

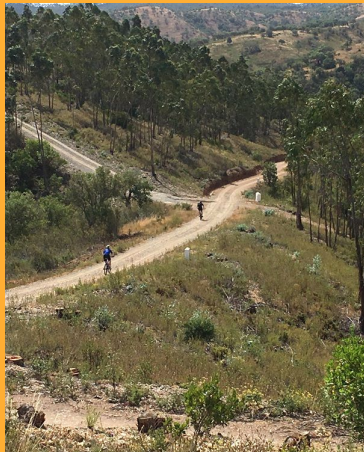
MONTE DO CASARÃO

Holiday houses in the Alentejo, Portugal
Privacy, peace & quietness

Newsletter 50

June 18th 2019, cloudy, 21°

SANTA CLARA RESERVOIR



Last month, we have exuberantly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Santa Clara reservoir. This reservoir provides large parts of the Alentejo and the Algarve with water. Moreover, it is an important tourist attraction. Also worth mentioning: the tunnels and underground passageways shelter bats. Although the reservoir has been built in a sparsely populated area, 120 houses had to be expropriated. The price was determined per house. The houses and farms were very isolated; there were no collective agreements. Some people were clever enough to buy more land in advance, others had a rough deal. At the time, Portugal was not yet a democracy. People did not protest against the authorities. The best you could do was hide whenever the engineer drove up in the jeep.



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www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVtrTOeEcc&feature=youtu.be

FESTIVAL DE MASTROS

From 12 through 30 June, São Teotónio is celebrating once again. All the streets have been decorated and every night there is an act or live music. Fado, hiphop, cante Alentejano, *mar-chas, baile*, something for everyone.



GREEN KEY AWARD 2019

Again, Monte do Casarão has been recognised as a sustainable tourist business. For the fourth year in a row. That award is *in the pocket*, as my daughter-in-law puts it. We are really pleased.



VELÁZQUEZ 'S CANVAS

Weaving and painting. At first sight, it doesn't seem an obvious combination. A visit to the weaving workshop of the Dutch artist Helene Loermans in Odemira makes you think again. We visited her with the participants of the April painting week. Among other things, she produces exceptionally beautiful scarves, combining from various materials, real works of art.



Recently, Helene Loermans had become fascinated by another aspect of weaving. She is examining the canvases on which the old masters painted their works of art. Which paint the old masters produced and used is no longer a secret, but what canvases they painted on and how they were woven is unknown. Helene Loermans has analysed the canvases used by Diego Velázquez, El Greco and Caravaggio. Using existing software, she subsequently managed to produce the weaving draft and to weave a reconstruction. Van Gogh and Titian are next in line. By now, she has received international accolades for her efforts. Various museums, including the Prado and the National Gallery, London are eager to work with her. The Getty Foundation has also recognised the significance of her

work. Soon, she will visit the United States to give a workshop and a lecture at Yale University. Lab O. www.labo.pt Remember the name. Or simply walk in. Helene is a fascinating raconteur.

PRICELESS

When nature's colours are reduced to greens and browns in June, we get an encore. Everywhere, tiny star-shaped, five-leaved pink flowers with yellow hearts shoot up. Centaury. It's priceless. And it has many uses. You can infuse it. One cup a day keeps you as healthy as anything. It gives short thrift to bowel and liver complaints, reduces fever (it was once known as the poor man's quinine) and it heals wounds.

As early as 1250, Dutch poet Jacob van Maerlant wrote about its healing qualities in *Der Naturen Bloeme*. However, the flower can do more: it is said to expel evil spirits and carrying around the herb in your purse would ensure it never went empty.

Centaury is derived from Centaurium. Ideas about the name's origin vary. Some say the flower was named after the Greek Centaur Chiron, an expert in the field of herbs. Others prefer a contraction of Latin *centum* (hundred) and *aurum* (gold). In Dutch, the herb was actually called 'hundred guilder herb' for a long time. Apparently, the plant has experienced a steep rise in value, for nowadays it's called 'thousand guilder herb'. Well, why not?



BIG LAND CLEARING OPERATION 3

Recently, I bought the book *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari. A global bestseller. In just under 500 pages, he expounds on the reason why we are what we are. It looked interesting. I managed to reach page 80. There it said: *After all, eucalyptus trees are extraordinarily fire-resistant*. What utter nonsense. I immediately shelved the book. Eucalyptus burns like hell, even explodes due to all the water and oil it contains. Every year, Portugal is plagued by huge fires, especially in desolate, inaccessible areas containing many eucalyptus trees. That is why the maintenance and fire prevention legislation was tightened last year, by means of guideline that everyone – including us – needs to comply with. And that is why the eucalyptus trees surrounding the cottages and along the entrance road have been cleared. Twice, the GNR have come by to inspect everything. It was fine. Mister Gomes did a great job. All the trunks have been removed (four truck loads, he cleared all the branches, twigs and leaves. The fun thing is that he paid us for it, too. Now, Wynand, Bas and Bob can go to the Yankees Major League game in London for a few days. And I shall spend a few days in Barcelona. Next year, we'll have some more eucalyptus clear. We have plenty.



Nel

