Quintamar – Escape to Children's Paradise

by Philippe Welti

The day starts with feeding the animals. Quintamar, situated in the nature reserve of Ria Formosa in the Algarve, Portugal, offers countless adventures for children. Add to that the clean sea with child-friendly beaches.

Parents with smaller children can relax in and around the holiday house, which contains four holiday apartments. Immediately upon waking, our son wants only one thing: to feed the animals. He has already made friends with the chickens, guinea pigs and rabbits. Ollie, the Vietnamese pot-bellied piglet, still warrants a bit of respect. And all the while, the peaceful animal simply yearns to be stoked. The animals know that when the children of the holiday guests arrive there will be a feast. Next to the enclosure you will find a trampoline, swings, slide and, under the 1,000-year old olive tree, a pirate ship that wants to be boarded each day anew.

Our daughter is ten and is not very interested in the small livestock. She is most impressed by watching dolphins – not in the zoo, but in the sea facing Olhão, half an hour's drive from Quintamar. Although the provider of the boat-safaris could not guarantee an encounter with the marine mammals, we took the risk – and were rewarded.

Quintamar is situated about 500 metres from the sea, amidst an almond and olive tree orchard and next to a lake. Again and again storks land at the lake on their passage from Africa to Europe – tempted by the many frogs. They enjoy themselves in the regeneration area of the lake, where plants purify the water in a natural process. The holiday apartments have either two or three bedrooms, a terrace with sea view and a pergola or veranda at lakeside. A gate to the patio prevents small children from jumping unattended into the water.

Those who prefer salt water (or if the sandpit next to the house is considered too small), will find fulfilment in the nearby sea. You will discover beautiful beaches for swimming on the island spread in front of Quintamar— reached via a miniature train – a further highlight for our son, who will for sure one day become a train driver.

Mass tourism is unknown in the Eastern Algarve. Nevertheless, a range of amenities is on offer. The former tuna station at Barril has been converted into two restaurants, catering to your culinary needs. The beaches with white sand, stretching along the 18km long island, invite one for long walks, collecting shells and building sand castles.

The nearby town of Tavira has many interesting sights, a daily market, plenty of shops, supermarkets, cafés and restaurants. Santa Luzia, a quaint fishing village, ten minutes on foot from Quintamar, offers small shops, cafés and restaurants on a promenade along the waterfront.

'For me it is important that the children also feel good with us', says Tamar Welti, the hostess. The expatriate Swiss has been living in the Algarve for nearly 20 years and speaks English, Portuguese and a bit of German. Her children, Gil and Abi, are eight and four years old. She knows all the sights in the area and is always at hand, together with her Portuguese partner, for advice and assistance. Should Mum not feel like cooking, Quintamar offers a unique solution: Pedro, an experienced cook, is happy to cater for guests with his cuisine on a daily or weekly basis.

How to get there:

Quintamar is situated about 30 km from the international airport of Faro. Switzerland is connected to Portugal with regular flights. **www.edelweiss.ch** flies from Spring to Autumn directly from Zurich to Faro. With Air Portugal (**http://flytap.com**) you reach Faro via a stopover in Lisbon.

Hiring a car for holidays in the Algarve is recommended, as public transport is a bit sparse and in order to reach the many beautiful beaches and visit all the interesting places further afield. Please **contact Tamar**, she will be glad to assist you:

Tamar on landline: 00351 281 381 306

Tamar on mobile: 00351 963 345 637

Further information in Switzerland: **079 223 7046** (Philippe, Tamar's cousin)

www.quintamar.com