

Recently Lufthansa and Delta launched their own online auction site, featuring flights from both carriers. It closed a short time later. Before it closed, we were able to book 2 round-trip tickets from Los Angeles to Madrid Spain for \$500. That's \$250., round-trip each, including fees and taxes. No wonder they closed the site. They were basic coach seats for travel the first week of December.

While Spain is beautiful, sometimes we seek more adventure and exotic locales, so our real goal was to use the opportunity to get to Marrakech, Morocco, Africa, a cheap destination from Europe, but not from the USA. We were able to secure round trip tickets for travel from Madrid to Marrakech for \$300 each, so we were set.

I like flying Lufthansa. The crews are German and take flying very seriously and all seem very professional, so it gives me confidence. The flight from Los Angeles to Frankfurt was long and uneventful. Sometimes you forget how long an eleven hour coach flight is, even with good professional service. We arrived promptly in Frankfurt and made our way to the connecting flight to Madrid.

Madrid was a terrific experience and you can read all about it in a separate entry. After several days in Madrid, we returned to the airport for our Royal Air Maroc Flight to Casablanca. The flight was just under three hours and we had only a few hours before the final flight to Marrakech.

We explored the airport and enjoyed our first taste of travel in Africa and in the Islamic world. The art in the airport was beautiful and we also began to see people in native Arab traditional dress, now more than western clothing. We made our way to the gate for the Marrakech flight and were a bit distressed to see the plane was an older 737 jet with the long, 1970s engines. These were the generation before the shorter, fatter engines you see on today's jets. The inside was new, but this was probably a 1970's plane still in service, which you still find in "third world" countries, mainly in Africa and Asia. The flight was only an hour or so, and we finally arrived in Marrakech.

Yes, it's hot. This was December, so it wasn't overwhelming. Small airport, just one or two main terminals, everything in one big room. Walked outside to donkey carts, and the reality of Africa. Caught a little taxi into town, after researching the process online. We always check various travel sites to see the best way to get from the airport to our hotel. Some cities it's taxi, some cities have a direct train from the airport into town, and some it's best to use the bus.

Morocco is a wonderful country and a great introduction to Arabia and Africa for travelers who have never experienced it. Although it has a large Arab population, it is a monarchy with a king and has other religions as well. Many of the people are not Arabs, but Berbers, a different group that originated in Africa. For everything you ever wanted to know, we recommend the US State Department site, [here](#).

My friend had pre-booked the hotel online, Hotel Islane. The location was perfect, directly behind the Djamma Al Fina, the main square, and directly across from Kotoubia, the main, ancient mosque. This was a little loud as they do the prayer calls several times a day including 5 am, but it's all part of the experience. The hotel was great, big room, huge tile bath, and about \$18. per night. This is not a new hotel, it's 1960's vintage, but we knew what to expect and for the price and location, you can't beat it.

There are many luxury properties, ranging from riads (formerly private mansions) deep in the medina, featuring 5-6 luxurious rooms, to La Mamounia, the grande damme, a hundred year old property that is the ultimate in luxury. It was the home away from home for Winston Churchill. Rooms start at \$500. a night, and it features typical Ritz Carlton level service, style and comfort. There is also a whole new area/development called the Palmerie, a few miles outside of Marrakech. This is filled with luxury hotels and condos, but is an all new luxury resort area, with no authenticity. Some people like to stay there and go into the media or old city for fun and tours, and then return to the luxury of the resort.

So we've travelled for 24 hours, half way around the world. We're now in Africa, in Marrakech Morocco. The sounds and smells of the city are wafting up from the busy street below. Its time to take a walk.

Part 2 Coming Soon...