

April 17th 2018, sun 19°

MONKEYTRAIL, ALSO FOR DADS

The first part of our next project, the monkey trail, is finished. A tree hut-cum-observatory, including stairs and climbing holds, designed by Mark and Teun. A pathway will be built through the valley behind Casarão Novo that offers everything children can do in and with nature:



climbing trees, building huts, sawing branches, swinging from ropes, jumping and clambering, anything. More work is still to be done. Therefore, fathers (and mothers) are cordially invited to help their children develop the monkey trail. Any ideas, suggested by yourselves or your children, are open for discussion. We'll supply the materials and the tools.

www.a-hill-of-your-own.com
www.montedocasarao.com

info@montedocasarao.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h82mYBohfc

The next **painting week** is from 4 - 11 october 2018. There are some places left.



www.montedocasarao.com/en/guestbook/painting-holiday-portugal/

Winners 2017

Bas and Margriet Fellingner with their daughters Loes and Mies have won our New Year's lottery. The Fellingner's response was: 'We are all jumping for joy.'



Looking forward to seeing you in October.

RAIN

It has been raining. And it has been pouring. The rain lasted for six weeks. Over 400 millimetres of rain have fallen since 26 February. The sun did shine occasionally, sometimes a few days in a row, but the rain kept coming back. We have never experienced this before. The Portuguese were not complaining. The land was parched. As early as in January, there were plans to ration the water. Luckily, that is no longer necessary: the reservoirs, even the big ones, such as Santa Clara and Alqueva are close to overflowing. Our own reservoir, too, is filled to the brim. The overflow can only just manage. Due to the force of the water the whole irrigation system for the vegetable garden had been washed away. It is now in the ditch next to the garden. However, by now the rain period appears to have ended. Last Monday the final showers fell and then the sun started shining. Just in time. The painting week started today and painting indoors is not what a painting holiday on Monte do Casarão is about. The



rain has ensured that nature is looking fresh and crisp, with plenty of orange, and purple and yellow and pink, and blue and white. What more can you want as a painter?

BIG LAND CLEARING OPERATION

Nobody wants another tragedy like last year's, when extensive forest fires killed dozens of people. 64 in June, 35 more in October. While high winds and scorching temperatures made it so much harder to extinguish the fires, the main obstacles were the inaccessibility of the seats of the fires and the badly maintained areas containing inflammable vegetation. The government has imposed harsh measures to render the land clean and accessible. Any village, town or private body that fails to comply with these instructions before 1 May, will face hefty fines. Everyone knows what to do, as this has been published in all the media. You even receive a personal mail about it.



It looks as if everybody assumes their responsibilities. Felling operations are under way (mainly eucalyptus and pine trees) and bushes are being trimmed or removed altogether. Any inflammable matter must be removed in a 5-meter perimeter around houses and buildings. In a 50-meter perimeter around houses and buildings, trees may not be taller than 4 metres and must be 4 metres apart, while the surroundings must be clean. Around villages, camping sites and industrial estates, a 100-meter perimeter is imposed. We, too, will need to fell some trees. Or rather, have them felled, for we cannot do that ourselves. That takes a specialist.

DEER

Deer have been sighted on Monte do Casarão. Two to be precise. If you live in the country, deer are nothing special, but to us it is yet another gift of nature. Deer had been sighted locally before, and occasionally one will be shot, but they have never been this close. During the past 200 years, there were no more deer in Portugal. Overhunting (partly due to the poverty and starvation in the last century), the disappearance of their habitat and diseases reduced their number to zero. In 1995, about a hundred deer were spread across the Serra de Estrela in the context of a reintroduction scheme. By now, there are about 3000 of them across Portugal, wandering towards Alentejo and Algarve. Add to this number the deer that cross the border from Spain and the chances that you will spot deer here are increasing. Now, I can only hope that I shall get to spot one, and that I happen to have my camera with me if I do. It took me eight years to spot my first wild boar. The picture is to follow, some day.



Nel