

GOOGLE HOME @ YOUR HOME



Who in 1995 could possibly ever have guessed that a research project by two brainiacs from Stanford University would evolve into the behemoth giant called Google? The project (nicknamed 'BackRub') which focused on discovering which web pages would link to a specific page, i.e. today's "links", and began "web crawling" (searching) in 1996. "BackRub" was renamed "Google" and the rest is for the history books. Fast forward to 2016 and we find that this project has evolved exponentially: its new official name is "Alphabet", the company's headquarters, "Googleplex" is the corporate seat for more than 60,000 employees in 50 countries; its stock trades at about \$900.00, and the company now makes hundreds of products used globally...from **Google Search** to **YouTube** and **Android** and all their offshoots.

One of the latest products is **Google Home**, a voice-activated speaker powered by Google Assistant. What is it, what does it do, and should you own it?

This piece of hardware is a virtual secretary....you ask it questions, tell it to do things, supports multiple users, makes phone calls for you (currently only in the U.S. and Canada), get real-time information on traffic, weather, finance, sports and much more. Your verbal request can play your music, or access other media like "Spotify" or "You Tube". Through its personalization software it can help manage your schedule, set timers and guide your morning agenda...simply by recognizing your voice. Last but not least, it can connect to other smart devices so your voice can dim your house lights, set the thermostat to the ideal temperature, and turn appliances on or off.

For those keeping up with the latest devices, a visit to www.madeby.google.com will explain more in detail, while pro-Amazon fans will find that their "Alexa" system has some tough competition.

Is it a necessity? Probably not unless you have an overriding need, have a medical condition that could require immediate help, or just love gadgets....not available in Spain but can be purchased in other EU countries for €149/ £129. For years we have fantasized in sci-fi novels and comic books about devices like this and it has finally become reality. The "Google giant" has slowly - yet quickly - encompassed so much of our lives so it was to be expected that being part of our homes was inevitable.