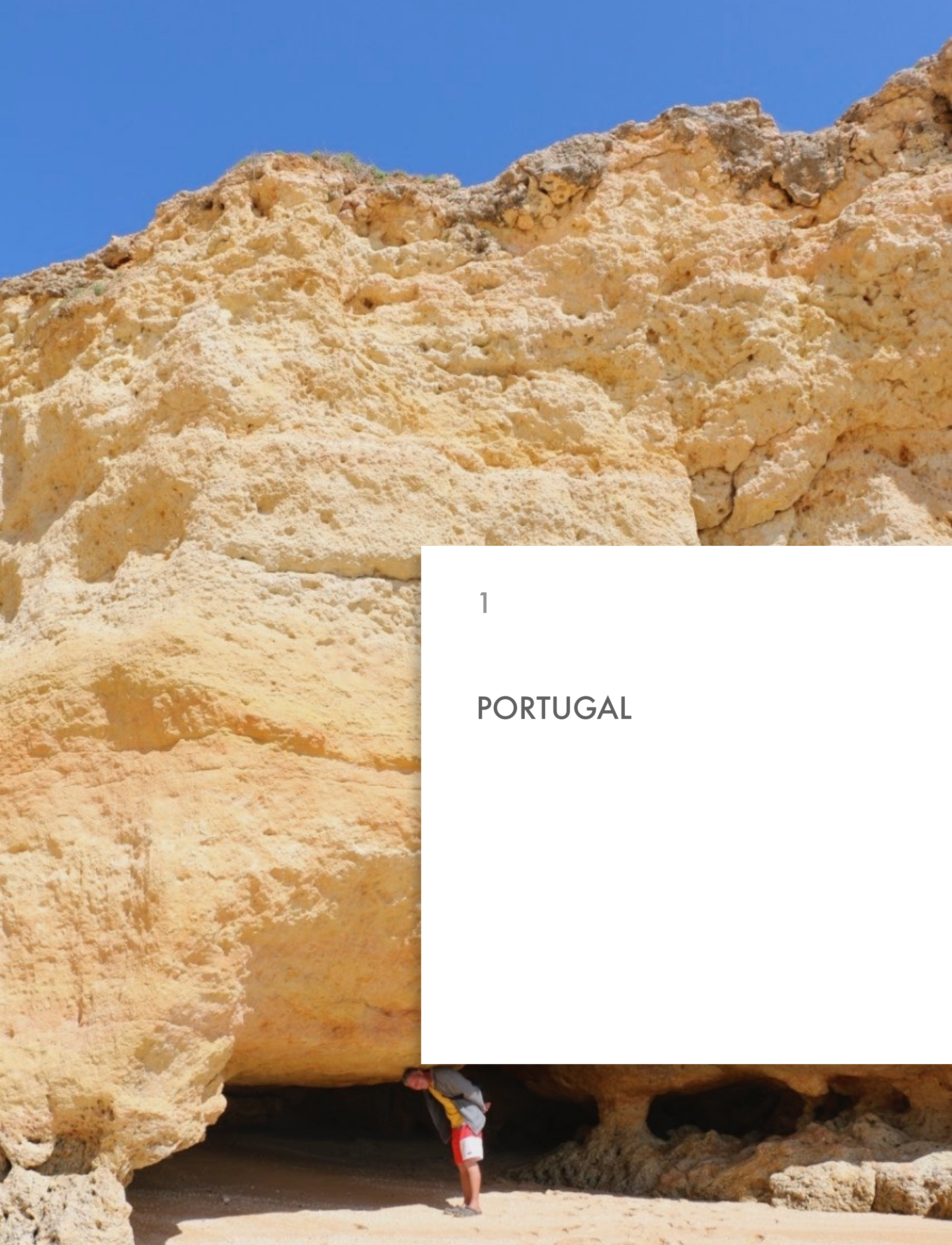




BUMBLING ALONG EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME





1

PORTUGAL



Praia do Marinhah

Monday 23 February

The weather changed and the dull, grey clouds hung over the beautiful Marinhah. Will it rain or won't it? That was the question of the day.

With the change in weather the majority of people packed up and left, leaving only a handful of hardened campers. Despite the weather we still had a wonderful day exploring the Portuguese countryside and its little creatures. The best find, some wild freesia, my mum's favourite flower. I don't know if the aroma is stronger in the wild but this freesia had the most beautiful smell, which so reminded me of mum.

In the afternoon, Hanneke (now spelt correctly) and I went for a walk and she pointed out plants and birds that I'd never even knew existed, so fascinating. In return, I showed her ivy orchids and the patch of ground which used to be sea coral, with lots of shell fossils embedded in it. We also spotted a huge variety of other wild orchids, almond groves, juniper berries, honeysuckle and lots of flowers we have no idea about. I nearly stood on some caterpillars, a precession of 58 killer buggers. That's some going to form a precession of so many but they did leave one little one behind. You could see his little legs going like the clappers to try and catch the train. At one point we heard him shout in a squeaky voice "hey, here's my ticket, room for a little one". Together we browsed the countryside and it was just



wonderful. I then showed Hanneke the prize of the day, Portuguese tree frogs. I warned her well in advance, so by the time we reached them she had finished her screaming like a banshee and throwing her arms in the air with excitement. I tell you, if you could bottle Hannake's enthusiasm the world would be a wonderful place. She lives for the moment, says what she wants and I think she is fab. The frogs were in an old water well and as we approached you could hear them croaking away. For 5cm long they can sure croak over 10 fields. It's mating season, so the croaks and ribbit noises were loud and somewhat unusual. Normally the frogs only croak at night but, mating season and they are croaking 24/7. It was like an orchestra of frogs! With the master bull on trombone, a boisterous teenagers on trumpet and the floozie frogs on saxophone. The pond of frogs were swimming around in green grunge and frog sperm. It looked horrid but to the frogs it was pure luxury, a 5 star lily pad. As we got closer to take photos they went quiet and still. We slowly crept to the side and parked our bums on the rocks. The frogs didn't move they just stayed on top of the green goo soup. We watched them and they watched us. It was a stand off...the frogs v humans wonder who'd croak it first. We took lots of photos and chatted away to them for ages. Just before it got too cold and dark we headed back to our campers and rejoined our other halves.



Praia do Marinhah

Tuesday 24 February

We couldn't decide if to move to the next place, the next bush or just stop here. After a long discussion that lasted 2 minutes we decided to stay put. We liked our neighbours and the humans weren't too bad. With that Craig went off and found a few bits of brick to stuff under Vin's wheels. We'd started to list on one side (not that I'd notice) and it was upsetting Craig equilibrium. He got out the spirit level and nudged Vin up 1mm...now he was happy. I spent the morning doing the admin stuff, whilst Craig spent a bit of bro time with Derek. Pmsl at the thought of Craig reading this, his eye will raise at that phrase..bro time! Being the macho type, he will certainly deny anything of the sort.

With admin done and the sun shining bright, we took a stroll along the west cliff. The coastal path disappears just after the twin arch rock formation and you have to scrabble up and down crevices and in and out of bushes. Not too bad if you have the right attire but shorts, t-shirt and crocs are not what you call good for rough rambling. We passed some beautiful views and lots of blow holes with the sea crashing up and smashing the away the rock. This wonderful landscape is slowly being washed away but I suppose that's Mother Nature doing her thing and in return she will reward us with lots of other natural goodies. We walked quite a way and ended up in the next village, Benagil. A tiny fishing village with a beautiful sandy



cove. The houses straggle a narrow gully and they all have lovely terraced gardens that make the village, so attractive. Once on the road we opted for the easier but longer stroll back to our little piece of paradise, Marinah.

Craig was preparing our evening meal when Hanneke popped over and invited us over for a few drinks. They have to leave tomorrow to go and see some friends in Portimao. How could we refuse, so with that Craig finished the lasagne and placed it to one side. All we need to do now is put the oven on for 20 minutes and voila...dinner is served. We went over to their pad with a thimble of red wine and a bottle of beer. We felt awful. I don't really drink, so it

didn't matter for me but Craig drinks like a fish. Hanneke and Derek pulled out a bottle of white wine and a bottle of brandy. They'd also put out a few nibbles of cheese and olives, how sweet. Cocktails at sunset soon turned in to a midnight feast, as the evening just flew by. We chatted about anything and everything and had a ball. Then around 11 we trotted off to Vin for lasagna and garlic bread. Craig made me laugh, he struggled to walk in his crocs and couldn't work out why his feet had grown so big. Or was it his crocs had struck? Perplexed and pissed he pulled off the crocs only to find they weren't his crocs..he pinched Derek's by mistake. Anyway, so pleased Craig prepared something earlier as our bellies were starving! All washed down



with more brandy. At this point, we set up the Hanneke challenge where we'd swap vans, the men in one and the women in another and we race to Cape Town. It was fun winding the men up and Hanneke gave Craig a good old run for his money. Derek and I just sat back and chuckled at them two going head to head in fun banter. Come the early hours of the morning Craig, Derek and Hanneke were well and truly sozzled. As ever, I remained sober. The highlight of the night was when Craig went for a cig and fell out the door and straight in to the bushes. Reappearing with a cheesy grin if though nothing had happened. On that note, we all decided it was time for bed and slopped off to our own little camper beds.



Praia do Marinhah

Wednesday 25 February

The birds are singing away this morning and full of the joys of spring. I do hope Hanneke and Derek are up and about to hear them. Craig woke with a banging headache but then again to be expected with the amount of wine, beer and brandy he shovelled down his throat. He nipped outside for a cig but wasn't long before he was back climbing in bed and head under covers. Bright light and hangovers don't go down to well. At lunchtime he surfaced with a very hoarse voice...a little deeper and he'd put Barrie White to shame.

Tap, tap. Hanneke and Derek to say good bye. So sad to see them go but so pleased to have met them, they have helped create some beautiful memories that we will treasure forever. Before we said our goodbyes and waved them on their way, we had a good chuckle about last night.

Hanneke and Derek's spot was much nicer than our plot, if nothing else because of the secluded little garden. We moved Vin a few meters and put our feet up in our new garden. Peanut had a good old sniff around to check the place was dude approved before he crashed out in the sunshine. We then had a look in the fridge to see what food we had left...ummmm BBQ. Sorted, we had a BBQ for lunch and then again.

A little update on our stats...we've travelled 2,795 miles and been on the road for 80 days. We've spent a total of €1,978, which equates to an average of €25 per day. But the most important... we are loving it!

Vin new little garden





Praia do Marinhah to Praia do Carvelho

Thursday 26 February

We woke up with a the biggest dilemma of the year! It was horrid. Do we move or do we stay? We love it here but we also love exploring. Oh toss a coin.

By 9am we are on our way, waving goodbye and saying thank you to our best hidden gem, Marinhah. It felt strange locking down all the cupboards, closing all the windows and checking everything was secure. Just as I had finished, I smiled. It is ever so funny when you watch a Motorhome leave a spot. You can guarantee within 2 minutes of setting off they stop. Despite thorough checks and rechecks there is always something in hiding that come hurtling at you like the clappers as soon as you settle down and set off.

Marg the Tom Tom peaked from under the dash and said hello. Hey, Marg, do your thing and find us another hidden gem! She beeped and after a few minutes she demanded we take a right turn. OK boss.

Craig seems happy we are moving on, not for anything other than we are down to 75% on the fresh water. After my stint of itching, he is paranoid we will run out of water bless him. I have told him we will fine but oh no, as soon as we hit 75% or to be more precise 105 litres, he goes in to panic mode. With all the recent sunshine our habitation



and engine batteries are fully charged, so at least that is something he doesn't need to worry about.

Another sunny day as we headed to our first waypoint, Benagil. Only 4 kilometres on the next headland. As we drove passed the fishing huts at the bottom of the dried up river bed, we took a sharp right and then booted Vin to give him a good kick up the hill. At the other side of the ravine Marg wanted us to turn left. The road signs all pointed right? So we did the usual and turned left taking an instant nose dive, down through the little tiny fishing village. Oh dear Marg, I do hope Vin can squeeze through. A few minutes later and the Tarmac finished but Marg was still adamant we carry on. Next minute we were right on the edge of a cliff overlooking an extraordinary cove. My god, this is beautiful. After Marinah, I didn't think we find somewhere so beautiful. Our parking spot is very similar with bushes, trees and little garden to hide Vin in but this time we have a 180 degree view of the ocean. The visibility out to sea is fantastic, so you can see for miles and miles. With such a perfect view, we sat down for lunch, with freshly baked ham joint and crusty bread. We watched the sun twinkle on the ocean waves, sail boats bobbing around and tidal current leaving their silvery trail. All swished down with the sound of the ocean lapping up on the beach.

Craig - shall we move?

No



Craig - but you will like it, I promise.

Do I have a choice in the matter?

With that the chocs were up and we were off. We moved down the windy road towards the beach. Only a few meters but it was even more beautiful. We parked Vin in the hedges and peered out through the door. Our own little beach cove, now that is a first. We tootled off down the path towards the beach and after doing the splits and bashing my kneecap, we found a tunnel. How cool is that Craig?

Craig - umm

As we went down through the tunnel we popped out on the beach in the little cove. Right in front, stood a lonesome sea rock, a bit like the James Bond rock in Thailand. Then as we looked around the cove we could see little caves and natural paths where the sea had washed away the rock. A toot around and a paddle in the sea (to wash the blood off my poorly knee) before heading back to Vin for a cool glass of water.

I found a fab rock to chat to whilst Craig went to find some tobacco papers. And believe it or not, he got the walkie talkies out! God knows how he will manage next week without me. Later on we had another walk around the west coast towards a



lighthouse. It was beautiful although I do feel like a broken record at the moment, as everything is beautiful. But it is honestly true, the coastline here is just one of the best I have ever seen. We spotted a few nice villas and even discussed the option of buying one! Watch this space, you never know.

I asked Craig, so what should I write about today? His reply "we moved". On that note, I say ter-ra for now.



Praia do Carvelho to Loule

Friday 27 February

What a lovely start to the day, sunrise in our secluded cove. Lovely orange tones to make the rock and sand look so inviting. I can't believe this is my last day. Why does the sun always shine when it is time to go home?

We set off on the road but just before setting off we put quite a bit of fresh water in the grey tank. We wanted it to swish about in the tank to give it a bit of a clean, it was starting to whiff a little. Craig's going to give it a good clean with the hose pipe, next week.

It felt good to be back on the road waving at all the campers. Every time someone waves we always go in to debate on the wave technique. Every camper has a unique wave, some point their finger, some just raise a hand and some do a half sort of wave. We just usually raise our hand but when we are full of beans, like today, we go full hog with a massive "hiya" wave. It's funny watching their face, as often it gives the impression you know them and you can see them wondering who it is. Well by the time we reach Loule our arms were aching.

We stocked up at Lidl, so Craig had enough stuff for the next few weeks or two. We did hope to find a GPL station but no such luck, but no worries he can fill up at Faro tomorrow.

We parked on Loule football ground. It great, as they allow you to park for free and provide fresh water, toilet facilities and little portacabin with wash facilities. They even arrange for a clean to come daily and make sure the facilities are clean and tidy, how good is that.

We did our usual cycle in to town but this time...in our t-shirts! No coats. Today, it's nice and toasty at 31 degrees. Hard to believe given its only end of February. Poor Peanut, he was shattered. Every time we stopped for 5 minutes we would catch a few rays and grab 40 winks, but at least he's happy.

Time to gather all my bits and bobs ready for going home. Craig and Peanut are staying here in sunny Portugal keeping Vin safe. Hopefully, I will only be a week or two and fingers crossed, I should find out early next week. So on that note, I will say cheerio for a couple of weeks and see you soon.

40 winks





2

ROUTE SO FAR

THE LAST 5 DAYS OF OUR JOURNEY



Our Top 10 Places

1. Seville
2. Salamanca
3. Alvor
4. Lagos
5. Belem
6. Mertola
7. Mafra
8. Evora
9. Beja
10. Praia do Rocha Marina

Our Hidden Gems

1. Praia do Marinhah
2. Praia do Arrifes
3. Praia do Carvelho
4. Praia do Almargem
5. Vila do Bispo (forest)
6. Mèrtola river bank
7. Praia do Amado
8. Porto Covo (dunes)
9. Cacela Velha