

Sheryl Howe

From: "Sheryl Howe" <sahowe@wbt.org>
To: <sahowe@wbt.org>
Sent: Sunday, May 15, 2005 3:22 AM
Subject: Arriving...

Hi!

I arrived in Addis (Ethiopia) Friday night, after a long time traveling on an airline where they only show one movie per flight. I didn't care on long flight number 1 because I just wanted to sleep. But long flight #2, 7 hours, one movie... it's just wrong...

It was a pretty uneventful trip, very little drama, luggage arrived...

Although, there is an election tomorrow (Sunday). Apparently, it's a big deal --- this is the third election since marxism fell and the first one where there's actually a viable opposition to the current ruling party. (You could pray about this --- there's plenty of international observers, but pray for a peaceful outcome, whichever way it goes).

So there's apparently lots more security about than normal. When I got through customs at the airport (where they were incredibly polite. I had two laptops with me --- mine and one I carried over for someone here. You can only bring one laptop; have to pay tax or duty or whatever on the second one. The Wycliffe people here had told me that if customs wanted to keep anything I had, just get a receipt and they'll come release it later. So I handed over the laptop to some customs guy. It's a little unnerving just handing over a new laptop to some airport guy --- there was a rickety-looking fold up table set up and they had a book they logged the receipt number in, they stuck a piece of masking tape on the laptop and wrote the receipt number on it and gave me the receipt so allegedly, someone with the receipt can pay the tax and get the laptop back. Luckily the laptop is insured...)

So get out of customs, and there's no one to pick me up --- because they were stuck outside in a big, long line of people waiting to get through security to get into the airport. Various hotel shuttle service and taxi drivers descend on me. I didn't know about the security thing outside and I'm a tiny bit concerned that, because it did take me a super long time to get a visa, and collect my luggage and the whole receipt thing/leaving the laptop, the people gave up on me and left. But I did have a phone number and the taxi guy had a phone and tried calling the number I had, but nobody answered. It actually wasn't as scary as one might think and the people came fairly shortly after I got through customs.

As promised, the weather is fabulous. I'm staying in an apartment with two other people. It's quite nice. My roommates were advising me that I could just break the server instead of fixing it, requiring me to stay here in the fabulous weather rather than return to hot North Carolina. ...

I'm not feeling as jet-lagged as I would have thought --- maybe it'll hit me tomorrow. However, today, I went to the kind of Walmart of here, Bambis. I had 75 Birr (the money here) --- about \$10. I thought I was totaling up what I was buying. I go to pay and one thing she keys in as 3 Birr more than the price it's marked. I, with no language skill, do the whole pointing thing. She wanders away for a bit and then comes back and keys in 3 Birr... and the total is now 75.45. So close, but 45 cents (or whatever it's called --- I don't know what coins are, they just have the number and some Amharic writing on there), 45 whatever the cents are called over. I'm blaming jet lag. I'm thinking I'm only here three weeks, I can blame anything on jet lag the whole time I'm here --- plus probably three weeks after I return --- like a get out of jail free card for stupidity for the next six weeks...

(Someone loaned me 5 Birr at the store and also, I connected to the internet to send this --- don't be impressed that email I came to fix is working already...)

Sheryl