



September 14 2011, sunny 31° C

CONTENTS

1. Indian summer
2. Mastros de Promessa
3. Tête à tête, doublette...
4. Sofie

www.a-hill-of-your-own.com
info@montedocasarao.com

Agenda items

- Sept 16** Abseiling Ponte sol Posto Odemira
- Sept 17** Mastro de Promessa Flor da Serra S Teotónio
- Oct 6/13** Paintingweek Monte do Casarão

1. INDIAN SUMMER

You wouldn't tell from the temperature – still around 28 °C – but summer is well behind us. The summer holidays are over and everybody is back home. Only surfers visit the beaches now, and in the restaurants and shops things have quieted down considerably.

On Monte do Casarão, we can look back on the high season too. No children's voices in the pool anymore, let alone cannonballs, no cars pass our gates. Once again, a number of interesting people visited us. Familiar faces and new faces alike. They have undertaken a wide variety of activities: canoeing, surfing, horse riding, spotting dolphins. People have swum, walked and – very important – they have lazed away their days and enjoyed the nature, peace and space around them.

We are now making preparations for a wonderful painting week and for the guests who are due to sample the Indian summer. In October and November, even in December, the sun will continue to shine and temperatures can run up to around 30 °C. The days are getting shorter and the nights do get colder, but I have yet to meet a worshipper who minds that.



2. MASTROS DE PROMESSA

If your child was sent into war, or if a family member was ill, all you could do was hope for the best. In order to make hope more tangible, you could promise to throw a big party if all went well. That's how the Mastros de Promessa came into existence. The Portuguese wars being at an end, the Mastros de Promessa have become increasingly rare. Since we moved here four years ago, we had never taken part in one. Until recently.

The week before last, the owner of café Caçador in Casa Nova da Cruz redeemed his promise.



His son had recovered from a really serious car accident and his wife from a complicated operation. Everybody in the area was present at his Mastro de Promessa: young, old, neighbours, friends, aldermen and mayors, even the stranger who happened to pass by and wondered what was going on, stuck around and joined the festivities. Underneath the colourfully

decked out *mastro*, people were dancing, eating and drinking until dawn.

Later this week, another Mastro de Promessa is to be held at the café Flor da Serra. It seems as if this special tradition is being re-established.

3. TÊTE À TÊTE, DOUBLETTE...

... triplete, but, pointeur, donnee: all terms pertaining to petanque, the best known and most played type of jeu de boules. Jeu de boules (the collective name for all games with an iron ball) were brought to Galicia by the Romans and there they became boundlessly popular. Present-day petanque originates from the Provence in 1907, and with 17 million (whether or not regular) players it is the French national sport.

After the Second World War, its popularity spread throughout Europe – partly thanks to tourism. Both European and world championships in which



scores of countries take part. The best petanque players still come from France, but other nationalities are on the up and up. All it takes now is Olympic recognition.

A recent addition to Monte do Casarão is a genuine *petanca* court. Why don't you come over for some practice?

4. SOFIE

Sofie, our 18-months-old Rafeiro do Alentejo, is showing a phantom pregnancy. For no apparent reason, she is suddenly shivering uncontrollably. She hardly

eats, is as slow as molasses, and her movements are reminiscent of a sloth rather than a young dog. She wants to be underneath the bed, or behind the shower curtain, but best of all she likes sitting on one's lap – all 35 kilos of her.

With wolves, the dog's ancestors, phantom pregnancies, including the start of milk production, have an evident function. After giving birth, the alpha female in the pack can resume her leading role, as she does not have to worry about feeding her cubs. Moreover, if something should happen to her, the future of her offspring – carrying her strong genes – is assured as well as can be. Why women show phantom pregnancies as well? Maybe it's for the same reasons. You can't teach nature. Nature looks after its own.



Nel