

Essaouira – March 28, 2021 – Drive from Marrakesh to Essaouira, Morocco

After three days of taking it easy at the Al Fassia Hotel in Marrakesh it was time to become explorers again. We are doing nothing tough today after a pandemic caused layoff of one year. We have a less than four-hour drive to Essaouira and I have already made hotel reservations with a hotel with parking. Oh, to be so naïve.

We leave the hotel, drive out of Marrakesh, stop for gas, and hit the open road. It didn't take but a few minutes to again become comfortable with driving in Morocco. Something new to contend with: it seems there is a police check point every 20 or 30 minutes that require us to come to a stop and either we are waved through or we have to pull over to show our passports.

As we entered a small town the policeman waves me over. I put on my mask, roll down the window and the officer says, "Texaaasss, you are from Texaaasss"? I say, "Yes, from Texas". He is smiling (no mask), we fist bump through my window and off we go.

About 45 minutes later a different type of uniformed police officer waves me over. This guy isn't smiling, and two other officers are standing with a radar gun. I was doing 80 km/hr in a 60 km/hr zone. I had been careful during the drive because the speed limit seems to change every couple of km, and this was the at least the third radar trap I had seen.

The officer speaks French, I speak English. He keeps pointing at the number 80, then me and then the number 60 and at the road. Eventually I am asked to get out of the 4Runner and follow him across the road to where the other officers are and their car. The officer gets in the back and writes 100 on a piece of paper. I play dumb, something that comes naturally to me. After about five minutes I give up and pull out 100 MAD or about \$12 and give it to him. I receive no ticket or any other paperwork but do get my passport back. I admit I was speeding but I know the money I paid for speeding never saw a government coffer.

We are now driving in what is best described as "new" Essaouira on the right side and the Atlantic Ocean on the left side. Our phone GPS is set to the hotel. I know the hotel can't be in the walled city because it said it had parking. I should know better than to think having parking means the parking is at the hotel.

We find a parking place and with the help of the attendant – he moves a vehicle and motions us into the spot he has created. Nancy is impressed – first attempt I parallel into a space with about two feet in front and two feet in back of the 4Runner.

Time to find our hotel. Earlier a young guy tried to get us to follow him to a parking lot, we said, "no thank you" and guess who is now standing in front of us. He tells us our hotel isn't

open. I call the hotel and get a recording in French; have no idea what is being said. We start following our GPS and he is walking with us.

We find the hotel. Door is locked, I knock several times and no one answers. From across the street a man comes out and begins speaking in French. Our guide or at least in the next couple of minutes he will be our guide tells us that the man says the hotel is closed.

Our new best friend and guide says he knows of a close by hotel we will like. What the heck, will take a chance. The first one has no view, the second one is more than we want to pay, but the third one is an apartment only two flights up with great ocean view. We have a home.



View of city wall and ocean from living room or bedroom windows. Wall is less than 30 feet from our window. This is the loudest ocean I have ever slept next to – the waves were crashing all night. It was great.

We agree to the price of roughly \$90/night with the owner who has an art gallery shop next door. We walk back to our car, let the attendant know we are leaving, and pay him a dollar.

Follow our guide to his parking lot or at least the one he represents. Wasn't easy getting the large 4Runner parked but I had at least three guys giving me directions and didn't take more than a couple of minutes.

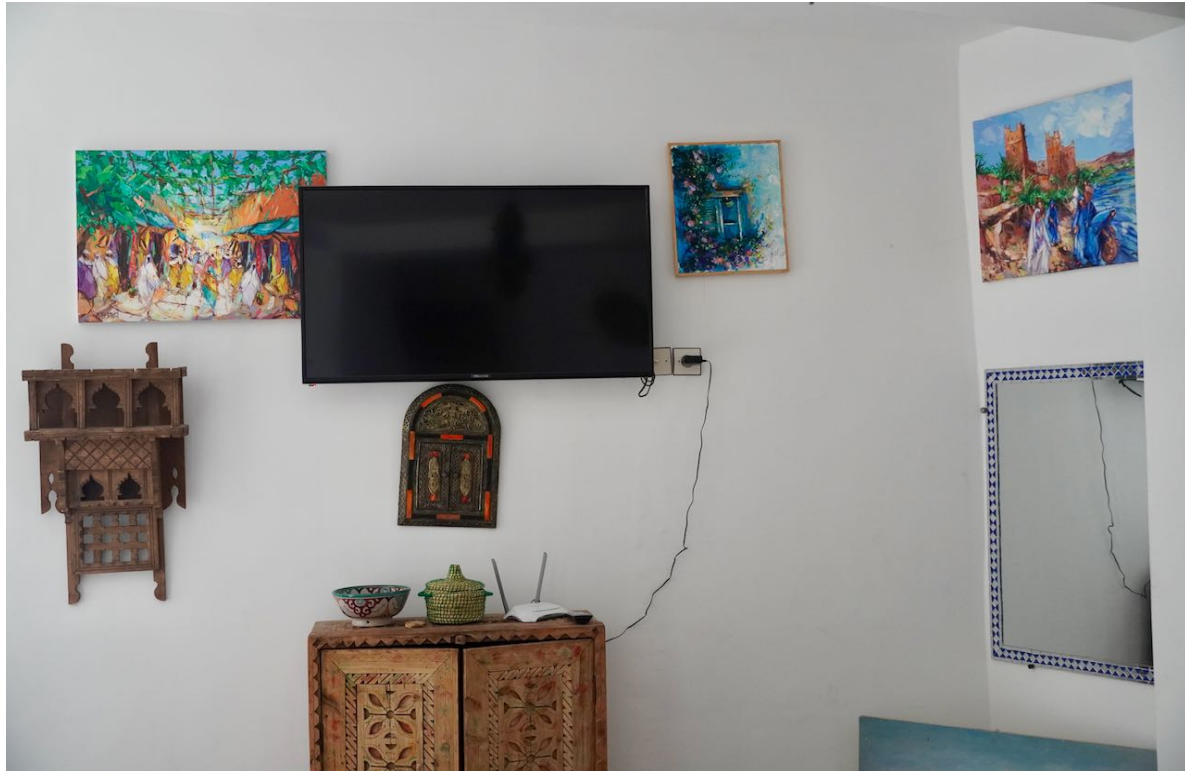
Our guide grabs a cart to load our luggage. This causes a shouting match between our guide and another guy with a cart who wants our business. I put our luggage in our guide's cart and

that sort of settle the issue – or at least the other guy gave up after we had been walking for about five minutes.

For all his work I paid our guide or fixer or good Samaritan 100 MAD/\$12. He was very happy.



Living room and Nancy in our bedroom. Kitchen and bathroom down five serious steep steps and on my right. Second bedroom down a different set of steep steps also on the right. Remember our landlord is an art dealer and I believe what he didn't have room for in his gallery he hung in the apartment.

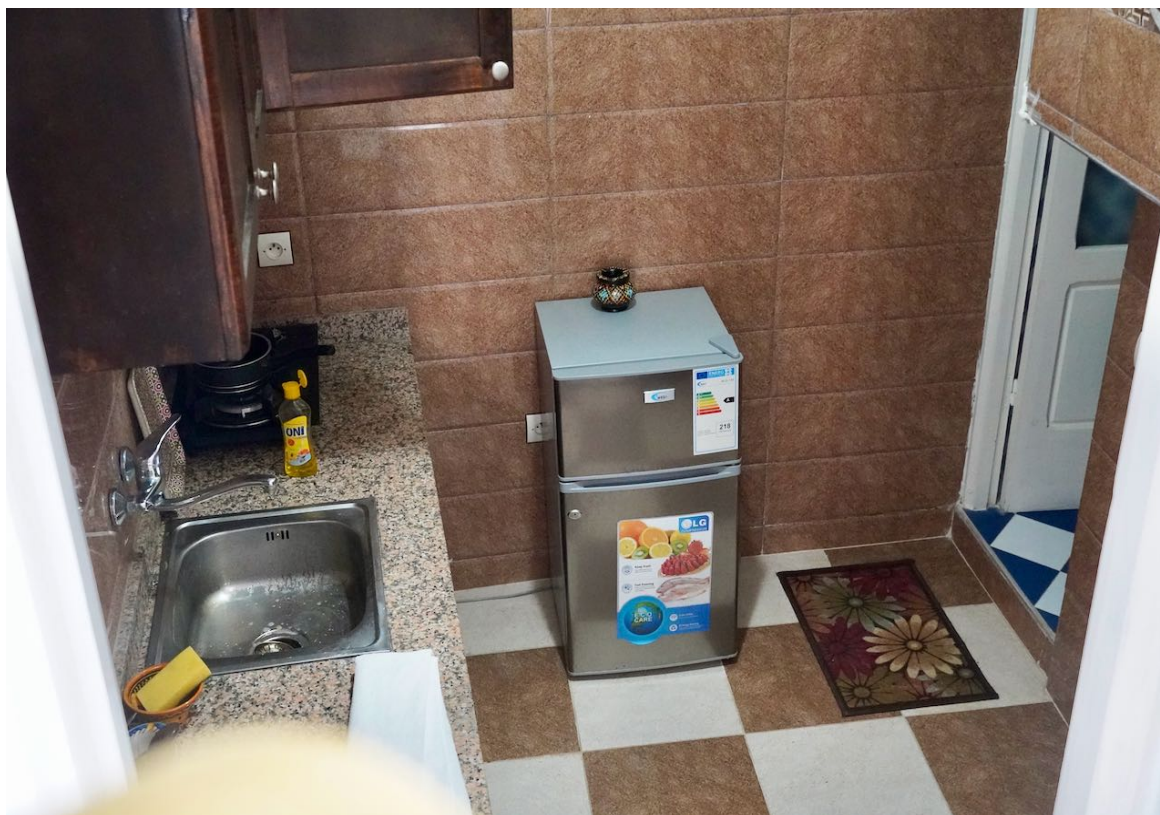


Television and router in living room.





Doors open on to city wall and ocean. The window I am standing in front of also looks out on to the city wall and ocean.



Looking down into the kitchen and door on right leads to bathroom.



Shower hose is on right. Nancy and I decided since we were only going to be here two nights we would shower at our next stop.



We felt very safe in our apartment.



Of course. there were gulls – hey, it's the ocean.



The two flights of steps with the first flight having no handrail, the dangerously steep set of steps to the kitchen and bathroom didn't make for the best apartment we have rented but the smell and sound of the ocean made it a good apartment.

Quick recap of our first day's journey: no problem filling up with gas, friendly fist bumping policeman, speeding ticket, reservation for a hotel that was closed and didn't have on-site parking as advertised, a guide who found us a place to stay and park and moved our luggage, an apartment in the medina overlooking and across from the city wall and ocean. All in all, a good first day.