

## DAY 4 - PORTLAND to LOS ANGELES

*Note from Wendy: Happy Birthday Bruce!!! Sorry the international date line missed you!! XOXO! We ARE on the other side of the world! It's tomorrow to you and yesterday for us! If Australia and the south seas are called "Down Under" is America called "Up Over"? OK .. Back to Bruce...*

The big day finally dawned and we reconfirmed our flight from Portland to LA only to discover that they had moved the flight 4 hours early and it had just departed 7 minutes prior to our call.

No one told us! We called the airline, they blamed the travel agent, we called the travel agent they blamed the airline.

We all know how that goes. After threatening the travel agent (we booked the flight through our company credit card miles and we are a decent size account for them) things started moving and after being escalated to the manager they finally agreed to book us a flight with another airline on their dime. PHEW!! Buying tickets ourselves on the day of the flight, would have cost an extra \$700!!

We got off OK, but now had an additional stop in San Francisco, then onto LAX, but we arrived in time. WELL in time it seemed, as our flight to Fiji was now delayed by over two hours. We were flying the Fiji airline called Air Pacific, we were told they only have two 747s in their entire fleet and are known to break down regularly. Yeah, that's REAL comforting when you are flying 5000 miles across an ocean!!

So we lollygagged in the bar for a while (BIG surprise) and boarded the 747 at 11PM. We were finally in the air after another delay at about midnight. The flight was relatively uneventful other than one of the flight attendants taking a shine to me and plied me with beers all night long so much so I even had 3 left over in the morning to put in my bag for the hotel later. This NEVER happens on an airline!!! Wendy slept much of the flight while I watched movies on the tablet PC because I don't sleep at all on flights. I dozed for about an hour perhaps.

## DAY 5 – FIJI – FINALLY!!!



Arriving in Fiji we were accosted by customs – seems like they caught us smuggling in 2 too many cartons of cigarettes (I have NEVER known customs in ANY country except Fiji to x-ray your friggin' luggage AFTER you have checked through immigration!! Bastards!).

So they wanted us to pay F\$70 PER CARTON import duty. That's US\$90.00!!! You're kidding me, that's more than I paid for the damn things! We told them to confiscate the smokes instead. They then backed down and agreed we could take both cartons for US\$45. So we paid. As we know that cigarettes in Australia are \$180 a carton, it was still worth while.

Fiascos over and done with we caught our shuttle to our beautiful beach front resort a short 15 minute drive from the airport.



I am now pushing 36 hours without sleep so the goal was to stay awake to adjust to the 22 hour time difference but to just relax.

So after unpacking we hung out at the bar for the entire day! In fact as I type this I am sitting at the bar with a Fijian rum and coke at my side.

We stayed at the bar the entire day except for an hour when Wendy went for a massage on the beach –

only \$22 for a 1 hour massage.

*Note from Wendy: OMG!!!!!!!!!!!!!! A life long bucket list dream come true! A massage on the beach! (see pics below). Waves lapping on the beach – no need for those silly "Serenity" CDs, warm, humid air instead of isolated, cold canned air in a salon. All of nature surrounds you as you are literally melted away in total bliss. Decadent bliss. A complete renewal.*

OK...Back to Bruce....

Beers cost about \$3 if you drink the local brew, they have Fiji Gold a light beer, Fiji Bitter I like and then another one I have not tried yet. Liquor is about \$5 if you drink the local rum, double that for imported.

Our room is rustic, no TV or phone. Internet is only available at the restaurant lounge, but it's authentic Fiji and that is what we wanted. There is not a single American tourist in the hotel, just Australians and Brits. Refreshing! We already made friends with several Aussies at the bar.

Driving from the airport to our "resort" which IS authentic Fiji with its Bures and coconut trees amassed. We did not want a Marriott or other hoity hotel experience as we might have well stayed in Tampa. The scenery reminded us of lush Hawai'i and the amazing mountains. Architecture is anywhere in the Caribbean. Fijians are a definite mix. They are not black. They are not Polynesian. They are not Asian. They are not....not. They just are. They are

not as Polynesians as what Hawai'ians look like, but have their own distinct caricature. They are, without a doubt, the most accommodating and likable people one will ever meet without pretension. Their hands are not out for a tip and tipping is highly discouraged and frowned upon here as with most South Seas nations. They truly take pride in being friendly and helpful – which is refreshing and a lesson all of us can learn.



Our Hotel room – the little house is called a "Bure".



The view from our patio. Sucks, huh?



Note the mosquito net above the bed



Simple, but nice.



The pool area - the water in the pool and ocean is in the mid 80s, perfect.



Wendy getting her massage. I censored the picture in order to keep this travelogue PG13.



Wendy tucking into a local cocktail, what I call a foofoo drink.



Wendy having her massage but picture taken from the bottom up!



And yes, I did not have a birthday - as we were landing the pilot announced: "Today is Monday 9 January, sorry folks there was no January 8." Oh well...

Tomorrow we're going on a more action adventure than just hanging out at a bar in paradise...



Cheers!