



September 30th 2010,
sunny 27°

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Painting week October
2010



The painting week at the end of October is fully booked. If you fancy painting Portuguese wind mills in the company of Dutch hobbyists, you have another chance Spring 2011. Meanwhile you can take a look at http://www.montedocasarao.com/Nl/n_painting.html

Extra info

<http://en.lifecooler.com/lifecooleren/alentejo-wine-route-wine-routes-334696-1.html>
<http://www.vinhosdoalentejo.pt/index.php?l=EN>

1. PUPPY SUMMER

Since early July, we have four more young dogs. Chance? Fate? Misplaced pity? By now, Wammes, Joris and Lotte, average size Portuguese hounds, are 4 months old. Sofie, a rafeiro do Alentejo, is 5 months old. We are trying to find the little ones (brothers and sister) a good home, but that won't be easy: young dogs abound here. Thus, we undertake the arduous duty of managing these un-guided missiles. That's quite a task indeed.



They will demolish anything. Pillows, chairs, shoes, boxes, lavatory brushes, magazines, brooms, whatever they can get at. Little remains of the garden I was so proud of. Apparently, rosemary, agave and passionflower are really tasty. They aren't picky eaters anyway: cork is quite scrumptious, and acorns, grasshoppers, ants, soap, stones, styrofoam, soil, fire starters and rope are not to be sneezed at either. The turds are in keeping with the diet: either they will float, or they are rolls of fabrics, or they'll look like sausages with a bit of rope in between.

We think (hope) it will take us about a year to turn them into well-mannered dogs who do as you tell them: don't walk away, and don't sit on the glass-topped table again. We can use some help to achieve this: Saturday morning at nine is puppy course time!

2. PAMPERING VERSUS PRIVACY

So far, we have had far more Dutch guests than Portuguese guests. There is some logic in that, as we tend to focus primarily on the Dutch market. However, that is not the only explanation. Our concept does not appeal to the Portuguese. Privacy? A hill of your own? Walking? Crazy foreigners!

It didn't come as a complete surprise. When we started the project, the municipal architect suggested we built all the houses in the valley below with the swimming pool in the centre. He could not understand that most Dutch people live in densely populated areas and do not want to see anyone while on holiday.



Moreover, the Portuguese like some measure of pampering. They appreciate it if someone drops by every day to have a chat, empty the bin and make the beds. Receiving the key to the cottage and being left to your own devices does not quite bring on a good holiday feeling. However,

if truth be told, the Portuguese who did stay with us did quite like what we have to offer. It might even be worth doing again.

3. WINES FROM THE ALENTEJO

Back home, you will not often find a Portuguese wine on the wine list, and certainly not an Alentejan wine. People might actually have heard of the name of Borba, but the other Alentejan wines tend to be unknown and are mainly produced for the domestic market. Alentejan wines are made from various old indigenous grapes. In combination with modern techniques, this ensures quality wines that are highly esteemed by connoisseurs.

You can find a lot of information on the Alentejan wines on the Internet. Obviously, it is much more fun to learn about a wine on the *herdades* itself, to browse and taste the wine. In the weeks to come, the wine growers will present their new wines and wine tastings can be attended throughout the region. The *rota dos vinhos do Alentejo*, the wine route, will show you the way.



4. WILLEM

What I have not told you yet is that our dog Willem is no more. Good, brave Willem. In the end, he was worn out and collapsed after making a few steps. He could no longer get up on his own. Uncomplainingly he allowed us to help him up, his look saying: I can't help it. His muscles, especially the ones in his rump, no longer functioned and he was tired, so tired.

He has had a great time here, with a freedom many a dog would love to have. He was the leader of the pack. His close friend Sproet, Stofel, Sofie, the little ones: he was their shining example and they liked nothing better than being close to him all day. We have acted in good conscience, Willem, but the thing I am struggling with is that at the very last you briefly protested, as if you wanted to say: 'Really, I'm fine. Don't do this on my account.'

It is not given to everyone to play God.

Nel

