

The Country of Liechtenstein

Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

The Country of Morocco

1979

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We arrived at the Luxembourg Airport on Aug 26, and visited Emmy's cousins and West Germany for a few days. We traveled to Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway, spent time in The Netherlands, Belgium and France, before crossing to Spain and Portugal. We crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, from Spain, on a ferry. It was off-season, and not busy, so we were the only members of this tour group.

The ferryboat was crowded and hot. Many Spanish people go across the Strait of Gibraltar to Cueta, Spain, which happens to be in Africa, to shop for radios, calculators and other such things. This being Monday they were out in force.

Funny thing is, Gibraltar is on a small peninsula off the southern coast of Spain, and the British have a long term lease. Spain doesn't like that, so they have closed off the border for the last several years. If we want to visit the Rock of Gibraltar, we must leave for there from someplace other than Spain. It doesn't seem to bother Spain that they own Cueta, a city on the coast of Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar.

We found we were the only people on our tour, and there must be several tour companies with the same problem. This is the off-season, so they didn't do much except drop us off at a street corner in Cueta and tell us to meet them there at such and such a time. We walked along the harbor and looked at the goods in the stores. We recently purchased a small pocket calculator at Neiman Marcus in Newport Beach, and find the same one here for more money. So much for the cheapy free port, so much for the bargains.

They picked us up as advertised and took us on a little sightseeing drive around the town. We then went to a Cueta bus station where we joined people from other tours with almost no people, so there would be one bus for all.

When we got to the border with Morocco (Cueta is still Spain, though we are on the Continent of Africa) it took a while for them to check our passports, but really no difficulties. The tour guide took the passports into the office and we just waited in the bus. A few miles past the border we passed the Club Med and other tourist resorts, then stopped at a hotel/ restaurant/ resort complex for lunch.

We met a French couple, Paul and Brigitte from Nice, France. Paul was born in Algiers and said he really knew good cous-cous when he tasted it. While the

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cous-cous they were serving for lunch was OK, his mother fixed it much better. It's a kind of stew with celery and a cream-of-wheat-looking something, with potatoes. Jim had Bread, Butter and a Pepsi (BB&P). We could tell it was Pepsi by the shape of the bottle and the shape of the logo, but not by the lettering. After lunch we went into a large room for tea and cookies.

As we drove toward Teutonia there just happened to be a camel driver with a couple of large camels to ride and some small ones to pet, and right where there was room to park the bus! Emmy decided to ride a camel, and liked the experience.

In Teutonia we were guided around town on foot. Walked in and out of dark dank narrow walkways, with only foot traffic and an occasional donkey carrying freight. There were crowded food stalls, marvelous (to Emmy's eyes) piles of olives, bakeries, and a variety of markets and stores. As we walked through Teutonia we saw mosques where we heard the Moslem chant over a PA system, and then watched them at their prayer time. It's easy to see, we find this spellbinding!

While walking through a crowded market area in Teutonia, we heard a chanting murmur and saw a crowd of people coming down the stairway street. (Many "streets" were stair steps.) When Jim started to take a picture, he was "told" in no uncertain terms to forget the picture. But he took one picture without aiming the camera, he just pointed his stomach and pressed the button. (Not the belly-button, the one on the camera!) We then saw a wooden coffin being carried down the stairs in Teutonia, on the shoulders of several men. (In 1986, at the World's Fair in Vancouver, Canada, a man at the Moroccan Exhibit told us it must have been a funeral of a woman. The body was in a box so no one could see her shape, a man would just have been wrapped in a cloth.)

Soon we came upon a snake charmer who just happened to be where the tourists were passing by. Brigitte let the snake charmer put one around her neck, ugh! That "ugh" is for the snake, certainly not for Brigitte!

We ended at a store where they were asking ridiculous prices for outlandish products, supposedly from a trade school. We had Lipton tea in a native tea room in Teutonia, while musicians made a horrible noise.

Back to the bus for the long slow bumpy ride to Tangiers. We found the right front tire on the bus had a big bulge, but they had no spare. Thank goodness they drove very slowly from Teutonia to Tangiers, and we made it all the way. The countryside, the farms, the buildings, and the people, all looked very poor.

Checked into a quite suitable hotel, took a hot shower, and ventured into a couple of stores in the neighborhood. Dinner in the hotel was included in the price, and it was supposed to be a chicken dinner. The chicken didn't look too good, so Jim asked if he could have some of the beef we saw being served at a nearby table. When it arrived he spent his time cutting the "beef?" into small pieces and hiding it under whatever else was on the plate. Emmy agreed it tasted funny. Thank goodness for BB&P (Bread, Butter and Pepsi).

After dinner we talked to a woman from Scotland who said she was just getting over her divorce. She said she was an actress, and also owns a small hotel in Edinburgh, Scotland. She had asked for a quiet place to rest, and her

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tourist agent picked Tangiers. She has already met several “exiled” British Army officers, so guess she won’t be lonely for long. Her young tour guide today liked her so much he didn’t charge for the tour of Tangiers this afternoon! At midnight as we left to go to bed, she was catching a cab to go visit the British Army. We will try to find her hotel in Scotland next year.

This hotel isn’t too bad. The room contained two small beds, a shower and toilet in the private bath, and it had thin indoor/outdoor type carpet on the floor.

MA, Tangiers, Nov 6, Tue

After a continental breakfast we found ourselves with a private guide, car and driver for a tour of Tangiers. Stopped near a palace of some kind where there were several entertainers, but they didn’t collect much from two poor Americans. With the guide, we got out of the car at the entrance to the Kasbar (the old fortress) and were led through a series of interesting narrow, covered walkways, through passageways and markets, and past homes. The 2 1/2 hours were nearly a repeat of yesterday, but different and fascinating and exciting beyond repair. We were in a different city, but the walk through the narrow streets and the marketplace of Tangiers was wonderful.

In one steep narrow passageway two women had spread a small dirty rag on the pavement and displayed a few pieces of green vegetable for sale. Two donkeys, carrying buckets of redi-mix cement for a Tangiers construction job, appeared. As they passed, a donkey peed and pottied, and some splashed on the food, and no one seemed to notice. But we noticed it did add to the already bad stench in the area.

One thing for sure, they are not living in rundown, falling down dilapidated houses. At times like this, words fail us. How do we describe this, when we haven’t read anything else that describes it properly. The buildings in Tangiers may not be clean and neat, but the walls look to be three feet thick, and in no danger at all, of ever falling down.

It appears the native market area is called the Medina (Traditional City). The Medina either joins or includes the Kasbar (the old fortress). The food stalls in Tangiers contained tons of olives of all sizes and colors and smells, and strange looking fruits and vegetables, as well as unrecognizable cuts of meats in the market stalls. Emmy was tempted by the olives, but chickened out. No thanks, she lacked stomach for it, or maybe would not have had one after eating some olives.

We discovered that bakeries in Tangiers sell heat as well as baked goods. Once they have the oven heated, they might as well make use of the heat. We would see little children taking un-baked dough to the bakery, and baked bread home with them. Makes good sense.

The Berber population is the original North African native, and they prefer farming and gathering of wood to sell as fuel, as their way to make a living. We saw little old Berber women carrying huge loads of wood, more like twigs, on their backs to sell to bakeries and other places in Tangiers.

The Arabs are mainly Moslem. Some women seem to wear “normal” clothes, while others wear a variety of black, gray, and brown robes, sometimes with part or all their face covered. There seems to be some latitude in the way they dress,

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or maybe they just belong to a different tribe, religion, or organization. The Moroccan men sometimes wear a robe and a fez, and sometimes not.

We bought a four by six foot Berber rug made of lambs wool and trimmed with camel hair. It's very heavy and according to the people involved, each rug is registered with the Moroccan government so the tourist can be sure of getting what they think they are getting.

We also bought two round brass trays, trimmed in copper, brass, and some silver colored metal, nickel perhaps. They are old trays, actually used (perhaps) in a Morocco restaurant, not just "distressed" to look old. For lunch Emmy had a sort of buffet, while the BB&P held out for Jim. We ate with Paul and Brigitte and arranged to visit with them in Nice, France in a week or so.

Most of the stores in town were closed for a national holiday today. In 1975, 850,000 Moroccan men women and children, with the help of the Moroccan Government, marched on the Spanish Sahara to take it over for Morocco. Maybe Spain didn't want it all that bad anyway, but what was the Spanish Army to do with all these people.

Due to a mix-up, our guide took us to the wrong dock in Tangiers, and by the time we got to the right place our scheduled hydrofoil had already left for Spain. We were on the next ferryboat an hour or so later, but one of its engines quit half-way across the Strait of Gibraltar. A hydrofoil normally rides high above the water on small "wings," but when one of its engines quit, it settled back to the water, then went even slower than a normal boat for the rest of the 12 mile trip across the Strait of Gibraltar.

It was after dark when we arrived in Spain, and we found the harbor already closed for the night. A place to dock was finally found, but now we had to undergo what we had been assured would be a very detailed inspection of our passports, and of the rug and copper trays we had purchased in Tangiers.

As we entered the customs building in Algeciras, who do we see but the uniformed (customs) man from the "leaky ceiling episode" of a couple of days ago! He recognized us, smiled, saluted, shook our hands, and waved us past the others, through the gate without even a glance at our passports or packages. A perfect end to a less than perfect day!

The taxi back to the camp site was no problem, and the bed was a welcome sight.

We visited several more days in Spain, and rested in Palma, on the Island of Majorca. A couple of days later, we drove on to the French Riviera. We then drove through Monaco, and through Italy to the tunnel under Mont Blanc. Then we drove to France, then Switzerland, and soon returned to Mettlach, Germany and parked the camper at Toni's neighbor (for several months). On Nov. 29, from Luxembourg's airport, we flew to Iceland for a couple of days, then home to the US.