

Wonderful World of ATM Stamps

The term “ATM “ stamps is an abbreviation from the German word “Automaten Marken” (and means stamps from a vending machine) and generally refers to stamps & postage labels that usually partially pre-printed and have denomination and other indicia printed by the machine at the time of purchase.



Early ATM stamps were first made by the Frama company in Switzerland in 1976, with many countries started using these stamps, which were relatively plain looking.

Later iterations of Frama stamps resulted in much more colorful stamps such as these from Liechtenstein & Aland. While Frama is no longer producing ATM machines, the one from Liechtenstein was purchased by the exhibitor in person at the Vaduz, Liechtenstein Frama machine in 2013.



Early ATM stamps generally used traditional (“lick ‘n stick”) gum and the values were printed by impact printers (using an inked ribbon).

Now, most ATM stamps use self-adhesive gum and most use “thermal” printing (which is technically NOT “printing” (which assumes applying ink or toner to paper), but rather “activation” of a thermal coating that is already present on the pre-printed labels, such as the Costa Rica example to the right.



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France and Portugal both produce very nice colorful and large ATM stamps. Many of the ATM stamps from France are primarily sold at stamp shows; more plain varieties are in use for “every day” use. The Portugal ATM stamp still uses an impact printer for the indicia.



Errors are available can be either machine or human errors. The above “inverted” print is a human error.

“Zero” values are generally test prints

Norwegian ATM stamp



To make their ATM stamps more appealing to collectors, they make them appear more like “regular” postage stamps by using simulated die-cut perforations rather than straight line die-cutting, as shown by these examples from Ireland and Denmark.

