



**December 2nd 2010,  
sunny 17°C**

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[www.a-hill-of-your-own.com](http://www.a-hill-of-your-own.com)  
[info@montedocasarao.com](mailto:info@montedocasarao.com)

### Painting on the hill 2011

From April 21 to 28 and from  
October 6 to 13,  
we'll once again organise painting  
weeks at Monte do Casarão.  
You can find more information on  
our website.



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

### Rates 2011

The 2011 rates are now on our web-  
site. As from June 1st 2010, the IVA  
(VAT) was increased by 1%.

This increase has not been passed  
on to our guests. As from January  
1st 2011, the IVA will be increased  
again, this time by 2%. The total tax  
increase has been incorporated in  
the 2011 rates.

You can still profit from the old  
rates. Until December 31st, you can  
book a stay in 2011 at the 2010  
rates. Obviously, this applies to the  
painting weeks as well.

## 1. LISBON RETURN

From April next, Dutch airline Transavia will fly  
to Lisbon. As it is a new destination, they will  
sell tickets at really low prices. If you use your  
AirMiles as well, you might grab a ticket for less  
than 100 euros. Which is good news. Many of  
our guests enjoy a few days in Lisbon before or  
after their stay here.

It is/continues to be a wonderful experience to  
room that city, especially if you take Susie  
Boulton's *DK Eye Witness Lisbon* guide with  
you. One reviewer on Amazon felt better for  
leaving the guide in the hotel room, but the  
other sixteen reviewers were really enthusiastic



about it. Cur-  
rently, the pa-  
perback edition  
is only for sale  
second-hand,  
but a new hard-  
back edition will  
be available  
from April 1st  
(not a joke).

## 2. SEA SALT

Portugal used to be one of the most successful  
salt producers in the world, but now only 10  
percent of the saltpans is used commercially.  
Some of them lie in the scenic area Reserva  
Natural Ria Formosa, a beautiful nature reserve  
between Faro and the Spanish border, full of  
storks and flamingos. There you can also find  
salt producer Necton.

Necton is the brainchild of two biotechnology  
students who in 1994 received a grant to exam-  
ine how to bring the natural resources of Portu-  
gal to the attention in Europe. The old, ne-  
glected saltpans in the Algarve caught their  
eye. The Algarve was synonymous with tourists,  
tourists stood for souvenirs and salt was a  
beautiful and easy product. By now, Necton  
exploits 17 acres of saltpans, has buildings  
(such as a laboratory and storage) take care up  
almost 13 thousand square feet and offers a  
large number of products. The salt is still pro-



duced in the traditional way dating back 2000  
years; its ingredients being sea, sun, wind and  
a lot of manual labour. All this won't do them  
any harm. The project has already won many  
prizes, including the Slow Food Award.

## 3. GUERRA LUSO-NEERLANDESA

Setúbal, you can find saltpans too, but they no  
longer amount to much. However, until late in

the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Setúbal was the main centre  
for the production and transit of salt, which at  
the time was of vital  
importance as a pre-  
servative.

From the 16th until  
the 18th century,  
there was even a  
regular salt route  
from Setúbal to the  
Netherlands. During  
that period, the  
Netherlands and Por-  
tugal were regularly  
at war over the Por-  
tuguese overseas  
territories. Macau,  
Mozambique, Ceylon,  
Angola, São Tomé,  
the Maluku Islands: the Dutch saw opportunities  
(read spices, gold slaves) in the riches of the  
Portuguese colonies. The Brazilian territories  
were conquered by the Dutch as well.  
The Portuguese had to pay an unprecedented  
steep price for the restitution in 1661: a tenth of  
the sugar yield was for the Netherlands as well  
as a monopoly in the wood trade. Also the Neth-  
erlands kept its influence on the slave trade. To  
top it all, Portugal was obliged to supply salt  
from Setúbal for no less than seventy years. All  
in all it was a mega-deal worth 4 million cru-  
zados, which equals about 500 million euros.



## 4. SQUARE POTATOES

Our third attempt to lay out a vegetable garden  
may be called reasonably successful.

To do Wynand justice, 'our' is not entirely appro-  
priate. Like a third-world farmer he hacks open  
the hard ground, takes out stones, spuds up  
weeds and the all-pervasive blackberries and  
tries to create something resembling soil.  
Thanks to his efforts, the tomatoes, courgettes,  
gherkins and peppers do well. The melons are  
small but tasty. Otherwise the produce is poor:  
all told, we have one meal of haricot beans, 4  
(tiny) heads of endive and 12 mange-touts.

You can only feel  
sorry for what has to  
grow in the soil: the  
potato harvest, which  
we optimistically esti-  
mated at fifty kilos, is  
not even one kilo and  
consists of square  
marbles and indented  
ping pong balls. The  
onions, slightly larger  
in number, have the  
shape of small  
Jugendstil vases and  
the radishes are in-  
edible.

Never mind: better  
luck next year. With a little luck from heaven  
we'll eat Brussels sprouts this winter. And curly  
kale. We have already tipped off our Dutch  
guests to bring smoked sausage.



Nel