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PAINTING WEEK OCTOBER 2019

The painting week has been and gone. It was a very fully booked painting week, with 15 participants. The sun shone all week, the atmosphere was excellent, the food was delicious, and the paintings were real pieces of art. That so many beautiful works are produced is partly thanks to our teacher, docent Jenny Helder, whose useful tips and insightful pointers render your paintings just that much better than you had conceived them by yourself. She won't be coming back. After 22 painting weeks, she has had enough. It's a pity, but we completely understand. We won't put a stop to our painting weeks. They will continue, at the beginning of April and October. We have to, as we have already received the first registrations. Thank you, Jenny, for everything you have done for us and the students. We shall miss you.



PORTUGAL BY BIKE

This year, far more guests have rented bikes than before. Mountain bikes to be precise. Well, it is easy enough. We phone the rental agency, tell him how tall the cyclists are, and next day, the mountain bikes are delivered on your own mountain, including helmets and repair sets. Obviously, you can enjoy great rides from Monte do Casarão. But now, we also border an official cycling route. The municipality of Odemira has charted roughly 1000 kilometres of bike trail. Some of the footpaths of the Rota Vicenti-



na are used, but for the most part, the route is new. There are four increasingly difficult categories: green, blue, red and black, green being the easiest. And then, there is the GT route, which takes you to a railway station. Just bring your bike along on the train, get off at another station and move on. The black route and the GT skirt our place. We have yet another fun activity.

THE TEARS OF RAINHA SANTA ISABEL

Isabel of Aragon was a noble, devoted, intelligent, modest woman and a benefactress to her people. She cared for the sick and the underprivileged in her kingdom. She paid poor girl's dowries, taught the children of the poor nobility, made donations to hospitals and religious projects and acted as a peacemaker in various conflicts. In her own lifetime (1271 - 1336) she was as a saint to many people, but in 1625 she was officially sanctified by the Roman Catholic Church.

She was also a faithful and loving wife. Unfortunately, her spouse, Don Dinis, was made of other stuff. One day, when he failed to come home once again, Rainha Isabel rode into the woods to find him. She asked the trees for help, but they didn't know where her husband was either. Thereupon she shed bitter tears. The tears turned into berries, covering the soil like a cloak.



These berries, camarinhãs, are growing in the dunes near Aljezur and elsewhere along the Atlantic coast. In the old days, you could buy them in the street, but those days are long gone. Recently, however, Coimbra University started a project to rescue the camarinhãs from oblivion and see whether they are com-

mercially viable. Not only are they tasty, they have medicinal properties and are really healthy. Obviously, the Rainha Santa Isabel is the patroness of Coimbra for a reason.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The kitchen garden is a huge success. From May, give or take a week, we literally reap the fruits of our gardening efforts. Melons, bell peppers, string beans, tomatoes (sometimes weighing a kilo each), aubergines, cucumbers, asparagus beans, beetroots, red cabbage, lettuce: the harvest is enormous. Everything as natural as can be, grown and ripened by the sun. No toxins or insecticides have been used.



The kitchen garden benefits our guests, too. Even now, for it all just keeps on growing. Everything is simply starting all over again. Obviously, things go wrong as well. We were supposed to eat endive last night – the Dutch way, with a meat ball on the side – except all the endive had disappeared. Eaten. We don't live alone here. And endive is quite tasty after all.

AFONSE DE ALBUQUERQUE

I have taken up singing. In an international choir in Aljezur. I really landed on my feet. There were performances in Arrifana and Monchique accompanied by the French acrobat troupe Cie XY; we sang in Barcelona, in the Sagrada Família en in the Palau de la Música; we sang in Aljezur and recently in Vila de Bispo, in the Ermida de Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe, a small 13th-century chapel.



This concert mirrored the travels and conquests of Afonso de Albuquerque, a 16th-century Portuguese explorer. Director Carme Juncadella has collected and edited Medieval songs from all the cultures and countries – Egypt, Ethiopia, Persia, India – culminating in an Islamic lament. Afonso had just killed 6000 Muslims in Goa, which he proudly reported to his king: "Um feito muito bom."

Not much has changed since.

Singing is fun and gives energy. That's why I'm inviting anyone near: *If you can sing, sing along!*

Nel