

Keep your wits about you at Marseille Airport

Ryanair flights into Marseille (2hr 10min) are busy as we recently found out, but a word of warning about the airport there. The flights were delayed in both directions, but were otherwise fine.

If you are travelling by train there is a shuttle bus from the station to the terminal. Fellow travellers found that three buses arrived at the same time and they are supposed to be at intervals, said to be three an hour. If a bus does not arrive it is about a 30 minute walk we understand.

Driving a car to the airport then beware. Ryanair use Marseille Provence Airport, about 27k north-west of Marseille, but at around 10k out the airport is not signed Marseille but Marignane. We followed the plane sign and then picked up signs for car rental return which are difficult to spot at roundabouts.

We dropped off the vehicle at Europcar – there are other well known brands including Avis, by the way – and headed for departures in searing heat.

Thankfully, the Terminal One departures area was nearby and we kept in what shade there was as we dragged our cases along.

However, beware. We could not see a Ryanair desk in Terminal 1

departures and we had to ask. There are actually two departure points and we were directed to Terminal 2. That was where we arrived but, in the confusion to get cases and find the car rental, that had not registered.

Then, we saw a sign for departures. Two areas were flagged up and we took the one for those who have already checked in and had hand luggage only.

Once inside we strolled on only to be called back by a loud woman who demanded to see boarding passes then demanded to see information on a phone.

I questioned that and she calmed down. Once she read our boarding passes carefully we were flagged on to baggage checks.

That was a quick and simple process although we had to show boarding passes again. Into the holding area we went.

The flight board said the time to board our Edinburgh-bound plane would be confirmed at 16.15. That time came and went and nothing.

Then the information line re boarding disappeared. All announcements were in French, nothing in English, so we did not have a clue what was going on.

So, we, and others anxious to know – we had noted other Scottish voices – but even French-speaking passengers were concerned by now and asked us.

The only out left was our mobile phone., Search for the Ryanair app which said we had been delayed to 18.50. Nothing on the board and no announcement.

It's not the most comfortable seating area and we found only two announcement boards in the space which contained a café – poor assortment of food – and a duty free. We dreaded a lengthy delay in this area which is definitely in need of some

TLC.

Eventually, the boarding was called, thankfully in English, and thankfully we responded quickly as we were called along with several other flights which meant a long queue.

Three immigration police were initially on duty, then two. One of them appeared constantly on the phone and so we were down to one.

It took ages shuffling along lanes in an air conditioning area where the ducts were covered in dust.

Stress levels increased as the clock ticked on and we advanced slowly to the front of the queue. Finally, our passports were checked and we were cleared with a short walk to Gate D.

There we were herded into lanes. Ours was priority boarding but there were people in that lane who had not paid for that privilege.

Others nipped into the priority section once the flight was called. Bad organisation.

The airport operatives then made a final call announcement. It was clear that a number of passengers were stuck in the immigration queue.

They made it, thankfully, but not by much and complained of a large queue at immigration and with only one operative. It was obvious that Border police had not staffed up.

Eventually, we boarded and were on our way, but the experience was not one I enjoyed.

