite the downturn in the market

Malaga keeps its finger on the pulse of construction despite the difficult times

MALAGA

SUR. While property, like all sectors, is currently suffering the effects of the health crisis, construction in Malaga has managed to weather the storm in recent months thanks to important developers' and marketing companies' commitment to the Costa del Sol.

In general, new development property transactions have shown better behaviour on the market than resale ones. This is apparent in data and statistics provided by the Ministry for Public Works and Development which reflect, as can be seen in the figures for the first nine months of 2019, a smaller decrease in new property transactions compared to sales of resale properties in the province of Malaga.

Where the provincial capital is concerned, according to figures from Malaga City Hall, the city has more than 5,000 new development properties on the market. Many of these buildings are located in the Teatinos and Puerto de la Torre districts, currently the driving force behind the city's property market, with more than 55 per cent of the

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total offer.

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Where employment within the property sector is concerned, 33,900 jobs have been created over the last five years and 88 per cent of the workers in this field are active, according to the data relating to 2019.

Sales up last year

Likewise, in Marbella, Manilva and Estepona new development prop-

erty transactions saw considerable growth, with increases in numbers of transactions of 80, 37 and 25 per cent respectively. These figures take into account the accumulation of the first three quarters of last year compared to the same period in the previous year. During this time, Marbella went from 134 transactions to 240; Manilva from 179 to 245; and Estepona from 201 to 245.

In terms of the number of completed sales, according to the National Statistics Institute a total of 46,927 transactions were closed across the country in January, which reveals a 35 per cent improvement compared to December last year.

Andalucía was the region responsible for the greatest portion of these transactions, with a total of more than 9,500. Catalonia came second with 7,179, followed by the region of Valencia with 6,485 and Madrid with 6,181.

Nevertheless, due to the current crisis situation, the experts say that they are completely unable to predict how the market will behave in the coming months, as spe-

cialist portal Idealista.com has pointed out.

Regarding the year-on-year evolution, and despite the fact that the overall market showed decreases, some regions have registered strong growth in transactions such as the Canary Islands and Murcia, while Andalucía, Aragón, Navarra and La Rioja have also seen increases.

With relation to foreign buyers, the same report by Idealista confirmed that the coastal provinces continue to attract the most interest from people from abroad as usual. Malaga ranked fifth in the list of preferred locations at the end of the year, at 27.2 per cent, beaten only by Alicante (42.3 per cent), the Balearic Is-

lands (35.1 per cent), Santa Cruz de Tenerife (30.7 per cent) and Girona (28.3 per cent).



Freepik



Real estate websites remain active. Freepik

House hunting and buying in times of coronavirus

The health and financial crisis caused in Spain by the coronavirus has paralysed thousands of property transactions. The only sales that will be signed before a Notary during the lockdown are those involving a mortgage deed which are considered to be extremely urgent. Nevertheless, as El Idealista explains, for those hunting for a new home it is a good time to contact vendors and clear up doubts or queries regarding properties they may be interested in.

The real estate website stressed that companies dedicated to property sales remain fully operational in digital format, so all their benefits (photos, descriptions, details, etc.) can be used to carry out an exhaustive analysis of available properties. While it isn't currently possible to go for a viewing, prospective buyers can contact vendors and ask questions regarding the

information not included in the advertisement.

El Idealista suggests that anyone really interested in a property can progress with the purchase process by applying for a *Nota Simple* certificate from the Property Registry and finding out about community fees and whether there are any existing or planned extra fees, among other things. Likewise, it is worth remembering that, if the purchase is to be made without a mortgage, it is possible to avoid signing at a Notary as property transactions may be carried out under a private contract which can later be made public before Notary. However, this option provides fewer guarantees and security than an agreement made between two parties with Notary intervention, but can be a temporary solution until it can be raised to public deeds.

The eastern Costa

Although the figures are much more conservative, there is also good news for the eastern Costa del Sol.

One such piece of good news is that businessman Tomás Olivo has acquired land to build on in Rincón de la Victoria.

Although his investment trust company General de Galerías Comerciales (GGC), responsible for facilities like La Cañada, specialises in commercial centres, it has started to be active in the property market too.

In this manner, the investor has formalised the purchase of five urban plots for residential use in the town for 11 million euros.

The transaction was funded with the investor's own capital and is in addition to other investments Olivo has made in the area.

Altogether, the total investment amounts to 37 million euros and, according to the notice sent to the MAB (Alternative Stock Exchange Market), will allow for construction of 1,600 homes, some of which will be allocated to rentals.

Regarding general trends in the

construction sector and especially in the residential sector, in coming years the Official College of Surveyors and Technical Architects of Madrid (Coaatom) underlines the boost in 4.0 Construction, characterised by automation of processes, Big Data analysis, cloud technology or interaction with the Internet of Things.

Future trends

This concept seeks, through application of new methods and technologies, to transform property construction processes "to make them safer, more effective, efficient and productive".

On this basis, the trends in the world of construction range from reducing emissions to home automation, as well as making better use of almost forgotten rooms such as the bathrooms.

Moreover, new constructions attempt to allow for greater enjoyment of the outdoors with large windows to create very bright rooms that connect with terraces or, where no terraces exist, resemble them.

OPTIMISING SPACES. These days of confinement are revealing the need for renovations in many homes to modernise and improve rooms

The challenge of renovating your home so you won't want to leave it

MALAGA

SUR. Although the time never seems ideal to embark on renovations, the fact is that these days of confinement are revealing the need for renovations in many homes to update or optimise rooms, making them more efficient and comfortable.

According to the Habitissimo platform, Spaniards invest an average of 3,000 euros on occasional improvements to the home, and 60,000 euros on comprehensive renovations.

Of 42 per cent of those who chose to carry out improvement work to repair deteriorations or age-related damage, 74 per cent carried out a partial renovation, updating some of the rooms, and 26 per cent carried out a comprehensive renovation, changing every room in the house. The majority of those in the latter group had just bought the property and sought to personalise it. Regarding the most commonly renovated rooms, the majority are understandably kitchens and bathrooms, which tend to suffer the most wear and tear.

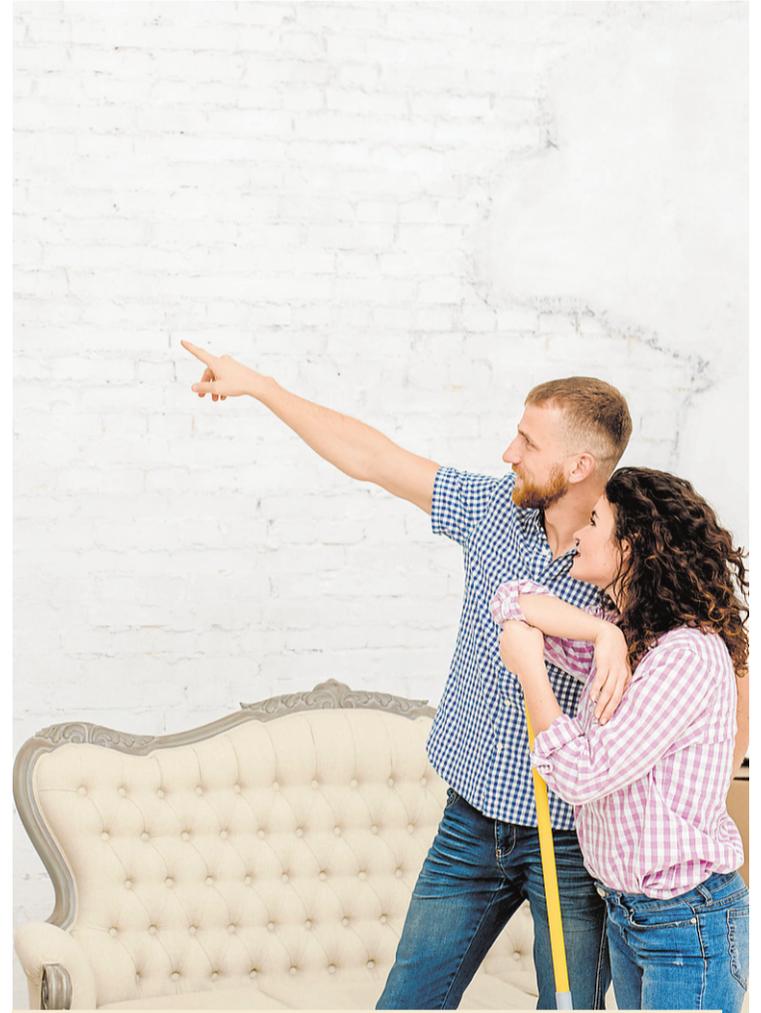
The 'Report on renovations and repairs in Spain' carried out by Habitissimo also reveals that other renovations that have started to grow in popularity are those related to improving energy efficiency and enhancing comfort, working on the air conditioning and heating or the insulation of the home. Environmental awareness together with state and regional grants to improve energy efficiency favour a demand for this type of work, which has trebled in recent years.

Renovation trends

Although the trends in this sector do not fluctuate as much as they do in others, the experts stress that this year nature will take a starring role. Therefore, those choosing to carry out renovation work will opt for clean, open spaces with few excesses or artifices. A minimalist touch in harmony with natural materials and lots of natural light.

Where distribution of space is concerned, open-plan solutions remain predominant.

Kitchens that open up onto the living or dining-room, which aim not only to enlarge the rooms but also to favour family relations. Plus, by eliminating unnecessary



Where style is concerned, simplicity and minimalism are key. Freepik

dividing walls, more metres of space are gained and the home's illumination improves.

And still on the subject of light and open spaces, it is becoming common to opt for glass walls and sliding doors. As well as providing a feeling of greater spaciousness, these separators become not just necessary elements for the distribution of the home but also aesthetic and decorative features.

In terms of bathroom renova-

Large open-plan areas are predominant, with kitchens open to the lounge or dining-room to enlarge the rooms and favour family relations

tions, straight lines are predominant, both where taps and basins are concerned. As specialist publications explain, this trend aims to provide greater purity to the space, seeking a symmetry between the sanitary fittings and the furnishings.

A combination of textures is also sought on both the walls and the floors. Walk-in showers continue to be more popular than bathtubs.

Where renovation work on walls and floors is concerned, it's worth noting that this year there is a tendency to return to traditional shapes. However, the ornate is eschewed and the trend places wooden panels and simple decorations at the fore, also combining textures.

Finally, in addition to natural light, artificial light becomes particularly important with lamps, lights and other illumination systems which are as necessary as they are decorative. In addition to these strategic illumination points, backlighting can be added to the furniture to further improve aesthetics.

COMMITMENT TO THE SECTOR. GILMAR Real Estate's solution to 'normalise' real estate investment in a situation as exceptional as this one

Gilmar Real Estate: digital 'normalisation' of real estate investment

MÁLAGA

SUR. With almost four decades of experience in the real estate sector, GILMAR Real Estate is proving the value of combining common sense, solidarity and the latest in technology applied to real estate marketing in such an exceptional situation.

Common sense because more than 30 sales offices in Madrid, Andalucía and the Canary Islands were closed as soon as the authorities declared the quarantine: "In a historical moment such as this, common sense is the best weapon we have with which to defend ourselves against this pandemic," they explain. "That's why we're sure that solidarity must rule over everyone's actions, from both a personal and a business point of view."

As Gilmar Real Estate points out: "companies also consist of people, and as people we have to think about taking care of ourselves to enable us to take care of others. As a company, we have 'read' the situation quickly. Years ago, we saw that the business model was going to change and we started to digitalise the company and our staff's training. By 2016 we were making 360-degree videos and '3D showcases', and we continue to incorporate any tools that speed up and improve the quality of the process, always keeping the people who contact Gilmar in mind.

"All 350 of Gilmar's consultants can accompany their clients online, from anywhere in the world, from any device, during the entire sales-purchase transaction."

Gilmar has more than 30 professional teams specialising in all the possible areas of the real estate sector. New development or second hand home sales and rentals, offices, hotels, retail, singular buildings, country property, land, mortgage management...

With 37 years of history, the company also provides excellent customer attention. "Not only do we accompany them during the entire process, we also make sure they're really happy in their dream home once they move in."

How can I get to know the house I'd like to buy without leaving my home?

When it comes to personalised attention, we of course use all the better-known technologies (video-calls, email, telephone, etc.) We also have a website with the greatest new development property of-



Home in Sotogrande (Cadiz). Gilmar

"All 350 of Gilmar's consultants can accompany their clients online, from anywhere in the world, from any device, during the entire sales-purchase transaction"



House in La Moraleja (Madrid). Gilmar

fering on the Costa del Sol, gilmaroffplan.com ; we use the most advanced online second hand home visualisation technology, a '3D display' with immersive experience and real images, and we can share the experience with our customers of 'viewing' the property and explain all the details they need to know.

Our website has more than 800 homes with this technology. The vast majority are in Madrid, but the experience can also be enjoyed with properties in places such as Cadiz, Seville or the Canary Is-

lands.

All the information is channelled through our main site, gilmar.es (Gilmar.es/en), where you can also find a 'webchat' with personalised attention.

Can I sign a sale-purchase with Gilmar without leaving my home?

The deal is closed with the signing of the purchase through a system which allows us to sign contracts remotely, with legal validity, and the only part of the other-

wise completed operation that remains pending is the personal signature before a Notary.

Gilmar also guarantees the correct document management of the deadlines for signing set upon formalising the reservation. Where buying new development property is concerned the process remains exactly the same. In the majority of cases, clients are buying 'off plan' many months in advance, so the client will have no problems with us.

For second hand homes, country properties or other larger scale

operations, since the State of Alarm was announced we have formalised sales-purchase operations online, providing the necessary legal framework to guarantee that the buyer's and vendor's interests are defended, the deadlines are followed, etc. until it's possible to sign in person at the Notary.

The latest technologies implanted by Gilmar allow us to maintain the same standards of information and close, personalised attention that have characterised this real estate consultancy for almost four decades.

IF YOU WANT TO BUY OR SELL YOUR HOUSE, *think of Gilmar.*

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and sale** of your property.

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NEWS. Sustainability has arrived in the construction sector and is set to stay, with more efficient materials and systems which are less harmful to the environment

'Green homes' inside and out - more than just a trend

MALAGA

SUR. Commitment to caring for the environment and a healthier way of living have gone from being an alternative lifestyle to a necessity which more and more people are embracing.

This revolution is affecting every single field, from nutrition, cosmetics and mobility to, of course, the home.

It's important to bear in mind that houses are, to a large degree, a reflection of the personalities of those who live in them and they also account for the majority of the water and energy they consume and the waste they generate.

According to studies, up to eight per cent of gas emissions in cities come from the buildings and the residential sector. A substantial portion which can, however, be reduced by investing in strategic elements which enable the saving of both energy and money.

Although it is now temporarily closed due to the health crisis, this year CasaDecor has already proved its commitment to sustainability. Not in vain, the most important interior design event in Spain, which serves as an 'idea lab' from which many of the latest trends appear, chose minimisation of environmental impact as the goal for this edition.

This, spokespeople have stressed, is in no way incompatible with harmony or functionality.

Sustainable materials

In order to improve sustainability point of origin, the 'green philosophy' of construction opts for materials that leave a limited footprint on the planet.

In the case of paint, for example, there is now a new generation of products that are made with low emission, aqueous components.

The market also has environmentally friendly paint which is free of VOCs (Volatile Organic Components), invisible particles which give off gases which are harmful to health and the environment.

One of these products is *Smart Anti Radiaciones*, a paint with high electrical conductivity which after application achieves a screening affect that reduces electrical fields and electromagnetic waves by up to 99 per cent, protecting any space from contamination caused by radiation such as telephone signals, 4G, WiFi, etc.

For the inside of rooms, *Smart Aire Puro*, with a chemical process similar to photosynthesis, absorbs



Latest generation thermostats allow for more efficient, pleasant spaces. Freepik

energy from light to defuse the harmful particles in the air, reducing pollution and smells and eliminating substances which are hazardous to health.

Where walls, floors and finishes are concerned, the trend for homes is to recover traditional materials such as porcelain, clay, brick or wood, insulating and reusable.

It's also important to opt for local or national products, selected under holistic criteria, from their production to their disposal or recycling.

Regarding textiles, natural or organic fabrics such as cotton, linen, wool or silk prevail. These long-lasting materials have properties which are very beneficial to the body, such as optimum ventilation. This creates cooler atmospheres, doing a lot to avoid dust mites accumulating and improving the temperature within the room.

Smart systems

As well as always choosing energy efficient household appliances, preferably in the A+++ category, a good way to invest in improving a home's sustainability is to opt

As well as smart appliances, there are also smart sockets available which improve household appliances' efficiency and their connectivity

for 'smart' appliances which are compatible with home automation systems. Fridge-freezers with 'holiday mode' and 'eco mode' which regulate the amount of energy they consume depending on their use, or that give notifications when the contents are nearing their best-before dates to ensure they do not go to waste; washing machines that can be programmed to run at the cheaper times of day and that measure out the detergent and select the programme automatically depending on how dirty the laundry is; or self-cleaning ovens and taps that control the amount of water used.

As well as the appliances themselves, smart sockets are also now available which can be automated allowing the appliances plugged into them to be controlled remotely through a voice command or a click on a mobile app.

Similarly, the latest generation thermostats achieve more efficient, pleasant spaces by adapting themselves to the circumstances, depending on the temperature, weather conditions and number of people in the room at the time.

An efficient, state-of-the-art automation which can also be used for lighting, with lights that can be turned on and off or programmed from a mobile phone and regulate themselves depending on the environmental conditions at any time, among other options.

As well as making our lives more comfortable, these

solutions allow for better management of the electricity and energy we use at home.

Likewise, by monitoring each of the functions within the home they allow for creation of smart homes which are efficient and connected, making the most of their capacities and not just saving energy but possibly even generating it.

Green certificates

In addition to the above, there are currently various different certifications to guarantee buildings' salubrity and efficiency, such as the BREEAM® (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) stamp, the world-leading method of evaluation of building sustainability.

This certificate examines the building for 49 requirements in 10 categories (Energy, Water, Materials, Health and Wellbeing, Transport, Waste, Environmentally friendly use of land, Pollution, Management, Innovation) and promotes homes that are healthy, efficient, and respect the environment.

Another very relevant standard is Passivhaus, a method based on constructing buildings that have great thermal insulation, rigorous control of infiltrations, and the highest indoor air quality, as well as making the most of the sun's energy for better temperature control, reducing energy consumption by up to 70 per cent compared to conventional buildings.

This concept does not involve the use of a particular type of product, material or architectural style.

It involves optimisation of the existing resources through passive techniques, such as a good form factor, for example, to reduce the surface area in contact with the exterior to lower the heating and air conditioning needs.

Also important is correct orientation of the windows to make the most of the heat of the sun when closed and natural ventilation when open, or fit solar protection to avoid overheating in the summer, etc.

In this manner, by combining passive and active techniques, the property will guarantee it meets the requirements for thermal comfort, salubrity, illumination and habitability of the home as well as being respectful of the environment that surrounds it.

While in any case the initial investment more than pays for itself throughout the property's lifespan, these homes don't actually necessarily come at a much higher price.



ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS. As well as considering the budget available, it is vitally important to examine the area the property is in and its surroundings

Thinking of buying a resale property? These are some of the key points to take into account

MÁLAGA

SUR. Buying a home is one of the most important decisions the majority of people will make during their lives, as it generally implies a commitment that will last for many, many years.

That's why it's vitally important to obtain as much information as possible and evaluate the different options available, comparing each detail to choose the home that best adapts to the buyer's priorities and true circumstances.

There are three main types of residential property available on the market: new build under construction or off-plan, completed new build and re-sale.

New homes still under construction (or off-plan) have their advantages, such as the price, as they tend to come cheaper than those which have already been built, and the condition they come in, as they are brand new. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is availability, as buyers have to wait for construction to be completed and for all the different permits to be approved by the authorities. Another thing to keep in mind is that the price is non-negotiable. The possibility of discovering hidden construction defects (finish, structure and habitability) is also greater.

These last two disadvantages are the same for new development homes which have already been completed. However, in this case they are ready to move into and usually do not require any renovation work.

Finally, the advantages of resale homes include their immediate availability, a price which may be lower or even negotiable in many cases, and a greater choice of location as they are not limited to new developments. However, the main disadvantage they come with is suitability of the distribution of spaces and the need for modernisation through renovation.

Factors to keep in mind when it comes to buying a resale property

When it comes to buying a house, the first thing we need to do is work out exactly how much money we have saved up to invest. The experts recommend that the maximum amount we should set as our budget includes the price of the property, the costs linked to the transaction and approximately 20 per cent for the deposit required



First of all, we must work out how much we have in savings available to invest in the purchase. Freepik

for the purchase.

Moreover, the monthly repayment installments for the mortgage should not be greater than 40 per cent of the buyer's usual income.

It's also important to carry out a detailed study both of the properties available on the market and the mortgages offered.

Once we've chosen the property, we must make sure it's in good condition. Regardless of whether or not we intend to carry out renovation work, it's important to check the quality of the construction; the finishes; the plumbing; the electrical installation and that the doors and

Resale homes come with advantages such as their immediate availability, a lower price and a greater choice of location

windows open well, close tightly and provide light and ventilation.

We must also bear in mind that over the years, a property's energy efficiency can help save a lot so it's vital to check what type of heating or air conditioning systems it has.

Moreover, in the case of an apartment, we must examine the building and the communal areas. Look out for cracks, damp spots, defects on the facade, the stairs or in the foyer.

When a property is located within an older building or has been empty for some time, the Consumers and

AND IF INVESTING TO RENT...

Location:

As specialist portal Finanzias.com explains, if the property is an investment it's important to choose low-risk locations, that is, places with high gross rental returns and a medium-scale investment risk.

Large populations:

It is also advisable to invest in locations with populations of more than 50,000 inhabitants where it will be easier to let the property and there will be a greater demand for rentals; not forgetting the revaluation of the area of interest.

Nearby areas:

Similarly, it's best to invest in areas you know, close to your place of residence, which will help reduce the need to employ a property manager.

Users Organisation (OCU) recommends a visit in the company of an architect or technical architect to detect any possible problems with the structures, framework, foundations or roof. These problems will have to be dealt with at some point if they exist, and could lead to significant extra costs.

It's also a good idea to check the property's situation in terms of town-planning. Ask the council whether there are any projects or plans, approved or under consideration, which could affect the property or its surroundings.

Likewise, to avoid pending payments and other unpleasant surprises, it's worth paying a visit to the property manager to obtain a certificate to confirm that all payments due to the community of owners are up to date. Buyers should also obtain a *Nota Simple* certificate from the Property Registry with details of any debts linked to the property such as mortgages or embargos.

It's worth remembering that if hidden defects, ie. serious imperfections which had gone unnoticed, are discovered after the purchase, the vendor can be required to repair them during the six months following the transaction.

If the property is not more than ten years old, it may even be possible to take legal action against the developer. Similarly, if the hidden defect makes it impossible to live in the property, the sales-purchase contract can be cancelled and the buyer can demand the payment be returned, including the purchase costs and damages if it can be proved that the vendor was aware of the defects.

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