

## ROLES OF THE DIFFERENT SPANISH POLICE FORCES

The Spanish police are essentially composed of three forces - the Guardia Civil, the Policia Nacional and the Policia Local.

### **Guardia Civil (Civil Guard)**

The Guardia Civil are Spain's conventional police force who are organised along paramilitary lines and controlled by the Ministry of the Interior. The Guardia wear green uniforms. They have wide ranging responsibilities for national law enforcement and have the resources, powers and facilities of a normal police force. They are now generally admired within Spain for their high level of discipline and professionalism. Whilst they are a military force with military ranks, in peace-time they act under the civil authority. The remit of the Guardia Civil is to police rural areas and towns generally under 20,000 people. They also police Spain's highways and are often seen on motorways and other roads doing speed and document checks, enforcing traffic violations and supervising traffic accidents. If you suffer a crime or need police help in a rural area of Spain it is the Guardia Civil who will attend.

### **El Cuerpo Nacional de Policia (The National Police)**

This is the countrywide urban police agency of Spain. They are under the sole authority of Spain's Ministry of Interior. They are normally dressed in black uniforms with white shirts but can also be seen wearing navy blue military style uniforms. There is also a considerable sized plain clothes force. Like the Guardia Civil they are a conventional police force, albeit they have civil rather than military ranks. The Policia Nacional are responsible for Border Security and issue Residencia Certificates for anyone wanting to become a resident in Spain and the essential National-registry Identification number (NIE). If you suffer a crime or need help in an urban area (population usually over 20,000), it is the Policia Nacional who will respond. Their duties also include the security of the Spanish Royal Family and major Government figures.

### **Policia Local (Local Police)**

Sometimes known as the Policia Municipal, this is the force that is recruited, funded and controlled by the town halls or town council and is responsible to the elected mayor (Alcalde). They wear blue and white uniforms and really deal with only minor matters such as parking, local traffic control and bylaw issues. Spain has no real equivalent to the bobby on the beat. Some tourist cities/towns have a city/town funded subordinate force of uniformed security patrolmen sometimes known as Seguridad Ciudadano. They have no police powers but can support higher level police officers. Crimes are not investigated by the Policia Local and any serious matter is immediately handed over to either the Guardia Civil or Policia Nacional.