

The Rock, 2014: Marla Perkins, Ph.D.

Another of my day trips from Spain in 2014 was a day in Gibraltar. I was on a bus for a couple of hours from where I'd been staying, and busses from Spain don't cross into Gibraltar, which is technically managed by the so-called United Kingdom. So everyone who wants to go into or out of Gibraltar by land walks or bikes across the border (no man's land, technically) along the airstrip that was installed for WWII. The space was a horse racetrack before the airstrip was made. A lot of WWII detritus remains on the peninsula.



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The Rock of Gibraltar pretty much is Gibraltar. There's a little bit of level-ish land where the Rock connects to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula, but not much. I knew a professional runner from Gibraltar who could run the perimeter of his homeland in eleven minutes: too much hassle to cross the border every time he wanted to go for a run, so he ran laps around his country. Cost-of-living is high because the competition for limited housing is extensive. Cost of everything is high because Spain is constantly dickering with the so-called United Kingdom by not allowing much in by land in hopes that Spain can take Gibraltar from the Brits by making themselves obnoxious to both the Brits and the Gibraltarians. Because bullying is always the best negotiating tactic. Needless to say, the Gibraltarians prefer to stay with the Brits. The Brits bring the supplies by boat, for a cost, but without the bullying.



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The top of the Rock can be reached easily enough by cable car, once one intellectually and physically fights one's way to the cable car. Along the way, one has to figure out the need to bypass the shysters claiming that the cable car is unavailable because a cruise ship just offloaded, so their shuttle on the road is the only way up the Rock. No. Maybe there was a cruise ship that just offloaded, but they don't use the cable car. The cable car doesn't have enough capacity, so the cruise people take their own shuttles. Meanwhile, as one is thinking one's way through the situation, one wastes twenty minutes while the shysters try to con other people so that they can fill up a shuttle before they go to the top. Once one does figure out the situation and straight-arms through and past the shuttle shysters and warns people walking along behind one, the shuttle shysters cuss one out for trying to save other people's money from the local shysters. Onward and upward.



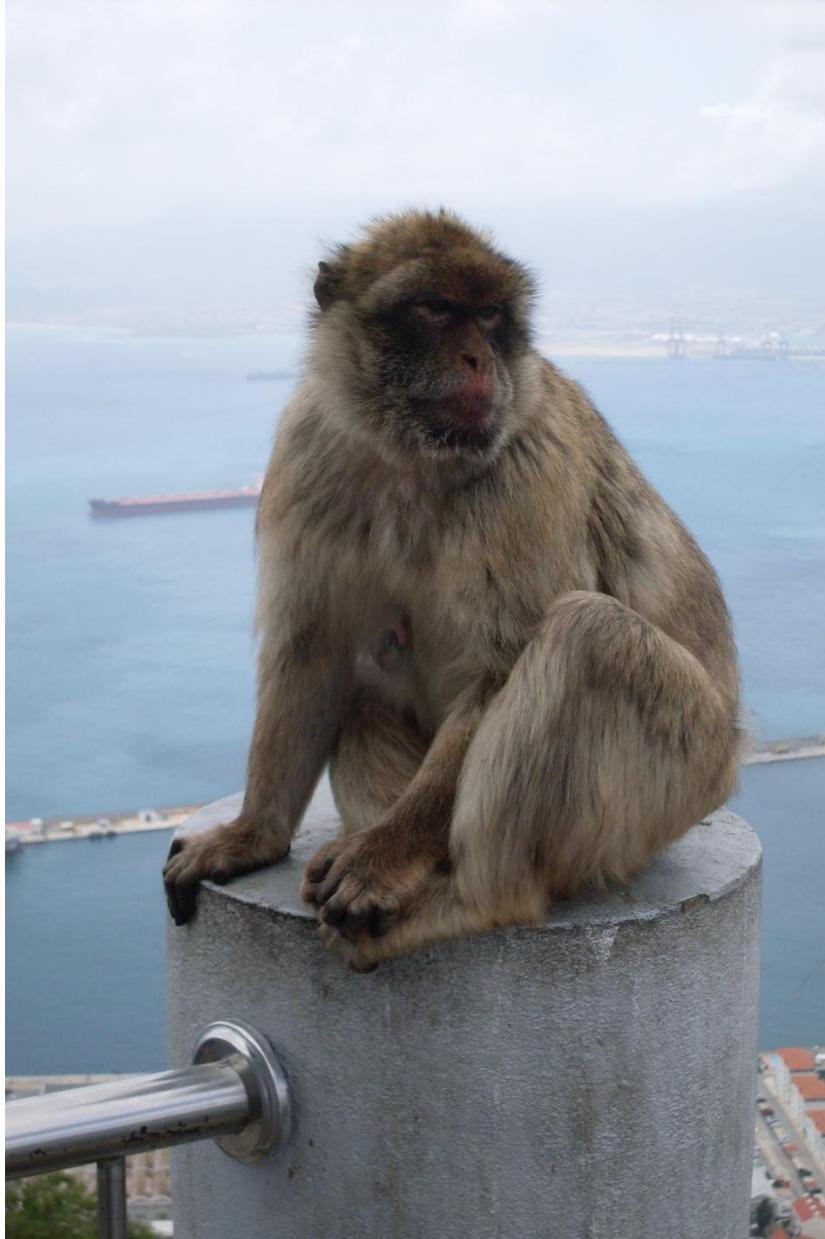
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Gibraltar is the only place in Europe where the Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*) live. Mostly they live in North Africa, in the Atlas Mountains. And mostly, macaques are Asian. How the Barbary macaques came to Gibraltar is unknown, but I assume they floated. It's not that far. An especially enterprising macaque could have swum. But more likely, they hitched a ride on a boat. They're an endangered species, but on top of the rock, they're all over the place.



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The macaques are also all over the people, and in their hair, and going through their backpacks, and trying out the cameras, and looking for snacks, and eating whatever snacks they find, and jumping onto railings, and jumping off railings, and being shooed out of the gift store, and being cleaned up after by the janitorial staff, and grooming each other, and nursing their babies, and trying to make more babies, and so on.



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Come for the rock. Stay for the macaques.

