



**November 6, 2009,
sunny 24°C**

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

info@montedocasarao.com

Prices 2010

The rents for 2010 have been established. If you book before January 1st, you'll get a 2.5% discount. We have special rates for winterers, depending on your wishes and how long you'd like to stay. We'll be happy to tell you all about it.

*Dear Frits,
We've chosen a beautiful olive tree on your behalf, overlooking the valley and entrance road. We'll care for it with love and dedication.*

1. THE WEATHER

Corny though the subject may be, the weather is an important selection criterion for choosing a holiday destination. Being able to enjoy sunshine and nice temperatures add greatly to the ultimate holiday feeling.

Here, we always have really nice weather. Even now, in the first week of November. We are still scantily dressed. When watching the weather forecasts, just pay attention to the bit below far left on the map of Europe. Even though travel guides claim that



the Alentejo has hot summers and cold winters, the weather in the coastal area, the Alentejo Litoral, is determined by the Western Atlantic Ocean. That entails a nice, cooling breeze in the summer and a mild climate during winter. About eight months a year the average temperature exceeds 23°. In January and November, it tends to rain for a few days, but then, we need the water. You won't hear any complaints from us.

2. ELECTIONS

Since we officially emigrated to Portugal, we're allowed to vote for the local elections. We have numbers 12, 13 and 14. Obviously, not a large amount of foreigners are registered here, or else they don't use their vote. We voted for the party that supports the current mayor, as it is impossible to vote for an independent candidate. De mayor is a fine man, who is kindly disposed to the town and the people he governs. He's starting his fourth term of office. What more do we need to know?

The polling station is as boring and dreary as anywhere else, whether it be in the Netherlands, Afghanistan or Portugal is. Really, would no one have hit upon the idea to cheer things up a bit? Ever? Being *allowed* to vote is abundant reason to throw a party, isn't it?

If you'd like to find out more about the Portuguese (national) election results and those in other EU countries,



you can access the highly informative site www.parties-and-elections.de

3. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What I find enormously fascinating here is naming. Whether it be a house, a village, a hill or a valley: everything has a name that triggers your curiosity about its underlying history. How about Mary Vinegar? Poorly Washed? Witchery? Superfluous Mountain? Pillory up There, suggesting the occurrence of a Pillory down There? Driving from São Teotónio to Monte do Casarão, you first pass through The Hovel, then through the Gorge of Hell (thus named because bad weather turns really foul there) and Purgatory (where two sisters used to live who were accused of witchery).

Then you have Internecine Struggle, Dump and



Suspicion. Luckily, you also pass the New House of the Cross, Holy Barbara and Happily Married; some compensation for all that doom and despair.

Casarão means Large House. Nothing special. I don't think we should mind.

4. WELL O WELL

Eating the yield of the land is not that simple here. Twice, we tried to start a vegetable garden alongside the house. Twice we failed miserably. The dry, hard soil full of rocks and the blazing sun put paid to our efforts. We knew there had once been a large vegetable garden at the back of Monte do Casarão, by a creek (that falls dry in the summer) and nicely sheltered by bushes and trees. And overrun by bramble. Metres high. We decided to restore the garden. It will take some more time, but never mind.

Once we cleared part of the bramble, we were happily surprised to discover a fig tree and a medlar (picture top left). We also came across a four metre deep well that our neighbours say is at least a hundred years old! We can even draw water from it that (once all the rubbish will be cleared) is actually potable!



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