

## How to Find a Plumber on the Costa del Sol

“Can you repair the leak in that water heater?” I asked the first “plumber” we’d called, pointing out the small valve on the suspended hundred-liter tank, and the bucket we had placed underneath it, which had been slowly filling with water.

“Well, I’ll have to empty the tank first to fix it,” he informed us, “And I’m afraid it will make quite a mess when I let all the water out.”

“Couldn’t we just shut off the intake valve, run hot water upstairs to empty it, and then take that piece off?” I asked innocently.



“Right, right, I hadn’t thought of that,” he replied in a distinctly northern English accent. “I haven’t actually sorted out the Spanish plumbing yet—it’s different than back home—but I wouldn’t mind having a go at yours. I could fix it for you tomorrow, if you don’t mind my learning on the job, so to speak.”

“Oh, you know what?” my partner Mike said, not missing a beat, “tomorrow we have to pick up family from the airport, and then we have a lot of sightseeing planned, so why don’t we just call you a day or so in advance when we know we’ll be home, and you can come by then?”

“Right, right, sounds good,” the alleged plumber replied, and we hustled him through the garage and toward his waiting car.

Later that day, we found another English plumber who knew exactly what the problem was and how to fix it with no sorting-through of the Spanish plumbing and no mess at all.

Most Spanish towns with an English-speaking population have numerous local magazines and guides with business listings. They are excellent sources of information, but be aware that a British plumber will do the same job as a Spanish plumber for about double or three times the price.

As we had more work done on the house, we learned that it pays to speak Spanish. We visited Spanish-owned plumbing supply and kitchen shops, learned new vocabulary words, such as grifo (faucet), bought what we needed, and then asked for a fontanero, or plumber—usually these stores have one in-house, or you will be supplied with phone numbers. And remember to ask your neighbors—one of ours drove us to a “to the trade” plumbing supply house that we never would have found on our own.

Even if your Spanish is not so good, when the plumber comes to your house, you need only show him the sink you’ve purchased and where you want it installed, and he will write out a price for you. He won’t have to “sort out” the Spanish plumbing, and should know how to empty a typical water tank.

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