



March 2nd 2011, sunny 18°C

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www.a-hill-of-your-own.com
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. Some places are available for people who live in the neighbourhood and only wish to take part during the **daytime**.

info@montedocasarao.com or
http://www.montedocasarao.com/En/e_painting.html

New year's raffle

As usual, we drew lots on January 1st. The **Zuidland family** from **Rosmalen** turned out to be the lucky ones. Congratulations, Garry, Annette, Sam, Job and Rosa! We'll see you back in May.

www.montedocasarao.com/Nl/n_winners_2010.html

1. ONOTHER NEW YEAR

Time flies. It certainly does here, in the Alentejo. It feels as if 2011 only just started, but I feel I can hardly wish you a happy new year by now. Then again, why ever not? Ten months still lie ahead. Happiness lies in little things. The first swallow pair has returned to Monte do Casarão. On January 27, we saw the



male, and the female followed a few days later. I'm really pleased they have both survived the crossing once again. Chattering loudly, they fly into and out of the garage. You can tell they are happy their old nest is still there. They sleep in it huddled together, as the nights are still quite cold. In the next few days, the nest will get a spring cleaning, after which the first eggs of this year will be laid.

The Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds has proclaimed the barn swallow (which is the bird I'm referring to) bird of the year 2011. In the Netherland the barn swallow is on the Red List. In Britain, its status is *least concern*. Still, if you live in the country, you might be able to help them nesting or provide emergency relief when a nest has fallen. You can find more information on the RSPB website.

2. OUR JOHN DEERE

Our extensive searches have paid off: we have a tractor. A 1987 John Deere, 4WD, 62 hp. A tractor was high on our list of priorities. We have plenty of use for it. Finding a good second-hand proved to be quite hard. Portugal does not have much of a second-hand market. Everybody buys a tractor for life and drives it until



it falls apart. Through Internet auctions we ended up north of Amsterdam. Transport back home proved to be a piece of cake. Now, the men need to get in some practice at hill-starting and slaloming, and we still need one or two accessories as well. But then the work can really start.

3. THE CHANTARELLE

The chanterelle season is nearly over. We did know that chanterelles grow on Monte do Casarão – they are quite recognizable – but townies like us tend to be a mite careful. This year, we gave in to temptation. We picked them by the bucket. By way of precaution, we took our first harvest to our neighbour Maria. I also looked up *What to do in case of mushroom poisoning*.

So far, I have not been able to find a typically Portuguese recipe for chanterelles. 'Natural' is how the Portuguese like them best. Rinse the chanterelles thoroughly under the tap, pat them dry. Pour a generous splash of olive oil into the pan, bit of garlic, grind or sprinkle salt and pepper, add the chanterelles. Give them a goodish



fry. That's all. By the way, in the Netherlands, the chanterelle is on the Red List as well. In Britain, it is quite all right to pick them.

4. EVERY DAY IS PARTY DAY

The Portuguese love parties: *en famille*, local festivals, national feasts, with or without a theme, with or without a reason, there is always something to celebrate.

Every other year, São Teotónio celebrates a festival in June which lasts three weeks. This year, it will take place for the 15th time.

The entire village - young, old, native and foreign - is involved. All streets are decorated with secretly made bunting and rosettes as well as flowers.

By day, plays and concerts are performed, processions and demonstrations are held. At night, people dance in the streets, underneath the *mastro*, the

mast, while live music is played. The month of June has been chosen on purpose: the days are long, the temperature is fine, school holidays have not yet started. Any tourists that happen to be there join in.



To note in your diary:

March 5 through 8: Carnaval Loulé
April 25: Carnation Revolution Festivals, a.o. Odemira
June 10 through 30: Festival de Mastros São Teotónio
July 22 through 30: Festival Músicas do Mundo Sines
August 4 through 8: Festival Sudoest Zambujeira do Mar
August 7 through 15: Feira Medieval Silves

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