

LOCAL

Why are homes so cold on the Costa del Sol?

When winter arrives and the temperatures drop many residents feel uncomfortably chilly at home, especially those who live on the coast

The humidity and minimum regulations regarding insulation in residential properties are two reasons people are shivering indoors

ANA PÉREZ-BRYAN | MALAGA

12 January 2018
16:53

No matter where you go in the world, the weather is always a popular topic of conversation: the heat, the cold, the rain, the wind.... come up in brief exchanges between neighbours.

These conversations are normally a matter of courtesy rather than based on reality, but the recent cold weather in Malaga has given residents and visitors a new slant on the subject: everyone has been complaining that their homes are cold. One question in particular always seems to be asked: how, in a place like Malaga and the Costa del Sol, which has such a lovely climate, can the houses be so cold and uncomfortable?

There are answers to this, of course, and one undeniable fact is that the weather is colder in winter and Malaga is no exception. In this province the coldest months are usually December and January, when the average temperature is about 12 or 13 degrees Celsius. It often feels colder than it actually is because of the relative humidity, which is higher on the coast than inland and gives that impression of 'bone-chilling cold' which is more acute in coastal towns.

Construction regulations

The second explanation comes from the president of the College of Architects of Malaga, Francisco Sarabia, who begins by agreeing "as a user as well as a professional", that houses in a large part of the province are not sufficiently prepared to cope when the temperature drops.

"The regulations for insulating buildings in areas with a warm climate are much less strict than in places where the winters are more severe," says Sarabia. He is referring to the Technical Building Code, to explain why a house in Burgos, for example, is not built in the same way as one in Malaga.

This legislation was modified in 2006, and it means that now "the minimum requirements for insulating a building are decided by climatic areas, whereas before the regulations were changed they were generic for the whole of Spain," he explains.

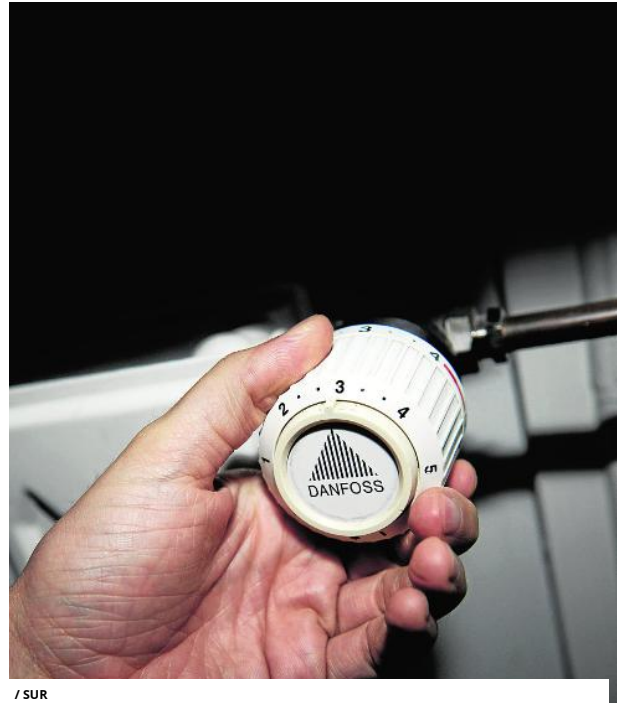
In other words, it is not surprising that properties which were built over a decade ago do not comply with the conditions which are obligatory in new buildings today.

"Nowadays, we have to incorporate insulation into the outside walls of properties built in Malaga. We always have to take the local climate into account," explains Francisco Sarabia.

In other words, the regulations with which the professionals have to comply when designing a house have to be adjusted to maximums of consumption - in summer and winter - so households do not need to use a great deal of energy in order to obtain a comfortable temperature.

'Cool houses'

This website uses its own and third-party cookies in order to optimise your navigation, adapt to your preferences and conduct analytical studies. By continuing to browse you accept our Cookie Policy [OK](#)



/ SUR

This also explains, for example, why on the Costa del Sol the requirements focus mainly on the heat, rather than the cold. In other words, buildings in southern Spain are obliged to bear in mind the criteria of keeping houses cool in the summer rather than warm in the winter.

Also, homes on the Costa del Sol do not use central heating to the same extent as in other areas of Spain and even Andalucía (such as Granada and Jaén) "because central heating is a complex and expensive installation and it would not be used much," says Sarabia.

On the other hand, and still following the criteria of geographical location, homes in Malaga do have to comply with other requirements, as he explains: "Here, homes are built to lose as little cold or heat energy as possible; properties tend to be designed with windows to the south so the sun comes in during the winter and also incorporate cantilevers to protect from the heat in the summer. North-facing walls tend to have few windows because a lot of energy is lost through them," he says.

Most people rule out the idea of central heating because it is so expensive and is not often needed in a climate such as that on the Costa del Sol, but many homes in this area do have air conditioning/heating units instead. These, together with other electrical appliances such as fan heaters, braziers or oil-filled radiators, are the most commonly used methods of combating low temperatures in homes.

The gas option

For several years now, especially since the liberalisation of the market in 2008, people in Spain have had the option of incorporating gas heating into their homes. This is considered the cleanest, least polluting and most comfortable source of energy. Its installation requires a gas boiler connected to a system of pipes through which hot water circulates and then provides heat via the radiators.

This option, however, is only available if the gas distribution network reaches the area in which people live, and it is not particularly widespread.

Information from Gas Natural Andalucía, the distribution branch of Gas Natural Fenosa, in Malaga province the network only extends to 14 municipalities (and is most used in Malaga city, Marbella and Rincón de la Victoria), covers 1,270 kilometres and provides a service to more than 280,000 people.

With regard to the demand for this method of heating the home, the same sources say that requests for the installation of domestic gas heating have increased by 20 per cent compared with this time last year.

A surprise to foreigners

It is a fact, then, that many homes in Malaga are cold and it isn't only the locals who are complaining: foreign residents, especially, say they are surprised and so do people who come from other parts of Spain where the weather is harsher but homes are better adapted to the climate.

One such case is Svetlana Bagdasarova, a Russian woman who moved to Estepona with her four children six years ago. She thought she was escaping from the cold in Moscow, but paradoxically found that the Costa del Sol in winter was not what she expected.

"At this time of year the house is freezing. The problem is that it is very big and it costs me more than 1,000 euros a month to try to heat it. It's awful!" she says.

Inés Vidal found herself in a similar situation when she moved to Malaga over 20 years ago. She comes from León - a province which is often very cold - and was accustomed to the comfort of heating in her home. She remembers as if it were only yesterday that one of the first things she noticed when she arrived here was the temperature of her home:

"It was colder inside the house than outside in the street. I bought a heater and used to huddle over it. When I walked into another room my glasses used to mist over because of the change in temperature," she says.

© Prensa Malagueña, S.A.

Prensa Malagueña, S.A. Companies Register of Málaga, Volume 173, Book 814, Page 173, Sheet MA-652, 1st entry. C.I.F.: A-29115672. Registered office in Málaga, Av. Dr. Marañón, 48. Contact email: surinenglish.su@diariosur.es

Copyright © Prensa Malagueña, S.A. - Málaga. Includes content from the company, the media group, SUR, the newspaper of Malaga and, where applicable, from other companies within the group or third parties.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES:

It is prohibited to reproduce, distribute, make available, communicate publicly and use in whole or part the contents of this website, in any form or way, without previous express authorisation in writing. This includes simply reproducing it and/or making it available as a summary, comment or press review for commercial purposes or those which are directly or indirectly lucrative, which is expressly forbidden.