



September 6, 2009,
sunny, 29°C

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Beyond the bustle



The summer holidays are nearly at an end. We'll have a full house for another week or so and after that things quiet down. We had really lovely guests (and cherish the pictures, letters, drawings, presents and e-mails) and the first bookings for next year have arrived.

If you'd like to read about our guests experiences (mostly Dutch) click on

http://www.montedocasarao.com/En/e_guest_book.html

1. PERSEIDS

The sky over Monte do Casarão is incredibly beautiful. On moonless nights, you can see countless stars in full splendour, even without a telescope. Also, your eye can follow the path of the milky way infinitely. We've been gazing up quite a few nights.



Some weeks ago, we were given an extra: the Perseids. In August of each year, the Earth crosses the dust cloud in the orbit of the comet Swift-Tuttle. Tiny particles, most not much bigger than a grain of sand, enter the atmosphere at high speed leaving a light trail. The meteors/particles appear to come from the constellation Perseus, which is why they are called Perseids. Our guests enjoyed the spectacle too. We could hear *ohs* and *aahs* rising from each of *their own hills*.

2. OPEN SEASON

Portugal has strict laws for hunting, with regard to kinds, numbers, periods and days. Nevertheless, during open season, anyone with a permit can hunt anywhere. In order to prevent our estate being invaded by strangers bearing guns and towing dogs, shooting our live stock every Thursday and Saturday, we farmed it to the local hunting club. Only the (approximately forty) members of this club are



allowed to hunt among our mountains. The total area on lease, which the club must attend to, roughly amounts to 9885 acres. Practically, this means that we agree by mutual consent if and when they'll be allowed to hunt. We know every hunter, which yields excellent social contacts. The highlight is the annual party, to which the *proprietários* are invited as well. From 1 pm to the early hours, we can eat and drink. There is great singing of songs and

recounting of stories, in which the swine augment in size with each telling.

3. MIDDLE AGES IN SILVES

Silves, a town near here, boasts a rich history. In the 11th century, the Moor-dominated Xelb, as it was called then, prospered greatly. As the capital of Al Garb (the Algarve) it was the centre of arts and culture, where Muslims, Christians and Jews fraternised with each other. How life was in those not so dark middle ages you can find out for yourself during the Feira Medieval. In the narrow streets around the castle you'll find hundreds of stalls selling bauble, art, sweets, scents and spices



evincing an unmistakable Moorish influence. You can see, hear and experience all kinds of things. However, nothing beats walking around as a medieval person yourself. You can pick a suitable outfit and party along as a monk, troubadour, knight, harem lady or whatever tickles your fancy.

4. BIRD WATCHING

The swallows have left. I can hardly imagine they have already departed for Africa, but I really don't know *where* they are. It was a joy having them around and I spent quite some time observing them – in a fitting disguise. Dad and mum raised a total of nine nestlings. First there was a clutch of five, that all made it through adolescence. The second clutch had less success. Just after the eggs had hatched, the nest fell down. One birdie didn't survive.

A few weeks later, another one didn't come home.

Safe journey, swallows. Hope to welcome you next year.



Nel