



July 29 2013, sunny 31°

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### Budding happiness

The **swallows** from the garage have raised 9 young. 5 in the first nest, 4 in the second.

New (and special) are the **red-rumped swallows** near the kitchen: they probably have 3 young, but we can't see them because of the way they built their nest (an upside-down igloo).

Also new: **sparrows** in the gutter near the gargoyle. I can't see how many there are. The entire gutter is filled with bits of straw, grass and Sofie's hair. They will need to fly out soon, as rain has been forecast for Sunday.

Aug 2-12 **Silves Medieval Fair**  
[www.cm-silves.pt](http://www.cm-silves.pt)

Aug 7-11 **Festival Sudoest**  
[www.sudoeste2013.com](http://www.sudoeste2013.com)

Oct 3-10 **Painting week**  
[www.montedocasarao.com/Nl/n\\_painting.html](http://www.montedocasarao.com/Nl/n_painting.html)

## 1. GREEN POWER

Being miles away from anywhere, we are not connected to the national grid. We generate our own power. An interesting story, so it's high time I shared it with you.

Our solar panels yield the lion's share of our



power. Since the sun shines abundantly here, the output is vast. 36 solar panels of 1,3 kW each fill up the 24 2V storage batteries. The set-up is monitored and operated by four computers, the 'chief' of which directs the other three. If the storage batteries are insufficiently charged at moments there's little sun (i.e. after sunset or on rainy or cloudy days) or if more power than usual is needed, the computer ensures that the diesel generator kicks in. It fills up the storage batteries and takes over the power supply until they are full. Obviously, the thing is to burn the diesel as little as possible. Unfortunately, that's impossible just now, as one of the computers is on the blink, which has immediate implications for the number of burning-hours.

We don't have an environmental quality mark yet, but we do aim at living in a green and sustainable way.

## 2. MARCHAS POPULARES

The 16th Festival de Mastros in São Teotónio has been and gone. Again, the feast lasted for three weeks. All the streets were decorated, live music was performed every night. BTT cross, theatre troupes, bailes, feira antiga. One of the national tv stations even reported live for one day. São Teotónio in the spotlights.

One of the highlights was undoubtedly the Desfile de Marchas Populares. It's hard to image



anything more Portuguese. The feast, in honour of Saint Anthony, dates back from the 18th century and originated in Lisbon. In 1932, everything grew more profane in character and a competition element was introduced. Nowadays the marchas form a part of festival weeks across the country. Streets, companies, institutions, districts, even entire villages present themselves to the public in fine attire, accompanied by dance and song. The marchas grow ever grander and more professional. Now,

hiring costume designers and choreographers is the rule rather than the exception.

But not so in São Teotónio, yet. There, the old folks' home takes part. A whole year's practice pays off: it all looks polished, but much better-looking are the proud faces of the participants, no matter whom you watch. Be it the matron, the man in the wheelchair, the demented grandmother or the grandchild.

## 3. ZAMBUJEIRA DO MAR

For a first introduction to the beach, we invariably refer our guests to Zambujeira do Mar, a friendly village by the Atlantic Ocean, near São Teotónio. It's a cosy village that boasts good food, a fishing port, a disco, a number of fine beaches and wonderful dunes.

Nowadays, Zambujeira do Mar manages to attract lots of visitors. The annual pop festival already was a good draw, but being mentioned by name as a stopping place along the Trilho dos Pescadores (the trail that

was introduced last year) doesn't do the village any harm either.

Moreover, it was voted the best beach of in the Praias Urbanas category. It seems as if the storks anticipated that. At first they could be found at Cabo Sardão, but now they've all settled on the cliffs near the village to nest and raise their young. A spectacular sight. May be added to the list of credits.



## 4. BLACK CHAPTER

After considerable hesitation, I feel I need to mention in this newsletter what a tragedy we've been through. The deciding factor was that many of you had such fun with or about them and took numerous pictures of them.

I'm writing about Wammes, Lotte and Sproet. They've passed away. They were poisoned, probably not too far from us.

Just over two months ago (on 21 May) Wammes and Lotte didn't come home from a walk. All our efforts to find them back were fruitless. A few days later, Sproet accompanied guests; halfway she started shivering and a moment later she was gone. As we feared the worst, we started searching right away, again in vain. We informed everyone, put up posters and officially reported the dogs missing. All honour to the professional approach of the police officers, by the way. Some three weeks ago, we found Lotte. And buried her. A post-mortem was useless by that time. Who is behind this? Why? Most likely the culprit wants to get rid of foxes. If another animal falls victim it's just too bad.

All this has had a lot of impact on us and on the fun we have here.

The euphoria is gone for now.

Nel