



16 December 2012, cloudy 18°

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## Early bird discount

This year, too, you can take advantage of the early bird discount. If you book for 2013 now, the 2012 will apply. The offer is valid up to 31 December 2012. The early bird discount applies to the painting weeks as well.

## Painting on the mountain 2013

Painting weeks on Monte do Casarão have been planned for **18 to 25 April** and for **3 to 10 October**.



More info:  
[http://www.montedocasarao.com/En/e\\_painting.html](http://www.montedocasarao.com/En/e_painting.html)

## 1. CHIMNEYS

It has probably struck you at some point that every house in the Alentejo and the Algarve boasts a chimney, and often more than one. They are all different: clean-lined or with all sorts of frills; white or brightly painted; rounded, square or cone-shaped; containing a weather-cock, a witch, or a dog, occasionally a length of wire netting has been added to keep out the pigeons. The Moorish past of southern becomes evident in many of the designs. Word has it that the Moors, when forced to convert by the Christians, built small minarets pointing towards Mecca on their roofs, so that they could continue to profess their faith. And many chimneys do actually resemble minarets. Many of the chimneys you see now, date from the 18th century. The wealth and status of the owner could be deduced from the shape and number. How the chimney would look depended on the answer the bricklayer received to his question: 'How many days do you want me to work on the chimney?' The longer he would be working on it, the more abundantly it would be decorated, and therefore the more expensive it became. Nearly all new houses and apartment buildings have chimneys as well. They no longer give any information regarding the owner's status. Maybe the antenna's satellite discs and sun boilers took over that function.



## 2. THE ALJEZUR MOSQUES

Architecture, sweets, gastronomy: five hundred years of Moorish civilisation is still perceptible in the south of Portugal. And palpable, too. Close to Aljezur, excavations have unearthed



the remains of the ribat al-Rihana (Arrifana), the monastic fort built around 1145 by warrior-monk sufi Ibn Qasî. Since 2002, the remains of no fewer than eight mosques have been found, as well as a minaret, a prayer wall, pots and metal weapons. In 2011, a bathhouse, tombs and an inscribed grave stone were found. Deciphering the inscription will yield new insights into Ibn Qasî's monastic community. If you'd like to have a look at the excavations,

you will immediately understand why the ribat was built on this spot, on top of the cliffs bordering the ocean. A better place to pray and meditate in all peace and seclusion is hard to imagine.

## 3. MUSHROOM WEEKEND

The Portuguese enjoy their food. And therefore, they take plenty of time for it. Moreover, eating is an important social activity. It is so important that weekends and even entire festivals are organised with the purpose of bringing a specific local delicacy to the attention of the visitors. In Aljezur, there is the sweet potato festival, São Teotónio hosts the festival of corn and beans, in Olhão you can visit the crustacean festival. Furthermore, there are the days of the mussel, the bacalhau, the pumpkin and the goat, on which the restaurateurs demonstrate their culinary skills. Last weekend, 7 to 9 December, was mushroom weekend: púcara, tortulho, cantarela, amanita. A mushroom workshop was on offer as well. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to go there. I Wish I could have, for Monte do Casarão is awash with mushrooms. It is



really frustrating to see them and not to know which ones are safe to pick. Recognition is direly necessary. Eating them is quite another matter. We will only do that once we are absolutely sure of our mushroom.

## 4. 2013

December again. Just Christmas and New Year to celebrate and 2012 will be a memory. It was a rather hectic and emotional year for us. Two sons got married, two daughters-in-law were gained. And Teun was born on September 20 a healthy and happy grandson. We had many guests, the painting weeks were magnificent again, Bob and Digna's festive week is worth repeating. Business is thriving, in spite of the economic slump. The best year ever. The prospects for next year are good, too. The most fun is when a number of people come here – with their loved ones – to celebrate something: a 40th wedding anniversary, turning 60...



This was the last newsletter of 2012. That only leaves me to wish you Merry Christmas and a very happy 2013. I'm off to the Netherlands for a week, to cuddle Teun.

*Nel*