

RTN Satellite feature by Bill Pole, August 2010



Your UK TV Questions Answered - Part 1

Welcome back to RTN's series of monthly features about the world of British TV here on the northern Costa Blanca. Last month we covered Sky Plus and Sky HD, and I invited your questions about what we've covered so far (or anything else) to be answered this month. Thank you all for your positive response, and I hope I've been able to help. Excerpts from emails requesting help (and their answers) follow below...

Mr Smith writes:

- 'We live in Javea and currently have a 2.4m dish and a Sky digibox. We were getting the warning notices about changing our card, then we eventually lost some of the channels. We are only interested in receiving the free to air channels but it is most of these that seem to have gone so it seems that we have to do something. Having read the blurb on your website it seems that a Freesat box with a hard-disk might be the most suitable for us. The channels we current view are: BBC1, BBC2 (when we can get it), ITV1, ITV2, ITV3, ITV4, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky News, EuroNews. We would be obliged if you could advise us as to what is the best solution for us.

Answer: We can suggest two options for you to keep you going on free channels:

A replacement white FTV card for Channel 5, Fiver, Five USA and the +1's, bought and activated locally for a one-off fee. You can also get the card direct from Sky more cheaply, as long as you don't mind hiding the fact that you'll be using it in Spain. Card activation is also down to YOU when you buy direct from Sky, whereas most locally sold cards come pre-activated, or are activated onsite by the satellite engineer as part of their charge.

A FreeSat receiver, as you mentioned. There are various types of Freesat receiver available; standard definition, high definition, or high-def with recorder function. Even if you don't have an HD-Ready flat screen TV, the high-def boxes can be connected via scart, enabling you to replace your TV in your own time. HD channels on Freesat are free, whereas Sky charge an additional £10 a month for HD, *on top of* a premium package charge.

Local installation, setup and demo are included free with all our FreeSat boxes. To see a list of channels available via FreeSat, go here:

www.radioandtelly.co.uk/freesatchannels.html

Ms Ross writes:

- I was interested in your article in the RTN today. We have had a Spanish TDT box for some time. As you will know(!), UK TVs are cheaper than here, and we would like to know if a TV with built-in freeview bought in the UK would work for Spanish TDT?

Answer: Simply put – yes, it will! Freeview is the name for the UK version of digital terrestrial TV, but the defacto standards are identical to the Spanish digital terrestrial system. What you WILL need to do when you arrive with your UK TV is to wipe off all the old Freeview channels and perform a fresh channel scan, to get all the local and national digital channels available in Spain. Don't expect many channels to appear until the scan gets to around 65% completion. After that, the channels will start to pour in, if your aerial has been set up correctly!

Mr Furzer writes:

- I have a FreeSat system with a Humax HDR box, I am able to load BBC iPlayer and then I select and click on a program, after this the screen stays in "Loading" and the nothing more happens. I have ADSL speed of over 2meg. Do you know of any restriction watching iPlayer here in Spain via the FreeSat system?

Answer: I can only assume that the same restrictions apply to Freesat as to PC-based versions of iPlayer. Because iPlayer is the brainchild of the BBC, which in turn is paid for by the licence fee in the UK, the BBC restricts viewing of iPlayer to the UK by means of scanning your internet router's IP address. This is a unique address specific to your ADSL router, and will tell the BBC that you are not in the UK. As such, all these services are not available to you. One solution is to pay a small monthly fee to use a 'proxy' server, which is a UK-based server that all your connections will route through in future. This means that the BBC's IP scan will come back ok (as it appears that you are UK-based) and so you will have unrestricted access to iPlayer, as well as other UK-only content such as 4OD (4 On Demand) and 'Demand Five' from Channel Five. Prices for proxy servers from around a fiver per month. Google the term for more info...

Finally this month, Tommy writes:

- I live in Torrevieja and have had a Turkish 1.9m dish installed (I'm sorry to say) by one of your cheaper Spanish rivals just a few months ago, before I got to hear of you. I had reasonable reception until recently, then my picture started to break up during the evenings. Some channels such as Sky One and Sky News seem fine, but BBC Two is no longer available at any time of day, and BBC One and ITV fade around 6pm and don't return all evening. I've tried calling my original installer, but he seems to have disappeared or is ignoring me – so much for my guarantee! Any help or advice appreciated. I have an Invacom single-port LNB and the cable is normal TV co-ax.

Answer: I'm sorry to read that you're having problems and appear to have been taken advantage of... Some pop-up-and-disappear-overnight 'cowboys' make our lives (and reputations) as genuine installers very difficult!

Big dishes for UK TV are the size they are because we are trying to collect every stray ounce of signal aimed at the UK. This makes them very sensitive too, and any slight mis-alignment can cause these weaker channels to break up or disappear. The fact that you have a) a Turkish dish, b) a single-port Invacom LNB and c) normal TV co-ax rather than specialist sat cable all conspire against you in terms of quality. Our materials are higher quality (and more expensive) for a very good reason. We only use Famaval Portuguese dishes with a 3-year guarantee, and we use platinum / titanium grade digital sat cable on an Invacom TWIN-port C-120 LNB. This increases our trade price for a dish system by over 200 euros, which is reflected in the retail price. In this game, you really do get what you pay for, as these high quality materials can make *all* the difference!

Unfortunately, you are also well outside of our operating area – we cover the northern Costa Blanca between Gandia and Altea, as well as 20-30km inland... You would need to find a local firm to help you. Go by recommendation, rather than a random name out of the paper that you've never heard of...

That said, there ARE various things we can advise you on to help get you back up and running quickly and cheaply. You say your reception used to be 'reasonable'. Let's work back towards there as a starting point. Firstly, visually check the LNB feed-horn (the tube attached to the LNB in the centre of the tripod on the front of your dish) for insects – wasps and spiders LOVE feed-horns as they are dry, dark and warm – perfect for nest-building! Next, stand behind the dish, and look for trees or plants which might be obstructing the 'view' of the dish. Every square centimetre of surface area matters! The amount of times we see trees, plants and even walls partially obscuring a dish never fails to amaze me. Lastly, you would do well to have your alignment checked by a local professional. Dish alignment, dish warp, LNB focal length, LNB skew and base stability are all checked as standard when we align a dish using our professional tools. Furthermore, we have a 'no fix, no fee' policy on all our work, and won't charge you a CENT unless we can dramatically improve things for you. Try and find someone who can match all these promises and restore the good name of satellite professionals everywhere! You know what they say – if you pay peanuts, you'll get monkeys. And if you employ a cowboy, all you get is a load of bull!

Next month: more of your emails, comments and questions over the last few months answered publicly. Got a question that nobody can give you a straight answer on? Something useful to shout about? Please share it with us, and hopefully many more can benefit. Until then, stay happy and safe!

Bill Pole owns and runs the highly successful business, 'ConeXionS Digital Satellite Solutions' (based in Javea). Originally established in 1988, we are one of the longest-running and best known satellite TV firms on the northern Costa Blanca, surviving through success, customer loyalty and recommendation. Find out why our customers rate us #1 for installations, service, after-sales and pricing! Phone us today on (+34) 660 638 975 or visit www.conexions-javea.com for the latest news, info and special offers. Legal & licensed.