

Guatemala; Upon Arrival

Written Tuesday Feb.18/2020 by Rob Bowyer

The first thing that comes to mind is how the unordinary quickly becomes ordinary. Perhaps this is a comment on how quickly people adapt to new surroundings. I know this to be true.

Upon touchdown at the main airport of Guatemala, comparatively speaking a tiny airport with one small terminal, I am bristling with attentiveness to the new world that has appeared around me. I do my best to absorb all that I can. My senses are on high alert. The newness of it all is exciting.

For the most part the long and narrow hall of the terminal is void of people. Our footsteps and voices echo off the terrazzo floors and the immense glass windows as if we are wandering through a rocky Arizona canyon.

As I walk, heavy with backpack and single suitcase, I peer through the large windows at the world beyond. There are but a couple of airliners out on the tarmac, one of them the one that brought us. They bear the insignia of AeroMexico; a bird of prey set as headgear on a human face, probably Aztec. I cannot explain why but I like their logo. Perhaps it is unique. From the near empty cavern and the barren tarmac one would surmise that Guatemala is neither a tourist destination nor a business center. That's okay with me. I hate tourists, even though I'm one.

The tarmac stretches out a few hundred feet and then abruptly encounters a shear rock wall that has been cut and grooved by machine. The flat surface that is the landing strip and terminal building is obviously human made for the landscape that surrounds me is rolling with mountains and I hazard a guess there is little chance of finding a natural area that is large enough and level enough and suitable enough to land a jet.

Along the entire top of the etched and imposing wall there is a chain link fence and the fence itself is lined along its top with coiled razor wire. Okay, so this is Guatemala. I can see the point of the fence. It is a barrier to keep people from falling over the edge, but then why the razor wire. Who in their right mind would clamber over a fence to immediately become involved in a 50 meter drop to hard pavement? Wait a minute, there are people in this world who are not in their right mind. The razor wire is to protect us from ourselves and the stupid ideas that sometimes inspire us. Hey, I have a great idea, lets storm the airport! Who's with me? Lemmings.

Beyond the fence are tropical looking trees, and a road upon which I see cars traveling. Beyond this are rows of tall buildings, apartments as opposed to business towers. The buildings are in various states of condition, meaning some look in sad shape and in need of repair, and some are colourful and cheery looking in their own right. I think of Beirut, even though I've never been to Beirut. Again I don't know why. I generally don't know why I think what I think. The city looks appealing and unappealing. My first impression is what a great place, I wouldn't want to live here.

Yes, yes, yes, and then in the further beyond are the mountains. The lovely mountains. Not tall and snow covered like the Rockies or Andes but still what I would call big mothers. It is early morning. We have been in the air all night traveling through darkness. We have left the cold and snow and the relatively flat surface of Eastern Canada behind. Now the sun has come up over the hills and the sky is clear blue. I have yet to taste the warm air. The mountains look dry and thirsty. I love mountains and I am ready to sip the nectar of Guatemala.