

52 Hours In the Cairo Airport: Preparing for Flight Cancellations

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

For the vast majority of us, our stay at an airport is usually just the couple of hours before a flight. Perhaps if your **flight out to your holiday destination or back home is delayed**, it might be a little bit longer, but fortunately it's rare that you have to spend a night at an airport.

Whenever we've had delayed flights in the past, it's been either down to technical problems with the plane or weather. I never expected in my life that the **delays we'd experience would be as a result of a whole political change in a country**, but that's exactly what happened to us on our return home from Egypt.

We arrived at Cairo Airport on a Saturday afternoon, knowing that our flight had already left London and should be waiting for us. Unfortunately, our planned flight home coincided with a decision to **turn all international flights around**, including ours, which was already three hours into its journey to get to us.

The drama didn't end there. Eventually, after finally managing to find another flight out, to Berlin, which was due to depart the following night, that, too was cancelled. We only finally made our **escape from Cairo** on the Monday evening, when we were allowed to board a flight to Munich with our Berlin boarding passes.

So how did we survive the intervening 52 hours? Honestly? When I look back, I'm not entirely sure, but there were some **valuable lessons that we learned** during it. With some, we were fortunate with the choices we made, while there were other things that, in hindsight, we wished we'd done or thought about.

The first thing we learned was to **keep hold of the details of everything we spent** while making our alternative way home. We knew that it would be needed for a compensation claim once we were back. Fortunately, I carry a plastic folder with us to keep our documents together, so all the receipts and information we gathered went into this, so we knew where to find them. This made life so much easier, particularly when we reached Munich and discovered that our luggage had taken its own sweet way home. Immediately, we knew where our baggage tags were.

Although it was a nightmare at the time to **recover our suitcases** when

we reached Cairo Airport, it proved to be a godsend to us, as it allowed us access to everything in there. Fortunately, my husband had the foresight to take out the toilet roll that we had in there, just in case of any upset stomachs. It was something we were very glad of during the rest of our stay at the airport. Trust me when I say that it's one of the first things to run out when there are lots of people trapped there.

Sadly, one thing that we didn't think to get out of our suitcases was the phone charger for my BlackBerry. In all honesty, I thought it was in my hand luggage, but I really wished over the remaining time we spent at the airport that I'd double checked and had it with me. With both my BlackBerry and my husband's **cell phone running low on charge**, we ended up having to use up a chunk of our remaining cash on a multi-charger. It was a great purchase, but one that we could've done without. Note for future trips -- **always keep your phone chargers with you** and, if it's applicable, an adapter for the country you're visiting. At least that was in our hand luggage with us.

Something else we learned was the **importance of keeping some local currency with you** right to the airport. With the Internet being shut down by the government, debit and credit card transactions were almost impossible, so the cards we had with us were useless. Of course, usually you'd just go to a cash machine, but even those were soon out of money. Another reason to have cash with you was that the power that it had in Egypt. We quickly discovered the importance of it, as on more than one occasion, people waving large amounts of notes around got themselves to the front of a line.

We had just about enough Egyptian pounds left to buy food and drink, although there wasn't much of either to be found at the airport. The fact that there was a **curfew in place** from mid afternoon until early morning meant restocking was almost impossible, once supplies ran out. Whatever we bought, and generally it was pretty much chocolate, chips, and water, we made sure to ration, ensuring that there was always something for us, no matter how long we ended up stranded. It was amazing, and frightening too, how quickly everyone descended to the basic survival needs of having enough to eat and drink.

Sleep was a harder commodity to come by, although we made the best of the floor and chairs on our first night, and the chairs at the boarding gate on the second night. As a result of our experience, we're now seriously contemplating **investing in some air mattresses or travel pillows** to take away with us in the future. We were certainly very jealous of the Japanese group we saw, who came equipped with both, along with a kettle to make their own tea and coffee. They were seriously prepared for any eventuality!

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Perhaps the most important lesson we learned from this whole delay experience is that **there's no way you can be prepared for everything**. We had almost everything thrown at us during our enforced vacation at Cairo Airport. Usually, if you're stuck at an airport, you'd expect to be able to get food and water easily enough, be able to use your credit cards and get more money out. With the situation we found ourselves in, none of those things were options to us.

It certainly gave us food for thought and will make us think more carefully in the future about **what we take in our carry-on luggage** with us. Trust me, we won't be going anywhere without phone chargers, tissues or toilet roll, or electrical adapters. As for those air mattresses and travel pillows ... we'll have to see what we can fit in with us in the future!

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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