

Report Portugal Monte Mariposa October 31 – November 2, 2008

This was our third trip to Portugal and the first one in Monte Mariposa, a beautiful center in the Faro area. It was also the first one without the one and only Portuguese dance teacher Lila Ventura, as she followed her heart and now lives with her partner in Argentina. The venue was a treasure, as we had the whole valley with tipis, a yurt and two person log cabins to our disposal. Not that we needed all.

There been no dancing in Portugal for a year, with the predictable result: drop-outs and craving dedicados. So the group was small with 14 people max, including us and the organizing team. The dedication made up for the lack of numbers and we had a great weekend.

After the weekend we stayed in the Alentejo (on the Atlantic coast, north of the Algarve) with Jacqui and Lars. Dry and red, cork oaks, picturesque villages and a breathtaking coastline: a country to fall in love with. We were lucky to be there with the once a month local gypsy market happening. There we bumped into Maria and Anna (a German and English participant of the weekend) and also Lea (who runs the venue Mariposa) and the Portuguese cook (a true artist!). Most of them were a long way from home. Coincidence or did it show how tight the small Portuguese dance family is?



The weekend

The focus of the weekend was on massaging the heart and on the Mantras and Names as archetypal feelings in us that can be awakened by the dances. The new people felt the change, expressing this in terms of the heart being more open. All agreed the title of the weekend (Journey to the Heart) was well chosen and apt: the heart was being massaged.



In the dharma talks and Q&A we elaborated on the above and other sides of the spiritual flow that comes with the dances.

We cut part of the planned program short, creating space for a feedback session, the first one in Portugal. People were enthused and Fátima, Anna, Jacqui and Maria led their first dance.

The calling took some ingenuity, as Wali was – except for the opening evening – the only male in the company, but in the end that too worked out ('women singing' – 'women in silence').

New initiatives

Portugal has a relatively short history of Dances. Our two previous trips proved valuable for strengthening the group in its desire to continue on this path. The weekends also served the group in answering many questions about the dances, the spiritual background, the history, the present situation and so fort. People also have shown interest in training and leading dances themselves, especially since Lila left, but as yet the group is still very small, so this weekend we fitted in a feedback session, creating space for what needs or wants to come later. The result came immediately, for three women followed up on this and soon will be leading their first co-led dance event in the Alentejo (north of the Algarve).

Alhamdulillah!

Dance Camp & other contacts

Part of this year's trip was to offer support to Jacqui and Lars (both German, living in Portugal for many years) who want to organize a Portuguese Dance Camp. This camp carries the promise of a further opening for the dances and hopefully will bring together the small dance circles in the North (Porto), Middle (Lisbon) and South (Algarve). Jacqui already gained some experience through the children camp she organized earlier this summer.

The visit to Lars and Jacqui at their site was very inspiring. They have a beautiful mountainous land with many opportunities. Meanwhile the dates are set (July 12- 18, 2009) and we are in full progress planning, plotting and scheduling.

Both Lea and the cook danced with us and were very enthused about the dances. In the past Lea already had invited Lila (she didn't make it because of Argentina) and she'd love to have the dances at her summer festivities. Our tight summer schedule didn't allow for it this year, but who knows another time with us or one of the new-bred Portuguese dancers? It would be a good chance to open up the dances for a wider audience.

Helena Passanha was another interesting contact. She is dedicated to ecology and spirituality. In the past she organized a dance event with Sue Richards (England) and we visited her estate (a real estate: 4 square kilometers) to connect, which proved very fruitful. Her center is momentarily under reconstruction, but she offered her cooperation for forthcoming events like the Camp. She also offered space for a monthly evening, led by Anna, Jacqui and Maria. The first one is coming up soon, they wrote us, consulting us on the possible program.

All in all we feel many seeds have been sown and we feel our trip was worth the effort and energy. The Portuguese dancers don't feel left alone and we already sent them large files with descriptions of the dances we led to further underpin their first steps on the dance leading path.

Wali & Ariënne, December 2008