

MARRAKECH

6 September 2012



Rick was off to Wiltshire for his annual PCB Golf Day, Hayden was off to Jersey for a networking couple of days and Jen met me off the train at Gatwick. After a snack and a few glasses of wine we set off on British Airways for the “Pink City” of Marrakech. It's a city of labyrinthine alleyways, but where are all the tourists? Our minibus transporter from the airport was unable to manoeuvre through the narrow lanes so we were escorted on foot to Riad Lydines which was right in the middle of the old Medina. It appeared that our 7 room Riad had just one other couple staying there. We were welcomed with mint tea and sweet pastries. There was no way we were going to venture out alone that day as we would never be able to find our way back. A taxi was called to take us to another Riad, also within the city walls, where we had a wonderful meal but even here there was only one other couple. Our taxi driver was really sweet as he had to park the taxi and walk us to the Riad both ends. We were a little concerned when we tried to contact him for our return journey as we he didn't answer his phone but he suddenly appeared out of nowhere and said he had been praying at the mosque.



7 September 2012

Terrible night, didn't think I slept at all but Jen said I fidgeted and snored all night. Amazing breakfast, I asked for an omelette but it came with potatoes, olives and full salad, a huge plate full. Our tour guide arrived promptly with a couple from New Zealand and her father from Hove.



The kissing lady

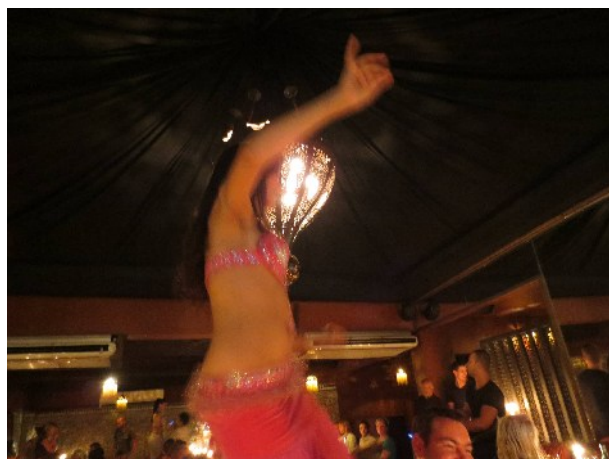


Storks were everywhere with huge, huge nests

We visited the Bahia Palace and then had a mint tea at another Riad. The father was feeling weary so we left him resting at the Riad while we visited the Dar Si Said Palace Museum of Jewellery. Before lunch we stopped at a carpet shop and were saved from the hard sell as father bought his daughter a rug for her birthday, Jen and I were enticed into a room by one of the cooperative workers who showed us how to make a rug and then proceeded to continuously kiss me until we paid her off. Lunch on the top floor of a local restaurant was followed by a visit to the Majorelle Gardens that since 1980 has been owned by Yves Saint-Larent and Pierre Berge.



We also visited a shop that sold homoeopathic remedies for all sorts of ailments. We bought a slimming tea and musk to keep the moths away.



That evening we chose to eat in a popular, touristy restaurant overlooking the square that comes alive at night with dancers, fortune-tellers, musicians, acrobats, storytellers and snake charmers. The phone rang during the belly dancers performance and it was Rick giving us the sad news that Auntie Ray had died that morning. Our usual taxi driver once again escorted us to and from the restaurant and Riad. When we got back to our Riad, as we were the only guests, we sent the Night Porter out to buy us some Apple Tobacco for the big pipe. Another sleepless night wondering if we could get an earlier flight back so I could get to Salt Lake City as soon as possible.



8 September 2012



Jen started to have a funny tummy and I was unsettled as it was proving difficult to contact BA to try and change our flight. We had a morning tour booked so decided to try and relax and enjoy what was on offer. The first visit was to Medersa Ben Youssef, a 14 century religious teaching university. One of the first things we noticed about the Medina was that there were very few windows in the alleyways. That is because most of the windows faced inwards so you couldn't really tell what was behind the walls. However, the university had windows and was so interesting. It was much the same as the palace we visited yesterday where there was a lot of carved cedar and corridors for the eunuchs. It's only in recent times, my life time, that men can no longer have four wives and that girls are able to be educated. I found this fascinating but Jen was not feeling well. The Souks were great, not only were they selling local handicrafts but they were also making them on site. The smell of leather dye was too much for Jen but we did buy a scarf/pashmina each.



Our Riad was amazing, it was centred around a garden with the smallest swimming pool you have ever seen, not much more than a big bath and not dissimilar to the Colonial style houses in Cuba. It was on three levels with a patio garden at the top. Jen definitely was suffering after lunch and after numerous phone calls we decided that it was way too expensive to fly home early. Our usual taxi driver dropped us off at La Mamounia Hotel that was frequented by Winston Churchill, some of his paintings are displayed in the rooms. I have to say that Jen was completely at home in this 5 star establishment and was enquiring about the price of spa treatments. Yes, they were expensive and thank goodness we didn't have enough time to take advantage of them. Also, we didn't have enough to cash to have a meal there so we opted to have a liquid supper, gin and tonic for me and coke for Jen. Have to say that we didn't have too many as the gin and tonic was about £15 a time ! Another sleepless night.



9 September

Rick had done a great job booking flights, car parks and hotels in Salt Lake. Jen and I had a lazy last day on the Riad patio joined by a honeymoon couple. She was British and he looked Arab like. They shut off part of the patio but after lunch we found the German couple who were also staying, frolicking and having great fun in the private spa bath. The honeymoon couple who had a secret staircase to the patio were horrified, however, the incident kept us amused for the rest of the day. By now my tummy had started to play up, oh no, bad tummy and huge flight to Salt Lake coming up.