

December 31st 2022, sunny, 20°

WET, WET, WET



50th wedding anniversary

We have been celebrating for a week with family and friends. On the day itself, with about 70 people, a cold buffet and a dance or two. And a concert by the Coro Internacional de Aljezur of which I've been a member for a couple of years. It all felt very special, really warm. Thanks again, everyone!



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[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=TVtrTOeEcc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVtrTOeEcc&feature=youtu.be)



Painting weeks 2023

The painting weeks are from **April 12 till april 19** and from **October 4 till october. 11**. More info on the homepage of our website at **What to do**

Our reservoir is nearly filled to the brim. It has taken two years. Enough rain has fallen at long last, which pleases us immensely. It has been predicted that the south of Portugal will turn into a desert, which seems quite plausible. Over the past month, however, there has been a downpour. Many cities, predominantly Lisbon, have been flooded, causing huge damages. One advantage is, though, that Portugal now has enough water.



Except for the south of the country, that is. The Santa Clara reservoir is only 37 percent full. That means switching on extra pumps, the costs of which mainly have to be paid by the farmers, who know that millions of litres of water can flow into the Mira River and the sea, just like that. It's a terrible waste but collecting the water would cost millions as well. As far as I've been able to find out, there is no authority whatsoever that says, 'This nonsense needs to end.' Environmental activists are not involved either. It's unfortunate, but typical.

CANTE ALENTEJANO

In Odemira, high above the Mira River and visible from afar, a statue has been erected. It is really huge: 12 metres wide and 4 metres high, containing 17 tonnes of mass. It's a tribute to the Cante Alentejano, acknowledged by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site since 2014, and to the singers, the *grupos corais*.

The statue of Fernando Fonseca has been un-



veiled only recently, late November, in the presence of various VIPs, including the sculptor himself. On this occasion, various grupos corais gave performances. These groups typically consist of men, but there was a female choir as well and – really special – a children's grupo coral that performed in a large party tent where the entire population of Odemira was served lunch.

We have posted a video of one of the choirs on our website. Do watch and listen to this really special manner of singing. It's even nicer, of course, to experience the grupos corais live. They are welcome guests at markets and festivals.

DELICACY

We have never eaten so many mushrooms as in the past month. Even chantarelles, which had been absent for years. The reason is that circumstances for mushrooms are currently ideal: rain, slightly soggy soil, some rotting leaves or a dead tree trunk and not too hot.

I have been able to extend the range of edible mushrooms to 10. It's certain that many more species are edible, but I won't take any risks. I have just bought 2 new books, but it's still tricky to tell them apart. There is always a poisonous species that is very similar to the other one.



I do miss my mushroom man. He won't be visiting this year. He is in Tasmania.

2023

Just some more 'oliebollen' (a traditional Belgian and Dutch beignet typically eaten on New Year's Eve) to bake and 2022 will be at an end. It wasn't a very pleasant year, and it doesn't look as if 2023 will be much better.

It feels as if, even more than in other years, you need to create your own world. You must not turn away from what is going on around you, and wherever necessary, you need to do your bit, but you need to cherish your own bubble. Even if it's full of bumps and bulges, sometimes. Quite soon, we shall have guests who are due to stay for 4, 5, even 6 weeks. They will create their own bubble here, on Monte do Casarão. And that is eminently feasible. Where will you find a place that is better suitable? Nothing on your mind, nobody around, warm sun, beautiful nature, plenty of time. With good reason, the local saying goes *tempo é tudo*.

There is also a material advantage to staying here for a longer period. Electricity, gas and water are included in the rent. As is the pizza on Sundays.



So, that just leaves me to wish you a wonderful and happy 2023. Who knows if we may meet (again)?

Nel