

20th September 2024

Tags

"I have a horror of tags and labels."

Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*

The Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky, is justified in his horror of tags and labels, especially when he references the stereotypes he's experienced in the world of the Arts. But, for a traveller, tags and labels matter.

For a start, a suitcase should be clearly labelled – name, address, something for easy identification on the baggage carousel. On my recent trip, a label with the Travel Company logo was deemed to be advisable too. But after watching a consumer-advice TV programme around misdirected and lost baggage on flights, I decided to invest in "luggage tags". These electronic tags, placed in a suitcase, can be linked to an iPhone so that, once activated, they can be tracked. Wherever your bag is, it can be located. So, one tag for my case, and one for my wife's. Job done!

On the outward journey of our trip, I had fun checking that our bags were with us on the flight and that they'd been off-loaded at the airport. All was well. We expected the same on our return journey. But as we were waiting to embark our aircraft, we could actually see our bags being loaded. There was mine, and there was my wife's. And with both cases secure in the hold our plane, who needed electronic surveillance?

However, at "baggage reclaim" in Edinburgh, I checked my iPhone anyway, just for fun. The read-out informed me that *my* case was in the airport, but that my wife's was in Barcelona! What? *Barcelona!* How could that be? We saw that case being loaded *with our own eyes!* It didn't make sense. But, sure enough, in a few moments, my case *and* my wife's appeared. I checked my iPhone again. It *still* informed me that my wife's case was in Barcelona. So we checked the pocket in the case where I'd carefully placed the tag. And it wasn't there! It must have fallen out and, we surmise, had been put in another case by a helpful baggage-handler – the *wrong* case, going to the *wrong* city.

And the moral of the story? Andrei Tarkovsky is *still* right about labels and tags – especially if he was to go on to reference an incompetent traveller who *thought* his tags were important, but who found that they only work if you're careful about the use of the tags in the first place!

A prayer for today

Labelled! Me? Oh yes! A unique individual. And I'm happy to wear that tag!