

February 2016, rain, 17,5°



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## And the winner is...

It's always excited who will win a week's free stay on Monte do Casarão in the new year's lottery. We tend to make it a little happening, with raffle tickets, a real high hat (an heirloom) and an 'independent' person performing the draw. This time, it was Rui Afonso, our contractor. This year's winners are Mira van Maaren and her partner Hans. Congratulations to you both. Mira's reaction was unmistakable: 'Fun, fun, fun! We are happy with his week.'



## THE NEW YEAR

Officially, it's no longer 'done', but still I want to wish everyone I haven't spoken to yet a very healthy and happy 2016. On Monte do Casarão, we meet many people, who all have their own stories. They are wonderful, fun stories, but also stories that are moving or sad stories, and of which you'd better not have too many. I honestly hope that you'll have a great store of the first category to tell us when you arrive here.



Together with some of our first guests, we saw out the old year in Zambujeira do Mar. It was spectacular to see the fireworks mirrored in the ocean. You hardly knew where to look: at the fireworks in the sky of those among the waves. Afterwards we gave ourselves over to the Zambujeiran nightlife. It was very busy, very crowded (three pubs and a dancing), very intimate to see everyone in the streets. Unexpectedly and surprisingly pleasant.

## HOLIDAY FAIR

And then, a few days later, we immersed ourselves in a different kind of crowd, travelling to the Holiday Fair in Utrecht, the Netherlands. People were queuing in front of the Portugal stand, and after the fourth day, most staff were hoarse from talking so much.



Portugal is really popular this year. The holiday-maker looks for an old and trusted destination for his sun trip. Turkey and Greece have problems sheltering refugees; the east of the Mediterranean feels the threat of the Syrian war; North Africa is not popular either, due to assaults. Therefore, many people choose Portugal. Well, there is certainly enough to do here and there's something for everybody. Whether you opt for metropolitan Lisbon or prefer one of the smaller cities: Porto, Coimbra, Braga, Guimarães or Évora, for nature, or for the Algarve and all its entertainment, for the sparsely populated Alentejo, for the Douro region or the lunar landscape of the Serra da Estrela, for the eastern border with its cultural inheritance or for the Atlantic Ocean: you will have a holiday that you'll think back on with great pleasure.

## NEW PRESIDENT

Last month, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was elected the new president of Portugal by 52%. He succeeds his fellow party member Cavaco Silva (right wing of the PSD, Partido Social Democrata) whose term of office ran out after ten years. In spite of the substantial victory by left-wing parties (advocating a reversal of cuts and savings enforced by Europe) on October 4 last, the Portuguese population chose a right-wing president on January 24. The foundations of the left-wing minority government appear to be very weak and inspire little confidence.



Europe may be satisfied. 'Rebelo de Sousa will ensure that Portugal adheres to the European rules.'

## RENOVATION COASTAL REGION

The entire Costa Vicentina, from Sagres to Sines, will be given a facelift. Parking spaces will be constructed alongside the beaches. The unpaved access roads will be repaired and some of them will even be asphalted. Footpaths, usually made of wooden planking, make it easier to access the beaches. Cars getting stuck in the sand and double parking will be relegated to the past. Pity really, but then again, the tourist must be pampered, of course.



The villages are being taken in hand as well. Odemira is ready, and now Zambujeira do Mar is one big sandpit. For months workers have gone all-out. New paving, new streetlamps, new benches and plants: even the entrepreneurs renew their interiors. It will be really pretty. It all needs to be finished before summer. Before the Portuguese are on holiday.

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