



BUMBLING ALONG  
EXPLORING EUROPE IN  
OUR MOTORHOME





1

# PORTUGAL





## Alvor

## Thursday 1 January

Happy New Year to all our friends and family. Weird really because every new year you expect to feel something different but yet you wake up and nothing has changed...not unless of course you make endless promises to yourself!

When we woke it was damn cold and in the night it had hit a low of 2 degrees. We jacked the heating up and once we'd defrosted we ventured outside to wish everyone a happy new year. Our French neighbor had already left which seemed a little odd.

We took a long walk on the beach. The best thing about the Portugal beaches are they are clean, pretty and go on and on forever. Great for just walking, chatting and giving your old feet a natural exfoliation on the sand. We passed a couple of large hotels that were quite low key in the decor, so blended quite nicely with the surroundings. Then a couple of beach cafe / bars and that was it. Nothing else on our two hour walk except the odd person walking their dog. By the end of walk we'd reached Tres Iramos, a stretch of beach with spectacular rocks, cliffs and caves. As we clambered over the rock we wandered on to another little beach with more abstract rocks in the sea. Jeez Craig look at them over there they are skinny dipping. Two elderly German couples were laughing away as they splashed around naked in freezing cold surf. Gosh they've got balls, excuse the pun!





When we reached the Aire we noticed our French neighbour had returned. She was ever so tearful. She'd taken her dog for a walk this morning and all of a sudden it fell ill. It's stomach swelled and by the time she got the dog to the vets, it was too late to save it. Poor old lady, she was distraught and I really felt for her. She'd lost her husband early in the year and now her dog and as she put it, her baby. Not long and news spread amongst the aire and everyone was speculating on how the dog had died. We are not sure but it could have eaten one of the precession caterpillars, as this year they have hatched early. Until now we'd never heard of them but we soon found out about the little buggers. They cocoon themselves together in fir trees and when they hatch they drop on the floor one by one. They all march nose to tale and hence the name procession. They have long spines and if sniffed or eaten can be fatal. We'd seen loads of what we thought were spiders webs but now we know they are not spiders but lethal little caterpillars. Well, you learn something new everyday.

Later on I was sat outside watching the sunset and the French lady came over. I haven't a clue what

she said but I could make out she wanted to see Peanut. I opened the Motorhome door and he was snug fast asleep on his bed. She pointed at him and said baba. I called him over and he went straight to her. She lifted him up and held him tight whilst she sobbed and sobbed. I let her have a moment with Peanut in the hope it gave her some comfort after losing her companion. I didn't know what to do or say, poor woman.

Craig on the other hand went to empty the loo or as he puts it, the crapper. He trudged over and on the way back stopped to have a chat with an English chap with a MAN Motorhome. It was a beauty. Craig was rather impressed with it especially when he found out it had a micro brewery in the back. He was a multi millionaire and now ran his business whilst on the move. Craig didn't get the name of his business but something to do with logistics and Amazon.

As Craig returned a microlite went over Vin and I am not kidding it just missed him. Damn stupid pilot. He just skimmed the Motorhomes and pylons. They then continued to do scoops and turns over a field with more pylons and it looked like he was practic-





ing his flying skills. Practicing or not he is one silly idiot.

We sat out with our new chums Irene and Cliff, Roger and Pauline and had a cool beer as the sunset over the aire. It was lovely until El President came around in her big Mercedes. She owns the land around here and most evenings she gets her chauffeur to drive her around her territory to check things out. That's fine but she ordered the aire attendant (Carlos) to kill the site dog. It is just a Heinz 57 but it is ever so nice. Never bothers anyone unless you take it on and it just wanders around doing no harm. It just didn't feel right given the French lady had lost her dog. Carlos didn't do anything to the dog but not sure if he'll pay the price on her next visit.





## Alvor

## Friday 2 December

We did plan to depart today but I twisted Craig's arm to stay one more day. It is such a lovely little fishing village, it is hard to say good-bye. Furthermore we both still had dull headaches, which we think is down to congestion. After breakfast we tootled up in to the village to find the little chapel. We walked and walked but no chapel. Craig sniffed out a small Pingo Doce (supermarket) in the edge of town, so we wandered around the supermarket. We couldn't find any bread or milk, so we left empty handed. As we turned on to the street two cars had collided. Nothing major but the Portuguese police were making a mountain out of a molehill. Making the drivers fill in loads of paperwork. We were forced to cross the road and glad we did because we stumbled across a little chapel. Behind the chapel, a graveyard with some very elaborate tombstones. In the far corner some little tomb houses, I have no idea what they are called but will ask someone. Best way to decide is like a brick shed, door in middle and as you enter there are coffins inside. Usually 3 on either side, stacked on top of each other and draped in lace or elegant cloth. In the middle flowers, candles and Rosemary beads. It didn't feel like a doom and gloomy place, it felt very bright and peaceful, a lovely place for family to come and remember their loved ones.

We continued to meander our way through the village, stopping at the castle, municipal building and village square. Eventually we parked our bums on two chairs in the Navegador restaurant. Yep, I persuaded

Craig to not cook lunch and instead sample the local cuisine. We had a fabulous lunch overlooking the colourful harbour, listening to some old geezer attempt to play the accordion. Craig had chicken and I had local fish, swilled down with a cool lager. After lunch we continued around the headland admiring the huge bunches of mussels poking their shells above the low tide and odd stork sitting proudly on the estuary grass island.

Back at the aire and just in time to join our chums for a sunset sip. I opted for a cuppa tea, whilst the rest enjoyed a drop of port. Just before the sunset a load of folk jumped out of a plane and parachuted down on to the beach. We counted around 60 parachutes in total, so you can image how fantastic it was to look up and see all the different colours gliding above. What a great end to a great day.

Parachuters landing all  
around our  
motorhomes







## Lagos

### Saturday 3 January

Up nice and early, so we could move on to the next place. As we filled up with fresh water our French neighbour came over to say goodbye and wish us a safe journey. But Peanut got the best hugs and kisses if all. What a beautiful lady. We then tootled over to our chums and said our goodbyes after exchanging contact details.

Back on the road and within minutes my feet were on the dash, it feels great to hitting the road again. To get to the next coastal town of Lagos we need to head back in land in order to cross the estuary. The journey was nice with hardly any traffic on the road. Once in Lagos we went to park on the aire, which happens to be the old football stadium but it was covered in stalls. Looked like a Saturday flea market, so we moved on to the marina. It was a lovely marina but every Carpark clearly stated no camper vans, so we moved on to...Lidl. We stacked up with the basics but nothing else, as we bought way too much food at Christmas and the freezer is full of stuff. We want to empty everything then we can start a fresh. It was hard not to buy any goodies because it was a super Lidl with a fresh fish mongers and a large bakery. Just 5 minutes down the road from Lidl we spotted a cheap petrol station, so we filled up. It is amazing the price different in just one town - €1.04 to €1.29 per litre for diesel. Not sure how that compares to home, as the price was still falling when we left the UK.





Craig thought he'd spotted a nice spot on Google Earth, so we bumbled off down a quite country lane. It didn't feel right to me but Craig promised it was ok. At the end of the lane some 10 km out of Lagos we hit a dead end or to be precise a rather large private property named Eagle Eye. We did a 50 shuffle and turned Vin around. We stopped half way along the lane on a little Carpark and had lunch. It was a lovely day and nice view...in the middle of a golf course! Once Craig realised where we were he was kind of anxious to get going before several golf balls penetrated Vins body panels. Needless to say we did get a few odd looks as we tucked in to our ham butties.

After lunch we headed to Ponte da Piedade for a stroll around the palm lined and craggy headland. As you look left you see the wonderful coastline all the way to Monte Gordo and then to the right the sweeping cliff coastline all the way to Sagres point. What a fabulous vantage point, I bet it is great at sunset. We saw quite a few of the Portuguese aquatic poodles! Scruffy looking things with Black curly hair and webbed feet. As we walked along the coastal path admiring the various rock art formations we noticed something in the water. We kept looking and eventually we saw it again, a dolphin. Then as we looked around we could see loads of them, all playing in the surf. I could watch dolphins all day, they



are fascinating. Eventually Craig dragged me back to Vin where we continued our journey back in to Lagos.

In Lagos we made our way once again to the aire. The market had gone but the aire was full and it even had a nice little queue of hopeful Motorhomes. Oh dear, what are we gonna do because Lagos isn't exactly Motorhome friendly. Well no option but to set off and search. After about an hour we settled in a street right at the side of the marina with no parking restriction. An excellent spot right on the Rio Bensafirim and overlooking the palm lined avenue of the historic town. With only a couple of hours before sunset we set off to have a quick look at the town. It felt similar in style to Faro but this time much prettier with cobbled streets, a bustling atmosphere and lots of little shops, cafes and bars. We meandered our way through the streets up to the Fort and then we turned around and hugged the riverbank, passing the fish market and back to Vin for our evening dinner.

## Brilliant coastline







## Aljezur

## Sunday 4 January

I woke pretty early and felt like going for a nice jog around the arena...so I did. Five minutes in to my trot and the sun just started to peer above the boats, what a lovely way to start the day.

By 9am we were cycling around Lagos and soaking up all the sights. It is a very pretty, walled historic town that has seen many a Portuguese explorer set sail for the new world. But for us we will stick to exploring the town before setting sail. Just one small problem, it was Sunday and nothing opens until 11. Ah well we will just have to use our imagination. First we stopped at the town hall then swiftly on to Santa Maria. We wandered around the quaintly little cobbled streets for a while before heading over the San Antonio church, which was closed for restoration. After a look around the customs house we sat and admired the view over the fort. This was the first slave market in Europe where they brought 1000s of people over from Africa. We walked to the end of jetty and then headed back to Vin via the wobbly, cobbled streets.

For lunch we had soup and mid way through Craig started to ponder about the chemical ingredients they stuff in croutons to make them stay crispy on the inside. I just nodded and scoffed the crunchy little buggers.





With Lagos done we set off for Barragem de Bravura. The drive to the reservoir was very pretty with lush green valley and the odd roaming cow. We drove around the reservoir and fully intended to turn off but the roads were very narrow and overgrown. Vin is adventurous but not sure he is ready for bumpy dirty track. As we headed back on the main drag we noticed a massive poster advertising the annual potato festival. Spuds are us, bring it on.







Before long we were in Aljezur, a weird medium size town split in 3 distinct sections. You have the town on the river, an old town that meanders up the hill towards the castle and finally another bit out on a plain. We parked on a free aire at the side on the river and municipal market. The market square seemed to be the meeting point for some unsavoury characters. Now we know why this town is famous for potatoes, it's the place for moonshine and 100s of jam jars! We continued passed the drunks and walked passed a few little bars and cafes then up hill to the castle. A nice walk through sleepy little streets. The castle isn't great but the views from up there are stunning.

Back in Vin and our new neighbour is still chatting to a guy who loves to let his cheek butt hang out. . He has a pair of old black shorts on with the waist rolled down as far as it will go. His hands are constantly scratching his arse and at the age of 60+ it isn't pleasant. With an old banjo draped around his neck you'd think he'd scratch that!

We locked up and tucked, tonight is gonna be a cold one.





## Praia do Banderia

Monday 5 January

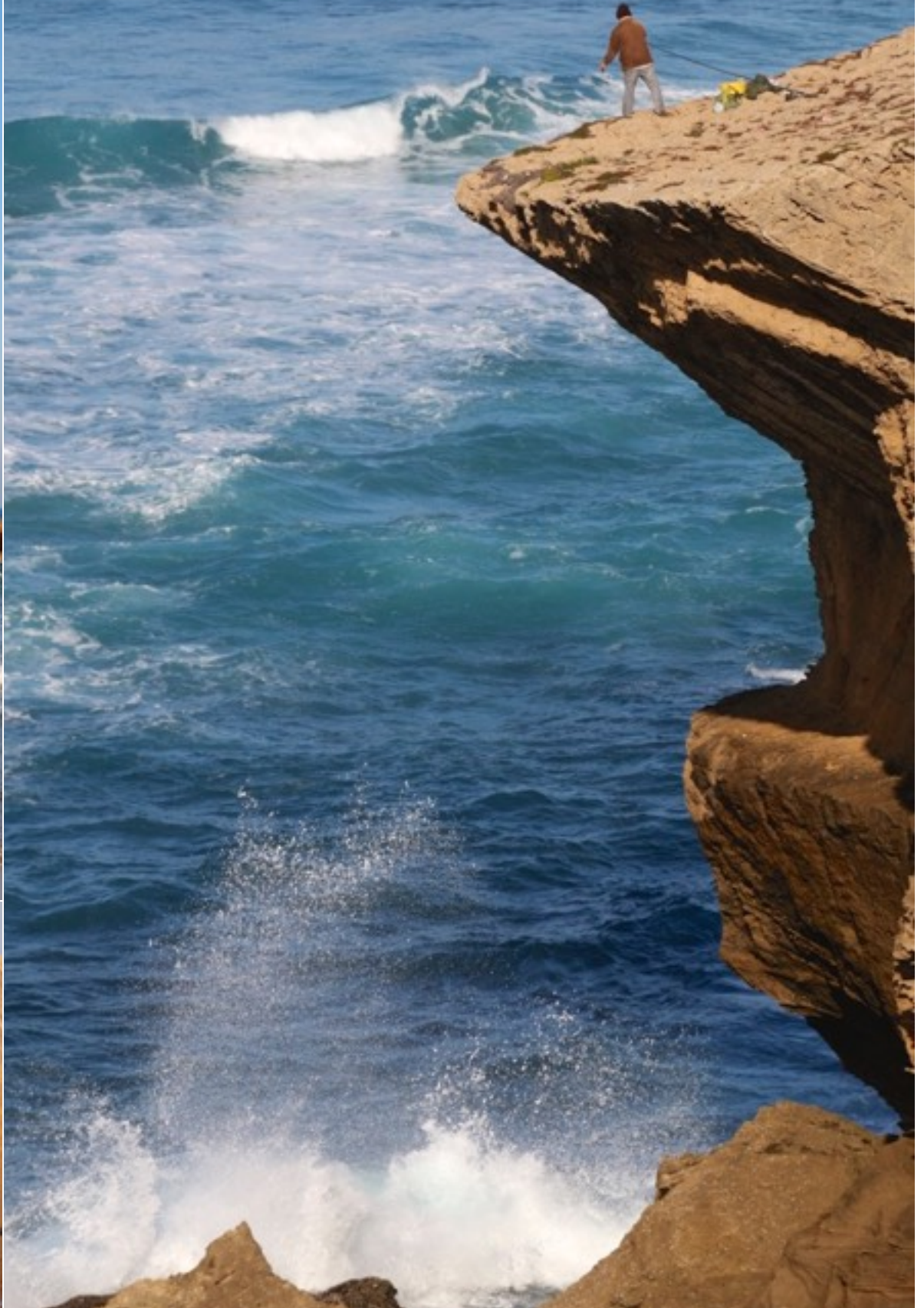
### Praia do Banderia

The temperature dropped to freezing last night but Vin kept us nice and warm. As we lifted the blinds we got a shock, bloody fog again, would you believe it. Is this blanket of fog following us! Later on our neighbour told us this valley is renowned for getting cold at night with fog patches in the morning.

As yesterday's little reservoir adventure threw us off plan we might as well head to the west coast first. Within a few kilometres we were at the Atlantic Ocean and what a difference to the Mediterranean. One word...wild. We went to a little cove called Amoreira but unfortunately the coastal road was under construction with diggers and piles of concrete. We moved a little further down the coast to surfers paradise, Arrifana but again they were resurfacing the road. It would be so bad but the fine dust particles are everywhere. Must admit, Arrifana looks a great cove with great surf, no wonder it is a hot spot. We trundled on to the next place and what find. Praia do Banderia. Right on the beach with nothing but massive sand dunes, little river and big crashing surf, stunning.

We went for a lovely stroll along the beach and watched the surfers catch the curls. On the way to the ocean, we spotted a lone surf board and bootie tucked in the rocks. We couldn't decide if someone





had left it there or if it was a memorial to some adventurous dude. Craig did a bit of beach combing and found lots of cork and bamboo but nothing to tinker with. Peanut on the other hand just pickled on every opportunity.

Back at Vin and would you have it, it's Roger and Pauline. They were just tucking in to their evening meal. Well isn't it a small world.





## Praia do Banderia

## Tuesday 6 January

Last night was lovely and toasty, outside temperature didn't go below 10 degrees. Makes a difference from the night before.

Craig went outside to compare notes with our fellow campers. Roger the cabin boy (that's what he calls himself!) and Steptoe. The theme of the morning centred around who'd been kicked off the wild camping spots the most. Roger tried his hardest to sound like he was a hardened beach bum but it just didn't work. Poor chap couldn't compete with old Steptoe who loved to attend all the 'nuclear parties' that are 'happening man'. When the pissing competition finished, Craig threw a spanner in the works by saying we'd never been moved on by the police.

It was pretty overcast and cool, so we decided to go play in the sand dunes. The dunes are huge with white, fine sand that is hardly touched. We had races to the top and slides to the bottom. Good fun. We then walked and walked. I continued to step in to soft virgin sand whilst Craig took the alternate path and went beach combing in the bit of grass. Ever so often he would shout out another find. It never ceases to amaze me why men find bottle tops, fishing net and bits of crap fascinating. He found loads of bits but I only allowed him to take one thing back to Vln..he chose a plastic handle. Something to keep him occupied and stay tuned for what happens to the handle. We strolled to the next cove and then headed back for lunch. Craig





got itchy feet and so we tootled off 1 km around the headland to a beautiful spot. High on cliff looking out to the ocean. You can see for miles it is that clear. I went for a mini exploration whilst Craig had a potty visit and the proverbial read. I wound all the way down to the cliff to find half a dozen little fishing sheds and a cave. I felt well chuffed with my find, think I need to keep it secret until sunset...and wow what a sunset!





## Praia do Amado

## Wednesday 7 January

Not long after stretching our limbs we set off for the next beach. This headland is just covered in beautiful little coves and bays perfect for just sitting and admiring the view. We passed one or two campers but that was it, it was so quiet and peaceful up here. We reached Praia de Amado and parked up. Is that the MAN van? I think it is. As we wandered over he popped his head out of the window "alreet mate". We had a chat before we strolled along the beach.

After lunch we walked 6km to the little village but as usual it was shut. I was quiet today, not because anything is wrong but I have this blink in song in my head and I can't stop singing it. "I hope" by Rebecca Ferguson. It's driving me nuts. Guess quietly singing worked well because Craig had a banging headache all day.





## Praia do Amado

## Thursday 8 January

Honk honk that sounds familiar, it's the bread man from Alvor. What a round he's got! Craig still had a delicate head and the honking was the last thing he wanted to hear. He'd had a bad nights sleep with the thumping head. I think he is dehydrated but he won't listen to me..or not until he's had his extra extra strong espresso x 2.

Buzz thud shit. What's that Craig? I dunno. We looked out the window and MAN was playing or should I say, attempting to play with his helicopter. The helicopter was poorly sick. He'd crashed it a couple of days ago and it looked like a few bits and bobs were missing. Craig wandered over to have a look, tinker and play...boys and their toys!

By lunch his head was starting to clear, so we took a lovely walk along the beach to the rocks at the North point. A young couple were learning to surf, jeez they must be cold, my toe only touched the ocean and it got frost bite. At night point we climbed over the rocks to look in to the next bay. A sleep drop and torrent waters, not quite what I was expecting. The Atlantic Ocean sure as hell lets you know who is boss around here.

Just before sunset I sat outside with peanut on my knee and gave him a gentle owd dawg massage. He loved it and fell fast a sleep dreaming of little dog treats. Not long in to his dream when Bessie the old





lab came up and sniffed his butt. Peanut was not too impressed and he let her know. Bessie belongs to MAN and debs and they were just on their way back to their Motorhome after a nice long lunch at a nearby restaurant. Their MAN motorhome is one hell of a beast, smart car in the back, 500 liters of water, micro brewery etc.







2

## ROUTE SO FAR









# OUR TOP 10

- 1. Seville
- 2. Salamanca
- 3. Alvor



# OUR HIDDEN GEMS

- 1. Praia Do Arrifes
- 2. Prais Do Amado