

Leon & Audrey's world trip 08/09

Part 31 – Seattle & New York

We are going to Seattle for 2 reasons. One is to see two factories, the other is to make the most of the ticket we have and build up as many frequent flyer points as we can. The factories are Tom Bihn, which makes good quality bags, back packs and laptop bags and the Boeing factory.

I've never been in a textile factory before, but I've done enough sewing and owned enough bags (particularly camera bags) that didn't quite do what I wanted to find how everything is made very interesting. Tom was very interested in my camera bag as he is currently designing something similar as an insert for his back packs. We came away with a lot of knowledge on how bags are made and how to check that they are well finished and should last.

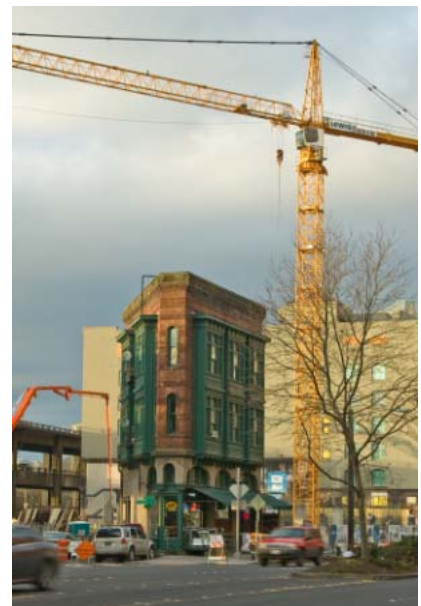


We wandered from there to the city, passing two stadiums along the way. Unlike Melbourne which would have tennis and cricket stadiums here we had baseball (Safeco Field) and gridiron (Quest Stadium). Both had shops for souvenirs to support the local teams – the Seattle Mariners (baseball) and the Sea Hawks (gridiron).

Like most big cities there is a lot of building work going on and this small pub on the corner has a large development going up right next to it. The main freeway to the city runs along the waterfront where we were. This gives easy access to the port, but does distract from the view.

The people in Seattle are the friendliest we have met so far. Everyone is happy to provide directions, one person with a book of bus tickets from his work gave us 2 tickets to get us back to our hotel.

We boarded our bus in the “bus tunnel” which was originally built for light rail but once built they decided it was too expensive to run trains on it and instead provided bus access (except on weekends when it is closed and the busses run on the street – don't ask me how they think).



We were up early the next morning for our trip to the Boeing factory. It took about 35 minutes from the centre of Seattle (once we had picked up our other passengers) to drive out there. We were picked up earlier as we were at a hotel at Seattle's other airport. The end result is that we didn't have time for breakfast before we left.



Audrey next to a tail fin of a 747. The super Jumbo they use to transport the parts of the 787 Dreamliner. It holds the world record for the largest cargo plane by volume.



The Everett Boeing factory – the world’s largest building by volume. Each of the blue doors is 300 or 350 feet wide and together are the world’s largest mural.



Bean and apple displays in the Pike Place Market. We didn’t cover much of the market. What we did see was very touristy. It is the home of the Fish Philosophy – a program designed to make you have more fun at work (Telstra used it while I worked there) and I’m sure this has helped make it as touristy as it is.



View of the Port and the city from just outside the Pike Place Market.

We had lunch at the market and then headed across the highway to the Seattle Aquarium.



Every aquarium needs to have a clown fish or 50. And it has to have 3 stripes. Every child there wanted to see Nemo.

There are the usual tunnels with sharks and rays and other fish, but Seattle also has a dome which is made up of flat panels of glass in a concrete frame. The flat panels cause a lot less distortion and it's much nicer to watch than looking through curved glass.

Rather than use a closed system that recycles the water, this aquarium pumps water in from the ocean through the exhibits and then pumps it back out. This sounds good and is probably very good for the health of the exhibits, but it risks the spread of disease to all the marine life outside.



microwave dinners and had a quiet night watching a Sunday "House" marathon – 17 hours of "House" (though we only watched 2 episodes). American television is *so* interesting.

Our hotel offers a \$4 breakfast which is a buffet with lots of donuts and sweet things. Healthy items consist of Raisin Bran cereal and very small amounts of fruit salad (mostly apple and grapes). The bagels might be ok too. I'm looking forward to going home and being able to have nice bread. The food we have had in the US has not been fatty, but it has been sweet. I've found American recipes before that say they are "Not too sweet ...", but they still are. The whole country seems to have this sweet tooth.



There were 2 octopuses in tanks joined by a tunnel. There was no place suitable for the octopus to hide as it naturally would and the constant flashes from the tourists didn't help.



We had a quiet night and shared a room service meal before packing (I'm getting a little tired of packing) and going to bed. In the morning we wheeled our luggage trolley back to the airport. Finally I feel I have received value for money. Our plane leaves at 7:50 am and we head for New York.

The sun was setting as we arrived at our hotel so there was not much to do our first night in New York (a 3 hour time difference and a 5 hour flight tend to eat up your day). We went to a local supermarket and bought

We had planned to do some window shopping (and possibly some buying too) while in New York and on the off chance that we do buy things decided to do the shopping first. Besides, it is supposed to snow tomorrow and that could make for some interesting pictures.

We started with a quick run through Macy's before heading for one of the big camera shops - B&H Photo Video. They do photography, video and audio for professionals and amateurs. They only have 2 floors but have a more interesting range than Yodobashi in Japan which has expanded to cover almost everything. I looked at lots of interesting items, things I had heard of but never seen. Some I would have bought except I couldn't justify it for the price (and if I can every justify them I now have seen them and know what I would get and how useful it would be). I did buy some cleaning equipment that I had been thinking about for a while but hadn't seen before now.

We had lunch at the Starlight Diner across the road. After perusing the menu for a while we both decided to go for the Southern Style Chicken. It came with a choice of salad or soup. We took the soup. A choice of tomato and chilli or chicken and rice. We decided on chicken and rice. Potatoes, either mashed, roasted jacket or fries. We took the fries. Vegetables, either peas and carrots or broccoli and corn. I had the broccoli and Audrey had the peas. Lots of choice, but to a formula. If I had asked for broccoli and carrots I don't think it would have worked. There was no option to not have the soup - It was nice, but it added up to a big meal.

We headed back to the room and letting our fingers do the walking to look for some EE width shoes for Audrey. We eventually found some and headed out to look at them (with a side trip or 2). Adorama camera has a small shop compared to B&H

Audrey tried on the 7 1/2 EE shoes and felt comfortable for the first time in ages, but the shoes were white runners which apart from not going with anything she wears just look generally ugly. Luck was with us however as they had a black walking shoe in the same size which was just as comfortable and left with us when we headed back to the hotel.

There was one shopping quest that has eluded us since leaving Hong Kong. Finding cotton buds with cardboard rather than plastic stems. Q Tips in New York have cardboard stems - we did check them in San Francisco, but there they are plastic. End result is 2,356 Q Tips being added to our luggage.

We finished repacking the luggage with the new allowance and the new purchases included and went to bed.



I am a big fan of segregation of the church and the state. Given the US flags flying outside churches like this one (left), I don't think the Americans see it my way.

Flag flying is a popular pursuit here as everywhere else in the US. It's easy to find an angle on things which includes a flag. The Empire State Building from the street below with obligatory flag (right).





New York street scapes. It's shorter than I was expecting, and a lot of the streets are narrow.



Grand central station exterior and the grand hall. People were headed in all directions with the sort of order you see in an ant's nest (which from across the hall, that is what it looked like).



New York Stock Exchange. A stock broker (probably) walks out into the cold and snow with his head bowed.



A church stands at the end of Wall Street, but Wall street is one way, so you can only see it if you look back. There is no money left on Wall Street, all the armoured cars now deliver food (we saw several armoured food carriers).



From Wall Street we walked through the snow and sleet to the Brooklyn Bridge (above right, New York from the Brooklyn Bridge above left). The snow wasn't piling up the way the weather forecast had promised and the way I wanted it for my pictures, but that's the way life is at times. Sleet at just on freezing is probably my least favourite weather after hot and humid. The real snow started to fall as we headed back to the hotel with not enough time to go back and take more pictures.

A few tall ships (with metal hulls) stood at anchor near the bridge. The Wavertree (right) was the last ship built with a wrought iron hull and is now the largest iron hulled ship afloat.



We arrived back at the hotel with enough time to stash a few warm clothes in the luggage in preparation for arriving in an Australian summer before checking out. We stepped into a nearby shop to look at some of their 1,500 pocket watches. All they showed me were rubbish and the one I showed interest in was hideously over priced (US\$1,000 for me to buy with a valuation certificate of US\$6,000). I wouldn't have paid half that even if it was mint which it wasn't. Audrey thinks they picked me as a time waster and only showed me the rubbish. I think the reason they have 1,500 pocket watches is that they have no understanding of the watches – he read the silver hallmarks incorrectly according to Audrey and in describing the watch made no mention of the movement.

We had chicken alfredo penne for lunch and then headed for the airport and our flight home. This has been a long trip and we are about to head back to Australia. I'll admit to looking forward to getting home and sleeping in my own bed, but I've enjoyed the whole trip. Audrey arranged all our plane seats in advance so that she got the window seat on the side of the plane she likes. When we booked in for the flight to Sydney from New York however we found they had changed our seats. And moved us to first class. For a 22 hour flight! We didn't argue too much and Audrey was even not upset about not having a window seat.

The outside deck at the British Airways/Qantas lounge is covered with snow, the food consists of a variety of dull sandwiches and I don't drink any of the alcohol on offer. The Australian and Asian lounges are better than the U.S. and European ones. Our plane stops in Los Angeles and we have to get off and wait for an hour and a half while they refuel and clean the plane. Then 13 hours or so to Sydney.

First class comes with lay flat beds and sheepskin mattresses, though they were short a couple of mattresses and Audrey missed out. I was already asleep by the time she got ready for bed so I didn't find out until 3:30 when I swapped seats with her so she could get more sleep. I'd had enough that I couldn't get back to sleep so I ordered a steak sandwich and watched the Incredibles. First class was nice and the lay flat beds (especially with the mattresses) were good, but I don't think it's worth the extra money and there is very little storage available with all the extra stuff required to keep first class flyers happy. We were sitting in the middle just on top of the front landing gear of the plane (the very pointy end of the plane - above).



We got through customs and quarantine without a suitcase being opened or x-rayed, re-checked our bags for the flight to Melbourne and had a cold drink in the lounge before we took off again.

Melbourne looks brown. Trees, grass, everything is brown and dry. Our taxi driver happened to live a couple of streets away from us so we didn't even need to help with directions – he gave us his card in case we ever need a taxi so we can call him direct. And we are finally home. We managed to not lose the house keys, our cat was not boiled in the heat wave of the previous week and we were awake enough to go out and buy milk and other necessities (we are in remarkably good shape as far as jet lag goes, all things considered).

We had deliberately made a hair dresser appointment for 10 am Friday so we had a reason to get up at a reasonable time. But it wasn't really necessary (the hair cut was, but the appointment time wasn't) as we got up at about our normal time of 5:30 anyway.

Some Holiday Stats.

Cities Visited: 30

Picture count: 9,764

Books read: Daughter of Time – Josephine Tey.
The tales of Beedle the Bard – J. K. Rowling (while waiting to take off in New York).
The Black Cloud – Fred Hoyle (about 1 third).