

Survived the Carpet & Leather TimeShare Experience. Oh by the way, I'm in Morocco...



Held hostage for an hour or so by carpet baggers. Literally, they do bag carpets!

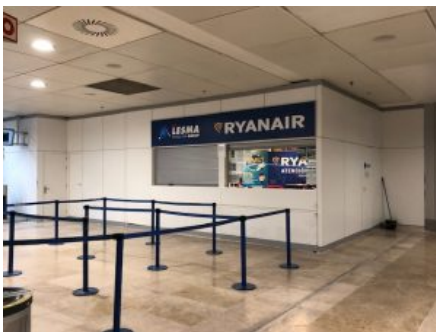
Becky let me know people wondered why no diary entries lately, like maybe I'd died in-transit to Morocco. No, not at all. The usual excuse would be that I've been too busy, and in fact I have had to devote a fair amount of time to getting some marketing stuff figured out and running while here in Morocco. But mostly it's because I put a lot of stuff up on Facebook, which is easy to do on your phone, instead of the website, which is a pain in the butt from anything but a regular computer. And by the time we get back to the room after being out "touring" all day, there's not much time or energy left!

But I'll attach a bunch of photos here so you can see what we've (my wife and I) have been up to. In a nutshell-

Monday evening- Caught a train from Redwood City to SFO, then flew SFO-Munich, 2hrs on the ground, then Munich to Madrid.

Tuesday night- We arrived Madrid about 11pm so no time for much of anything but crash.

Wednesday morning- the plan (remember, there's always a plan) was to head into Madrid and see... something... anything... since we were, of course, in... Madrid! Our flight didn't leave until 2:30pm. But we first woke up too early, went back to sleep, and didn't get up again until a bit past 8 and, well, we were still tired and had a lot more coming up, so we bailed on heading into town. Besides, we were flying Madrid to Rabat (Morocco) on Ryan Air, and I wasn't absolutely convinced we wouldn't suffer some "gotcha" that would cause us to have to pay a small fortune if we didn't do everything just right.



The infamous Ryan Air visa stamp check office.

So we head to the airport just a bit over three hours ahead of our flight, because, well, that's what they tell you to do, I'd never flown out of Madrid, and I'd never flown Ryan Air. Turned out two hours would have been fine. Almost nobody in line at the Ryan Air checkin counter. The main potential "gotcha" was that you had to get a visa stamp check, and there was nothing that looked like a visa stamp check place in the direction the lady kindly motioned.

Now here's the important thing to know. If we hadn't been checking bags, there would have been nobody telling us about this

requirement, nor pointing in its direction. This is where Ryan Air newbies get tripped up. You cannot get on your flight if you don't have this stamp (assuming you're not from an EU country, I should point out). You will have to go back through security, miss your flight, pay a huge fee to get the next flight... fun!

The flight itself was fine. Weird flying an airline whose in-flight literature brags about their 94%+ seat fill rate, as if it's something you, as a passenger, would appreciate.

Once in Rabat there was no issue clearing security, ATM right at the airport for getting the local currency (Dirham), and the cabs? What cabs. You'd normally have cabs in front of an airport, right? I'd already researched things and new about the government-fixed cab rate into town (150 Dirhams, about \$18), but nothing mentioned any difficulty finding an actual cab. Instead you get this guy in an orange "Cab Service" vest who may or may not be an official cab person, who takes your bag(s) and walks you a very long distance to a far corner of the parking lot where there are maybe 15 white cabs of varying vintage (none newer than 10 years, most 2 or even 3 times that) and consistently bad shape. And of course the fare is 300 Dirhams, not 150.

Oh, and language is an issue. English is not universal in this part of the world, and for these cab drivers, Arabic was used instead of French (French is nearly as common as Arabic everywhere in Morocco...except these cabs at the airport). I tell him it should be 150 and he just says no. 150. No. I decide OK, 200 would be reasonable, we'll go for 200. He keeps holding out for 300. I tell him no, we'll go elsewhere. Eventually he settles for 200. And yes, I was using Google Maps the whole way to the hotel, making sure we weren't heading the wrong way so we might be held hostage until we paid more to get to the right place.

We're heading into Saturday night/Sunday morning right now, and a lot's gone on (nothing bad) while we've been here, but don't have the time right now to do all the updates. But I will post the same photos I've put up on FB, so you can get some idea of what the place is like. --Mike--



Catching the train to SFO



Lufthansa passengers have strange ideas of standing in line. They curve. Same thing in Munich.



Brilliant vending machine idea at Madrid hotel. Stuff you might have left behind.



This is **not** Italy's Best coffee, as it advertises in Madrid Airport.



Something to know about Hotels in this part of the world. In Summer the *heat*; doesn't work. In winter the *Cool*; is disabled.



The Royal Cat of Rabat!



Ruins near Rabat.



Karen happy en-route to Fez. Vending-machine Starbucks coffee.



Intersting town gate in Meknez



Roman ruins in Volubilis



More roman ruins



Still more roman ruins



Did I tell you about the cool roman ruins?



A dinner out at a Riad in Fez



Marketplace in Fez



Narrow twisty passageways in Fez Meidna



As if you don't know