

Post



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Off to the land of Oz - April 1, 2025

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SUMMARY

Our Australia adventure started out with three happy surprises: access to the American Airlines lounge in Austin, an upgrade to Business Class on the LAX portion of the flight and an on time departure. - Karen

[Photos](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

DETAIL

Is today the first day of our Australia trip? Well, we're not there yet, but we've done lots of planning. Our flight to Sydney starts with a flight to Los Angeles and that's not til 7:00 pm today. It's nice that we're not leaving at the crack of dawn. We can (somewhat) relax and prep the house for our absence. We've been planning this for months and I've been adjusting my body clock in advance. Sadly I was given bad advice by AI and made things even worse. Oh well, it is what it is.

We convene at Tricia and Don's and travel in one big Uber to the airport. Our driver conveys he's from Cuba and that's about the extent of his English. Going through security we're TSA Pre, yay. So we don't have to take out our liquids or electronics or strip at all. Alas all four pieces of our luggage are flagged. It turns out the x-ray machine (MRI?) wasn't working and they had to re-boot it and send our bags through again, this time without issue.

Normally flying international wouldn't get me into the Admiral's club, nor would being Platinum loyalty member with the airline. But those two things together did! We're flying coach so we take advantage of the complimentary wine and food. We're told we'll get neither on our flight to LAX. An hour later we're full and feeling no pain. My phone buzzes. It's American, they've upgraded us to first class. Only to LAX but still.

On the plane, before we take off, we have another cocktail and then dinner and wine at cruising altitude. Definitely more than we need and I sleep most of the way to LA. On our approach the LA skies are clear, dark and calm. We glide endlessly over the blinking sea of twinkling lights that is the greater Los Angeles area. The top of the SoFi Stadium flashed us some ad or message that is lost on us.

My watch tells me it's a couple of hours until our Sydney flight departs, but we'll need some of that time to get to the international terminal and maybe back through security with our luggage, ugh. As the plane taxis to the jetbridge the trim stewardess retrieved my sports coat. So civilized this close to the front of the plane!

At the gate we deplane, quick and easy being in rows two and four. We walk and walk, leaving Terminal 4 and headed towards Terminal B, aka the Tom Bradley International Terminal, aka the TBIT. So many names. We never did need to leave the secure area to get to our gate. We were always "air side", never needing to re-experience the indignities of another security screening.

At our gate I ask ChatGPT, on my smartphone, for directions to the AA airport lounge. It's just a quick eight minute walk, but it's back to Terminal 4 from whence we just came. No thanks.

We park ourselves at our gate and take turns freshening up while the balance of our cadre stands (well, sits) guard over our luggage. A through tooth brushing proves a delightful transformation.

The PA system isn't terrible here but only perhaps one quarter of the announcements are in English. Most seem to be passionate pleas for stray passengers, always on the verge of missing their flight to Seoul, Tokyo, or Shenzhen. Those announcements were made in mostly unintelligible English followed by Korean, Japanese, or Mandarin. Trump's executive order on "English is the official language" necessarily ignored for expediency.

On our walk over we'd seen double deck planes, with their long rows of windows amazingly both above and below. We're on an old-style plane with only one level (for passengers), though it is wide. Our row (34) goes all the way up to letter "L" (though there is no seat "I" to avoid confusion).

Rummaging through our bags we retrieve our eyeshades, ear plugs, and compression socks. Our row has two extra inches, but contortions are still required to get into our tight, long compression socks. No deep vein thrombosis for us, please.

As soon as the doors close and cross-check is done (whatever that is) the tall guy in the middle seat (next to Karen) bolts to snag an aisle seat in a different row, nearer a friend. Karen is thrilled to have the additional space for the next fourteen hours.

It's 12:30 a.m. body-time by the time we take off. We close our eyes to sleep, ignoring the clatter (and smells) of dinner service as we fade off into a fitful, only moderately comfortable sleep in our coach seats. Tomorrow's another (snore...)

Photos



The steep driveway and cowboy boots conspire with the heavy luggage, but Tricia and Don successfully get to the Uber.



The Admiral's Club lounge was fairly full, but we found a good corner with four seats. A young future doctor from Texas Tech recorded our pre-flight fun.



The meal to LAX was spicy but somewhat tasteless (due to the altitude). I guess we should be grateful we got anything.



FARNSNIENTE

and as guys, took a trip down memory lane, thanks to this exhibit of old flight attendant outfit from times (and airlines) of yester-year.



With nothing better to do before our flight, we relax and vamp for the camera.

[Next](#) | [Index](#)

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