

August 5th 2023, sun, 28°



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Too large?

It did take him about an hour, this tiny grass snake. I have been watching with wonder. Youthful exuberance, I thought. But he did it: ate the entire gecko. For now, his belly is full.

Guest often treat me to a book they wrote themselves. A collection of poems, novel, non-fiction. Very special, and I feel really honoured. The latest acquisition is a children's book by Susana Filipe.



Thank you, Susana. It will find a place in the library, Portuguese children's book section.

ROUTE 66

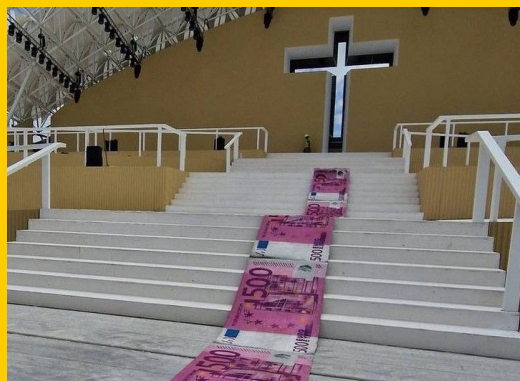
Portugal has its own Route 66, the N2. From Chaves to Faro, all the way from the far North to the deepest South. Spanning 738 kilometres.

It's a good way to explore Portugal in all its charm and splendour. It leads you through ever-changing landscapes, through the vineyards along the Douro, through pinewoods and areas boasting cork oaks, through the imposing Serra de Estrela. You cross eleven rivers and pass 35 towns that all have an atmosphere of their own, white cottages and small cafés. It's great fun to do, even for a small stretch. The entire route would take you a week. You can't speed and it's quite fine to see some sights. The comprehensive route guide is really useful to have.



WALK OF SHAME

Pope Francis has been in Lisbon, in honour of World Youth Day, an event that take place somewhere every third year. One million teenagers and young adults from across the world (only the Maldives were not represented this time) discuss the future of the world and profess their faith, culminating in an outdoor Mass at the end of the week. Obviously, such a visit doesn't come cheap. It has been estimated at € 160 million, more



than half of which are public funds. Money that many Portuguese people feel might have been spent on better things. The altar stage where the pope celebrated the closing Mass cost € 5 million.

Street artist Bordalo II likewise had his doubts. Before anyone knew what was going on, he rolled out a runner on the steps on which 500-euro bills were printed along with the slogan *Habermos Pasta!* The act cause a lot of commotion. Many people approved, but obviously, many others disapproved. Bordalo II called his project Walk of Shame, alluding to the sexual abuse of 5000 Portu-

guese children by the Catholic Church. The Pope has apologized for that. He was less pleased with the fact that the Portuguese euthanasia act was recently passed. The runner was taken away. It was replaced by another one printed with the text *Welcome* in all languages. Oh well.

SWALLOW

Swallows continue to fascinate me. I wrote about them before. But they really seek out people. As soon as I take a seat outside, early in the morning, dozens of them fly around me. And now is the first time we have young ones again on the front terrace. The sparrow have more or less left Mum and Dad in peace. From behind the window, I have an excellent view of what is going on: building (and restoring) the nest, sitting on the eggs and, once the young have hatched, the feeding. The young ones grow bigger by the day; after a few weeks they nearly fall out of the nest and the time has come for them to fledge. All aunties and uncles drop by, chirping loudly and encouraging the young to take the big leap.



Mum and Dad have had two sittings. The first time, four young ones hatched, the second time there were two. Now, they have to make sure they clock up enough flying hours and grow strong for the crossing to Africa in September. God speed, little animals! See you in February!

HOT?

Family and friends often ask us how we are keeping, what with the heat and the fires. That is why we have listed some figures for you. First, the fires. There are fires every summer. Particularly the North of Portugal faces many of them. This year, there are far fewer. A decrease by 27% minder compared to recent years, and 70% less land has been burnt. Without any doubt, this is due to strict legislation. So far, the Monchique Mountains, which we look out on, has been spared. Then temperature. July and August are no different than other years. On average, it's 29 °C, with occasional extremes. This weekend and on Monday, 39°C has been forecast. then, it will decrease to 29 °C. Humidity is low, and we always benefit from the Atlantic Ocean, which is still very cold, 19 °C. The (almost) continuous sea wind cools things down. The nights are equally cool. It doesn't rain. We do notice that average temperatures in the spring are on the rise. For instance, in 2020 the month of March averaged 19 °C, in 2022 17 °C and this year 22 °C. April scored 21 °C, 19 °C and 26 °C, respectively. if you'd like a full report, with statistics, I could send it to you. Unfortunately, it didn't fit in the newsletter.

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