

Viking and the Travel Emergency Phone Number

Finally, off to Europe on Sunday afternoon, June 25. We left that afternoon to drive to a Ramada Inn close to the Albuquerque airport (ABQ). The idea was that on Monday we would get our 7:10 AM flights on Delta Airlines to Amsterdam on Monday, arriving early Tuesday morning. On arrival at ABQ at 5:00 AM, however, the nice lady named Yolanda at the Delta check-in desk informed us that our flight to Minneapolis (MSP) had been canceled! And hence *no* flight from MSP to Amsterdam (AMS) to connect with our Viking cruise before it left port on Tuesday afternoon, June 27. Yuck!

What Delta *could* do for us was to put us on a 6:05 AM flight to Los Angeles (LAX) the *next morning*. From there, after a six hour layover, they would fly us to AMS, to arrive on Wednesday morning, June 28. That is, a day late, and still missing our long-boat. A quandary – should we scrub the whole trip and go home? We did purchase trip interruption insurance, after all.

Well, on Friday before that Sunday I had received an e-mail from the Viking people about what to do in case of a travel emergency. While still at the Delta desk, I called the number provided. The lady who answered tried to see if there was another way we could get to Amsterdam in time to meet the boat. Unfortunately she couldn't do anything better than what Yolanda was able to provide. She said that we should take it. And we would then be met at the AMS airport outside the baggage claim on Wednesday morning by a Viking representative. Who would then have a driver take us to Kinderdijk, where the Viking boat named Sigyn made its first stop. OK, so that's what we would do, and Yolanda completed setting up the changes of flights to AMS.

So, we were then staying that day and night in Albuquerque because of the very early flight to LAX. Yolanda eased the pain by saying that Delta would provide hotel and meal vouchers for the stay-over. Oh boy!, we could stay at the Sheraton Hotel across the street, a fair bit fancier than the Ramada motel! Nope – calling up the Sheraton; “Sorry sir, but we are fully booked tonight.” The voucher did not seem to work for the Ramada (an inexpensive \$64) but it *would* for the Marriott Courtyard, a bit further down the road. Calling them, they said they had a room for us, which I then reserved on my credit card for a mere \$270. Assuming that the Delta voucher would arrive at the Marriott and the charge to my card would be rescinded. Fine.

Retrieving the car from the Park & Shuttle, before going to the Marriott, we stopped back at the Ramada (we hadn't actually been checked out yet) and enjoyed their free hot breakfast. Then on to the Marriott and we were able to even get into our room (at about 9:00 AM). We had gotten up at 4:00 AM, so we were glad to have the opportunity to nap a bit.

Around 11:00 that day we decided to be like tourists and went to the Albuquerque Biopark. This park is home of the Botanical Garden, which we went to first. Plants, a huge model train set-up, a butterfly enclosure, and a living bug house. After a break for lunch, we visited the adjacent aquarium, but I never saw one of its featured river otters. After returning to the hotel, we dined at the nearby Applebee's, and hit the hay for an 3:00 AM start the next morning in plenty of time to make our flight to LAX.

When we checked out of the Marriott early on Tuesday morning, I asked at the desk if the Delta voucher had arrived. It had not. So the credit card charge for the \$270 reservation was turned from pending to paid. Thus we were *free* to leave the hotel for the ABQ airport with no further charges. After we returned home from this trip, I requested that Delta reimburse me for the \$270 charge. The complaint was lodged on July 17 and is still "open." We will see what happens.

We arrived at the ABQ airport in plenty of time to make our 6:50 flight to LAX. *Oops!* You might have noticed that six paragraphs above I wrote that it was a 6:05 AM flight. All my fault – I hadn't read the boarding passes properly and came up with the 6:50 flight time. Needless to say, we went to the gate for that flight *just* as the 6:05 plane was leaving.

So, *now* what do we do? Another call to the Viking emergency lady, and she was able to get us on a 10:05 Southwest Airlines flight to LAX that, because of the scheduled six-hour layover, *was* able to get us on Delta's 13:55 flight to AMS.

It was an eleven-hour flight, operated in collaboration with KLM Airlines. A nice Dutch dinner, and a mostly unsuccessful attempt to get some sleep during most of the flight.

We got off the plane around 8:30 AM Wednesday, June 28. We went through customs, found that our two roller-bags checked earlier in a the Delta counter *did* arrive at the baggage claim. We exited into the public-arrivals area to meet the Viking agent. There was indeed a girl from Viking who eventually found us and turned us over to a driver who took us to Kinderdijk to meet the Sigyn, our long-boat. We got there in time for lunch.