

**Staffordshire couple's Spanish dream turns into nightmare as fire destroys home - now they need 150,000 Euros**

Spain | February 12, 2021

A couple's dream of a new life in sunny Spain has become a nightmare after a house fire left them in need of tens of thousands of euros.

Former taxi-driver Paul Bailey and his wife, Debbie, grew up and worked in Stone before selling up and moving to Andalucía in February last year.

The pair, who have appeared on Channel 4's *A New Life In The Sun*, were planning to open a luxury bed and breakfast in Alhaurín el Grande in the region's Malaga province.

But their hopes were shattered within weeks of arriving, when a fire brought to light a termite infestation which has made their two-floor property a structurally unsafe fire trap.

Their 50,000 euro renovation budget has been swallowed up as they battle to raise 150,000 euros to rebuild their home.

Problems had beset the couple from the start.

Three weeks after arriving in Spain, Paul lost his dad and a week later, on March 20, his and Debbie's new home was in flames.

The 42-year-old said: "We were having a fire in the fireplace downstairs to keep warm. After two hours I put it out with water to make sure it was safe.

"I was upstairs and I heard the next door neighbour running around the garden screaming 'smoke, smoke, smoke' and 'fire, fire, fire' in Spanish.

"I went outside and she said her house was full of smoke.

The couple had hoped to open a bed and breakfast on the second floor of their Spanish home

"I showed her I put the fire out, but there were hot embers falling down the chimney. There was a broken mirror on the floor so I used it to look up the chimney and it was like an inferno. The whole roof was on fire."



The fire revealed their home was riddled with termite damage, which they say the previous owner had gone to great lengths to hide.

Paul said: “He had put an artificial ceiling in so we couldn’t gain access up there. The roof was on fire with no way of getting to the fire. We rang the fire brigade and it took them 40 minutes to locate the fire. A cowboy job had been done to the roof. He had half a job done and hadn’t had the chimney sealed or lined. I found a termite nest in one of the rooms.

The fireplace in which the fire started

“We found out all the timber in the house had been injected with petrol and diesel. We were lucky we didn’t all die that night.”

Forced to muddle through in rented properties for several months, the couple now live in the downstairs of their home, which Paul describes as a ‘building site’, adding: “The whole roof has to be replaced. The architect report said it was completely unsafe.

“We sold up everything we had. We had a really good life in Stone, now we have a small bathroom with a shower, no kitchen with proper plumbing and a concrete floor. We can get by, but it’s awful.

“It’s been one of the worst years of our lives. We are under constant financial pressure. To get the house and hotel finished we are looking for 130,000 to 150,000 euros.”

The house is riddled with termite nests and damages

In desperation, Paul and Debbie have set up a GoFundMe page.

Paul said: “We are very grateful for what we have received so far. It’s keeping our heads above water as in we can pay the bills for the next couple of months at least.

“With our mortgage, bills and living costs we need 2,000 euros a month to survive.

“After the fire we put an insurance claim in for 100,000 euros and we got 8,000 euros only because of the termite damage. We are looking for any help we can get.

“We love where we are, it’s just everything else has happened.”

“We now find ourselves living in a building site with a bill for 150,000 euros and the business is wrecked.”