

# Diary into Paris

*"I prayed with them, hoping we were all praying for the same things"*

Three full length movies after getting on the plane in Melbourne, I got a whiff of balmy air and bam, I was in Singapore.

Naturally my mind conjured up a delightful image of basking by a hotel pool, wearing newly bought bargain priced shoes and drinking a Singapore Sling cocktail.

But the gun laden guards, welcoming me with cold eyes, reminded me that it was in fact the middle of the night on a two hour stopover. So I continued on my journey flying another 16 hours to a freezing European winter.

The Emirates flight attendant kept smuggling me free chocolates and offering to take me to Morocco for a week.

"Sloooow driving," he said slowly. It was an undogly hour and I was deranged, dehydrated and also scared: of flying, of anything really, yet I managed to refuse his offer graciously.

Next stop was Dubai where I had barely enough time to walk the eight football fields worth of terminals to mine. The whole time I was wishing I had dressed comfortably instead of in ridiculous tights, skirts and cropped jacket ensemble. Sunglasses would have been nice too.

Sleepily, I trudged by the grand bazaar that is Dubai Airport, viewing any available spot of carpet as Heaven. Oh, what I'd give for a good night's rest, but the journey must continue and I was onto another plane.

Once settled, I could almost feel myself falling asleep but trouble was, I couldn't sleep on the plane, even though I was as exhausted as a truck driver who had just covered the distance from Melbourne to Darwin, surviving only on Red Bulls and McDonald's drive thru.

No, I couldn't just sleep the remaining few hours from Dubai to Paris because I'm scared of flying. Yes, I'm

one of those terrible people who becomes as nervy as a skittish colt on a 747.

Scared of flying people can't just relax, accept a cup of weak coffee and cuddle up to their flight pillow with their cute little eye masks on. Scared of flying people just sit there the whole time, alert for the entire journey.

Eyes big, eyes wide, eyes open. Too scared to wear a sleep mask because when the plane should crash a precious moment is lost having to remove it. These strange people, like myself, cannot fathom how others around them can talk normally, even laugh, when their time should be better spent warming up and preparing for the brace position.

I watched a movie, or at least pretended to, all the time suspiciously surveying my surroundings. Then, panic attack!

"Why can I hear the engine?"

I peeped out the window, saw nothing but a black eclipse and almost fainted. Then, kindly, my non-scientific brain got a dose of reality and I remembered that hearing the engine was a good thing.

The pilot pressed the loudspeaker button and muttered something incoherent but I could only make out "ladies and gentleman ..." and palms sweaty and ears pricked I tightened my seat belt further and sat up even taller, ready to use my muscles in disarming the emergency exit doors.

When I saw a group of traditionally clothed Muslim men walked to the end of the aisle and prayed, I prayed with them, hoping we were all praying for the same things.

Thankfully, eventually, we were almost there, almost on land again. Now I was smiling in a deranged, sleep deprived way. Happiness had never overwhelmed me so much.

My delight must have very evident, for I soon

woke my neighbouring seat buddies whilst trying to sneak through to the bathroom. I had been wedged, like a pickle in a sandwich, between two Pakistani IT consultants. One was an avid snorer, the other an ardent cougher and the first talented enough to do both at once.

Snorer man opened an eye, looked at me then returned to his sleep, grunting while his coughing friend struck up an unexpected friendship.

"Australia, ey?" he said, eyeing me intentionally. "I very much like to go to Australia. Who are you staying with in Paris?"

"Ahh, my boyfriend, friends and family." I'm such a bad liar.

"You want to share a taxi from the airport?" Did I want to be stabbed in the eye with a pen, his question conjured up a similar image to me.

"Ah no thank-you. My friends, my family – boyfriend – everyone, they're all picking me up from the airport," I said inanely. Why didn't I just make it really believable and tell him that my old kindergarten teacher would be there as well, waiting for me with red balloons?

But the truth was I was going to Paris, the city of love, in time for Valentines Day, by myself. And yet the scent of adventure was in the air, even in that air-conditioning vortex onboard the plane and I could already smell French hot chocolate.

As I stared out the 10mm plastic plane window, a voice inside my head yelled, "Who!" – the kind of whoo that drunk men yell when their team kicks a goal.

I was in Paris baby! 🇫🇷

**Anna Kosmanovski**



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