

Post



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Jul 29, 2025 · 5 min read

# Leaving Austin (again) - July 28-29, 2025

Updated: Aug 1, 2025

## ***SUMMARY***

We took a late (10:30 pm) flight out of Austin, non-stop to London on British Airways. We were delighted to find that we were seated in Premium Economy which was actually very nice and comfy. Due to the late hour and seats that actually reclined a ways we got a good night's sleep - an absolute necessity for dealing with the nightmare that is Heathrow Airport. We had a many-hour layover but were able to access the BA lounge so the time passed quickly. Another overnight flight, this one to Johannesburg, South Africa. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Our flight from Austin to London is scheduled for 10:15 pm. We're surprised it's so late, but there are probably flights all day long that we don't know about. We're due to have a six hour mid-day layover at Heathrow before our flight on to Johannesburg, so this departure time works out well. It would have been nice to have a shorter layover, but then again you don't want to cut things too close.

Given our late departure we just dilly dally at home all day. Our eventual Lyft ride to the airport is driven by a very talkative bloke, a long time Austinite wearing a wife beater tee shirt and a thick mat of body hair. I'd suggested to Karen that we take one of those autonomous Waymo vehicles, which has no driver. Karen said 'no' but maybe after being driven by this Sasquatch she'll reconsider.

Tricia and Don are already a day ahead of us in getting to Africa. They were flying via Doha but rerouted themselves as politics were flaring in the region. They flew instead via Newark which, not surprisingly, resulted in them departing a couple of hours late.

Our flight is forecast to be 20 or so minutes late, which isn't bad if that's all it turns out to be. Our bags are checked all the way through to Johannesburg so we don't have to mess with them at Heathrow, yay! Karen remembered to bring some Sominex type sleeping pills for the flight which is good as I forgot. She's sharing and we're hoping we can find more at a Boots pharmacy in Heathrow.

We're on British Airways and learn that their current security briefing is done with characters from period pieces like Jane Eyre, Bridgerton, Downton Abbey, and the like. It's hilarious. You can find it on YouTube.

Our plane to London is not very full which is nice. We're in Premium Economy, thank goodness, as we have such a long way to go. Our section is maybe 1/4 full, or less, so we are able to spread out. I have a full row of three seats to myself, but the trays are between the seats so no laying down for me. We ultimately lift off at 10:48 p.m. I am able to be disciplined and don't partake of dinner, though the Tikka paneer does smell great. I do have a glass of white wine. In Business Class the wine's poured from full size glass wine bottles, where we are I'm handed a plastic bottle full of one glass of wine. It's fine.

Just before 6:00 am (body time) I find that I'm awake, just like I would be back home. I am ready for breakfast when it arrives. Disappointingly it's just a small, slightly smooshed, slightly oily croissant with ham and processed cheese. The accompanying cup of coffee (black, no sugar served in a paper cup) is quite good but quite small. It six ounces, or maybe just four. I enjoy a second cup and would have enjoyed a third, but it's already noon local time, so I behave.

London's time zone is six hours ahead of Austin's, and in Johannesburg (like Paris) it's one hour earlier. We're hopeful that our adjustment to that time zone won't be too bad. Thanks to Karen's "Sominex" (Kirkland Sleep Aid) I got quite a good night's sleep. We'll have a six hour layover here at Heathrow and our flight continuing on to Johannesburg will be eleven hours. Fingers crossed that we're able to get another good night's sleep.

Off the plane we can't figure out where to go. Karen recalls that ChatGPT said we could get to the airport lounge without going through security or taking a train. Both are not true. We had to consult many people before we figured out how things work. Once off the plane here there are only two flavors of travelers: those connecting and those leaving the airport. Once we accept that simple fact everything fell into place.

In Terminal 5's immense shopping mall/transit hub we find a Boots pharmacy, buy our OTC sleeping pills, and hightail it to the BA Galleries Club lounge. It's very nice with seating for maybe a zillion people. On our walk in there's a big electronic sign identifying the four available lounges (one just for first class) and a "percentage full" for each. Nice!

The lounge is only about 60% full, but we're specifically looking for two seats, together, empty, with no dirty dishes. Not so easy to find but not impossible. Once we're seated I head out to forage for food. There's no end to the offerings and there are multiples of each. For salads there are four bars, each well stocked with lots of healthy, good looking choices. This is British Airways home and main hub so it makes sense they provide a good loyalty member lounge. We start off with healthy fare but end up with the sugary, salty and alcoholic stuff.

At the appointed hour we take the train back to our departure gate. Out the window we can see our plane, in all its two-story splendor. There's a separate jet bridge for each of the plane's floor. Onboard we get settled while the captain lets us know the plane is completely full and has a crew of 22 people. We're told there might be some turbulence on the way to "Joburg". The safety card shows the locations of the sixteen emergency slides on our hulking plane. We'll be traveling 5,758 mile and in the first few miles we can see a couple of castles on the outskirts of London. The interactive map says we are going 190 mph before this big hunk of aluminum gets airborne.

We accept a small glass of bubbly before takeoff. Once at cruising altitude we're offered a cocktail. Gin and Tonic for me and white wine for Karen. "A cocktail" in their parlance means two small bottles of gin, two small cans of tonic, and a glass of ice, lime slices and a stir stick. So much for being good.

At dinner we're served more wine. We're suspecting that the flight attendants want us all asleep. Dinner's fine. I get the Sticky Chicken Rice and Karen enjoys the Mezza Luna tortellini. Cleaned up and boozed up, the cabin lights are dimmed and we all settle in for a night of restless sleep. We saw that there's an infant seated just beyond my reach. He's mostly good and thankfully what complaints he does have are quickly remedied. The captain turns out to be right about the periodic mild turbulence. We're asleep, then we're not, and then we are. That's how our night goes.

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## Photos



As always, step one: go to the Austin airport.



Some progress made. We're in London, at the British Airways Galleries Club Lounge. Just five or six more hours til our flight to Johannesburg.



Thankfully they have lots to do here. Mostly eating and drinking. Much of it is not good for you, but their salad bars were impressive.

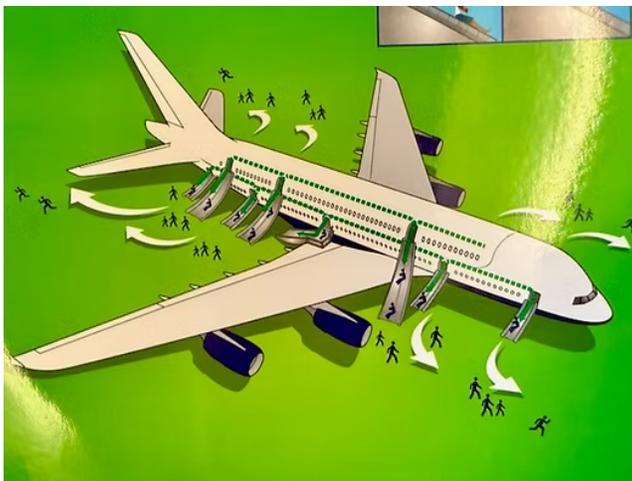


Their alcohol, however, impressive, yes, but not good for you. We partook, nonetheless.



## FARNSNIENTE

Our plane size for our flight down to Johannesburg. My first time on a double-decker Airbus plane.



The safety briefing card indicated that they have some crazy number of evacuation slides, like sixteen. We're hoping we won't use them.



Karen loved the 'glove compartment' next to the window seats. More storage options is always a good thing.

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