

## Vehicle security

Many times, we hear the expression “there was a look of utter devastation on their faces”. I thought that I understand this, but recently experienced it first hand and can guarantee that reading about it is nothing compared to the reality

Friends of mine in their late 60’s called me and asked for help; the voice on the phone was emotional enough, but even this didn’t prepare me for my visit. They had been burgled, their car stolen and were totally defeated. Thieves had lifted up a shutter, prised open the window and with a pole had hooked the handbag containing the house keys. Silently entering for only a few moments, they were away with cameras, mobile phones, a laptop and piggy bank. As the car keys were also available they stole off in the car

Violation of personal space, the loss of possessions, having no communication and no transport all in one fell swoop totally knocked the stuffing out of my friends who are both active in the entertainment industry and normally upbeat; devastated doesn’t come close

### Prevention against theft

What could they have done to prevent this? I guess that it depends upon how you wish to lead your life. A couple of years ago after visiting a customer living in a remote area, I realised that I had left something behind so went back only a couple of minutes after leaving. After unlocking 3 doors to get to the porch, the home owner handed me my glasses. Good God I thought, fancy having to live like that. The other extreme is leaving your front door open as we all think our parents did when reminiscing with rose coloured spectacles. The middle ground is where most of us sit

So what happened to the car? It was found abandoned on the hard shoulder of a motorway some hours later by the Guardia Civil. Visits to two Guardia offices, a few phone calls and several hours later, the car was located at a workshop where the grua had taken it. The grua company wouldn’t release the car without 250 euros being paid over, but that was just the start. One tyre had been knifed, the radio stolen and all of the electrics left on to flatten the battery, but worse was that the thieves had broken off the ignition key meaning that the spare key could not be inserted. Why; were the thieves concerned that someone else would steal it after they had abandoned it; who knows?

We got the car home and over the next couple of days repairs were undertaken to the car and my friends’ state of mind.

So how do we prevent our vehicles being taken? A statement of the blindingly obvious is to keep it locked at all times. This not only means when it is parked outside of your home, but also after you have filled up at the petrol station when the car is particularly vulnerable. After reading stories about handbags being stolen from passenger seats where the ladies routinely put them, you should lock the car whilst driving also. No I don’t have a handbag nor even a man bag, but my briefcase contains a lot of work. Imagine that you are stopped at traffic lights and a door or the

boot is quickly opened by a passing opportunist and you wave bye bye to your possessions. Even if you are quicker than Linford Christie or built like Mike Tyson, you will not catch them

### Greater precautions

Apart from this basic precaution, it then depends on how much trouble you wish to go to to prevent your car being stolen. Remember that if the robbers want your car, they will get it; just the same as they will break into your home if they are determined to do so. The best that you can do is deter them so that they move onto another target; selfish perhaps, but other peoples' cars are not your responsibility. Steering wheel locks that prevent the wheel from turning are a simple and very visible deterrent as are wheel clamps. Etching your registration number onto all of the windows makes it less likely that your car will be stolen and cloned as another car.

### Tracking

A major worry for my friend was whether he would ever see his car again. Whilst hanging around at the Guardia, I asked what normally happens in these cases; were cars never seen again, end up in rivers, set fire to, wrecked or just abandoned? The reply was any of the above! Not knowing where the car was caused a lot of concern; one way around this is to have a tracking device fitted. These are a discreet item that we have all seen at the movies when the cops are following the bad guys and know where they are at all times. They are also used by taxi firms and delivery and collection companies for example to see which the closest vehicle for the next job is.

All vehicles are vulnerable; my friends' car was quite old and no doubt taken as a means of getaway. Someone looking to get home after a night out when the busses have stopped running and the cabbies are all in bed means that a car that is easy to steal may disappear, so don't think that no one would be interested in your old banger. High value cars are often stolen to order and later cloned.

### Bikes

When I had my Kawasaki sports bike, I not only chained it to a very sturdy railing but also used "D" locks on the wheels. The chain could have been cut and the bike loaded into a van as often happens when bikes are stolen, but the deterrents worked for me

Incidentally, is your insurance up to date? It may be tempting in these hard times to skimp in this area, but my friends were glad that theirs was OK as the repairs, grua costs etc will be covered. How long it will take them to get over the trauma, only time will tell

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