



EDITORIAL

"Be careful what you wish for" the saying goes. As you sit on the tarmac at Heathrow praying for your flight to Cairo to be delayed *just a little longer* don't be surprised if only three days later your wish is granted in a different fashion – a six hour delay on the train from Cairo to Alexandria. And as you disembark from the same train with feet like blocks of ice because of the over-efficient air conditioning from which you desperately longed to escape, cast your mind back to the previous night when at four in the morning, bathed in perspiration, you were cursing your hotel for turning off the air conditioning. And if you hoped to avert trouble in central Cairo by avoiding the revolutionary crowd in Tahrir Square you might not have anticipated being disturbed by young men from the Libyan revolution who were pursuing a violent vendetta on the 17th floor of your hotel – also at four in the morning!

You may guess from this that a recent holiday to Egypt was not without incident. First the tarmac delay. On checking in for our flight from Newcastle to Cairo via Amsterdam we were told that the flight was cancelled for technical reasons – but we were immediately informed that we had been re-routed via Heathrow. Anticipating that this might result in generous compensation under Reg. 261/2004 and given that we were in no hurry it was disappointing to discover that the re-routing would get us to Cairo only five minutes late – not the two hours needed to qualify for a payment of €300 each. But all was not lost – the plane from Heathrow to Cairo also developed a technical fault. It was not serious enough to cause a further cancellation but it would take "about an hour" to fix while we sat on the plane. As time passed – 60 minutes, 70 minutes, 80 minutes, 90 minutes – hope began to grow again that compensation would be payable – only to be dashed at the last minute with only a few minutes to go. Frustratingly, the compensation would easily have paid for the flights with some to spare.

As you will gather from reading the article by Dr Shafi about the Arab Spring in this issue, Egypt is suffering a catastrophic decline in tourist numbers and all the hotels we stayed in were remarkably empty at what should have been the height of the season. We suspect this was the reason for the lack of air conditioning in our first hotel; the management just switched it off to save money. But no such luck on the train. The delay in this case was caused by railway employees mounting a protest against the Government and blocking the track. Only by travelling on a very circuitous route could the train reach Alexandria – turning a two hour journey into an eight hour tour of the Nile delta.

We did in fact venture across Tahrir Square and suffered no mishaps but did not find it a particularly comfortable place to be. We concluded that a better vantage point was the balcony of our hotel where we could easily observe what was going on from a safe distance. However this illusion of safety ill-prepared us for the outburst of violent shouting and screaming, of doors banging loudly and of disreputable looking young men running up and down the corridor at four in the morning. Such was our alarm that as well as calling security we barricaded our door with a chest of drawers – they weren't going to take us without a fight! It took about 45 minutes for the situation to calm down but it wasn't until the next morning that an explanation was forthcoming.

Apparently the hotel was accommodating a group of Libyan revolutionary veterans – participants in the war of liberation who had been injured and due to a lack of sufficient medical facilities in Libya had been sent to other countries for medical treatment. Unfortunately for us, those staying at our hotel

were from two different factions and resentment had boiled over into a violent dispute just outside our door – so much for wishing to stay out of trouble.

As one would expect from a four star hotel with an international reputation the management were seriously embarrassed by this incident but it is amazing how easily one is pacified when those magic words “We can offer you a free upgrade” are uttered! Free drinks in the Club Lounge watching the sun set over the Nile while the feluccas glide over the water are enough to calm the most fevered brow.

After all this would we go back to Egypt? And the answer is yes. One of the joys of travel is encountering the unexpected and the unpredictable and one has to be philosophical about such incidents. Flights are cancelled wherever one travels to; trains are delayed here at home on a regular basis; and as we know from the disturbances last summer in London civil disorder can break out in the most unexpected places. Egypt was no worse than many other places and a great deal more exciting as a tourist destination than most – a view of the Pyramids from your hotel balcony is more than enough to compensate for the lack of air conditioning.

And perhaps rather than railing against fate we should listen to the wise words of President Richard Nixon: “Life isn’t meant to be easy ... I guess I’m something of a fatalist ... Life is one crisis after another.”

David Grant
Co-Editor

Travel Law Specialists at the Bar

1 Chancery Lane boasts one of the few dedicated specialist International Travel & Leisure teams at the independent Bar.

Chambers is listed as a top tier travel law set in *Chambers & Partners* and as a leading consumer law set in *The Legal 500*, a ranking which is attributed to the practice's travel industry knowledge.

Members of the Travel Team act for both claimants and defendants in all types of overseas accident litigation, as well as contractual recovery actions against overseas suppliers, international and national regulatory compliance and related areas of leisure activity litigation. We also provide non-litigious advisory consultation for organisations concerned with regulatory compliance in the travel industry, due diligence, standard terms and conditions and the configuration of internet businesses.

1 Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1LF

www.1chancerylane.com, clerks: 0845 634 6666