

Travel Notes 2013

Tuesday 14 May 2013

One day to go – quite excited. Have logged into Emirates online. We need to be there 90 minutes before departure. Gary Noel is taking us to the airport – leave here at 3 am – should get to the international airport around 4pm – plenty of time.



We are flying on the Boeing 777-200LR – seats 21A and B booked for the Perth to Dubai leg. 11 hours flying time. Sandra insisted on a window seat. Clever girl!

The next leg Dubai to Glasgow is on the Boeing 777-300ER (see picture on the right) – seats 27A and B – window seats again – 7 hours 45 minutes flying time.



Wednesday 15 May 2013

Gary took us down at 4am – got there before 5am – very quick check in – the girl took Sandra's passport and boarding pass and forgot to hand it back. It was not until I realised that Sandra did not have her boarding pass that we twigged she did not have her passport either – we went back – how the girl would have found us I do not know. Took John Marlow's advice and went straight through to customs – processed – had a body scan – having to take off your belt is a pain – I had to do that every time I went through a scanner unit.

The Emirates 777-200LR (long range) needs a face lift – it looks very tired. All that sitting gave me a sore bottom. We were sitting in a 3 seat arrangement. The chap next to me is from Port Hedland. He mentioned taking his wife and two (quite young) kids on an open ended ticket to Europe. His first stop was going to be Paris. The food on the plane is not up to the mark. Sandra thought we would get three meals for the 11 hour journey – we got two. Although Sandra liked the meals I did not – that comes from being thoroughly spoilt by the cooking at the Robin Court restaurant.



Saw the Jack Reacher movie (Tom Cruise) and quite liked it. I especially liked the female lead (Rosamund Pike) – what a babe!

The stop at Dubai allowed us to buy some tobacco for Brian Martin – quite inexpensive – will give it to Brian as a gift. I called Brett from the lounge using my tablet and the Pennytel app. The call just went straight through.

The second leg of the journey was in a much better model of plane (I must be getting fussy in my dotage) – it was almost empty – lots of room to use the spare seating to sleep. Food again was just okay – 2 meals supplemented by afternoon tea sandwiches.

Glasgow customs processed us quite quickly – our bags were not checked. We were met by Linda Martin (Brian is in Aberdeen) and her son (Alan) – in Avonbridge by 9pm – cup of tea and then to bed. Slept very well.

Thursday 16 May 2013

Linda is a terrific host. Just had breakfast (Weetabix). Playing around with the power points. We have to buy a couple of those international plugs for powering up the laptop, 2 x tablets, 3 x mobile phones (you can tell we are very much into IT thanks to Brett's influence). My Pennytel on my laptop also works. Made three calls this morning – went straight through. No adjustments like I had to do in 2010.



Went to Falkirk to get the international plugs and a wireless dongle. Did not go directly into the city centre but just outside in an area called "Retail Park" – got the international plugs and a Vodafone dongle at Maplin Electronics (love the store – all things IT) – then went shopping in the One Pound shop followed by lunch in an American theme restaurant called "Frankie and Bennys" – they ask you to include a gratuity as part of the final bill.



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Been having problems with MS word 2010 - keep getting a message that "MS word has stopped working" – tried the usual stuff in Google – no go – then thought of renaming the document from .docx to .doc – that does not work either. Will keep trying.

Solved the problem! My son always tells me that Google is my friend. Oh, he is so right. Would you believe that an add-on called "send to Bluetooth" was causing the problem? Go figure!

Friday, 17 May 2013

Had trouble with restless legs last night. Took forever to get to sleep. We are off shopping today. Will pick up Linda's granddaughter (Emma) to join us. Weather forecast – hail. Should be interesting shopping.

Mum phoned this morning. I called her back. Conversation using Pennytel very clear. All is well with her and she is now using Telstra instead of iPrimus.

Sandra is learning how to use her Gmail and wanted to sync her contacts. Got that solved this morning.

We picked up Emma (Linda's granddaughter) from her school – they have every Friday afternoon off – took her shopping at Aldi - this is the company that is already set up in eastern states Australia in competition with Woolworths and Coles – very keen shopping prices with a set range of products. You can save money shopping at Aldi.

Went to Morrisons for lunch – just like Coles and Woolworths but they also offer a café style of dining – nice food and friendly service.

Drove to Bathgate railway station – checked on the process for booking our train tickets from Edinburgh to London.

Returned back to Avonbridge.

WCE beat North Melbourne – the world is being set to right again.

Saturday, 18 May 2013

We are off to Falkirk this morning – get some folding money from an ATM and do some shopping the main part of the town (you have to pay for parking when you go there unlike Retail Park).

Spent the best part of the morning and early afternoon trying to find accommodation in London – nothing available on the dates we selected (22 May to 26 May nights). Eventually settled on a booking at the Holiday Inn Express London Greenwich which may require a taxi ride from London Kings Cross railway station. Another option is using the tube which I have accessed and it is quite easy to get to Greenwich from London St Pancras.

Also booked train travel from Edinburgh Waverley to London Kings Cross Station. Got a good price for that. Discovered that you cannot make a booking until you have first registered an account (eastcoast.co.uk) – had to phone them and ask if my original booking went through as I could not locate it in my account – it helps if the website tells you that. Was I wrong about this booking. Read on.

Went out for a pub lunch – very nice – very cheap eating and good value. Then to Falkirk for some folding money and some shopping. Sandra bought a top at Marks and Spencers.

Sunday, 19 May 2013

Lazy day – slept in and had a nice cooked breakfast – cooked by MOI assisted by Linda. Then went out and bought 2 x Sunday papers – spoke to the shop owner who recognised the aussie accent and said that his wish was to go to visit Perth.

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Went for a long walk in the afternoon. Misty weather and quite cold. Took our mobile phones to see if either of could get a service (the Martin's live on the edge of the Vodafone envelope and a service is not available in their home). Both Sandra and I got a service on our way back from the walk some 200 metres from the Martin's home. We called each other and all seemed to be well.

Watch this space.

Monday, 20 May 2013



Linda took us into Bathgate station (you can see Sandra lounging against the post) to catch the train to Edinburgh. Once at Edinburgh we went to the ticket collection area and found that there was no booking with eastcoast.co.uk. I phoned the company and spoke to Magda – she called back and confirmed they did not have the booking – they wanted a reference number which I did not have. I had kept a copy of the web page of my booking (as a precaution) but I did not take a copy with me (dummy – in hindsight I should have done that).



Shopping in Edinburgh was good – bought a man bag (Sandra insisted) and a lightweight cardigan top (zip front). Lunch was Mexican. We had ice-cream in a restaurant called “fourth floor” opposite St Andrew's square.

Discovered that I could not call Linda Martin from my mobile phone – it worked fine in the morning – but not in the afternoon – I had a Vodafone UK service but the calls were not going through.



Linda met us at Bathgate station. I used a phone at Edinburgh station to call her. On the way home I checked the mobile phone and the call went through to Linda's home. Go figure!

I checked the copy of my train booking around 5.00 pm and contacted eastcoast.co.uk and spoke to Karen – she asked me to email the copy of my 18 May 2013 booking to her – I did and waited for the promised phone call (in 10 minutes was the promise) – nothing at 6.00 pm and nothing at 7.00 pm – I phoned the company again.

I discovered that I was not actually talking to someone from eastcoast.co.uk but to an outsourced company that handled out of hours enquiries (they are located in the West Midlands of UK). The chap I spoke to could not help and suggested I call back on Tuesday morning.

He could not confirm if the email I sent had been received nor could he confirm if a second booking that I made (today) was in the database.

Tomorrow's phone call will indeed be interesting.

Tuesday, 21 May 2013

Made the call and spoke initially to customer support at eastcoast.co.uk – that section is useless because they could not help with my enquiry – got transferred to web support – spoke to Abdul – went around and around and discovered that my MasterCard would not register. The site is so badly designed that despite attempting to make an online booking (with Abdul on the phone) it would not go through. I gave up and decided to try to make an online booking using the Virgin site (they control the West Coast trains). Managed to get everything done without any problems. Thank you Richard Branson.

We are going out to lunch today and meet up with Kath and Ronnie Martin.

Sandra is doing a washing.

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We will pick up our train tickets to London at Bathgate station.

Lunch was at the same pub we went to the last time. I had pasta followed a cheesecake.

Shopping at Retail Park to buy some stuff for Sandra and another plug to allow us plug in the USB attachments of which we have a few.

Got the train tickets at Bathgate station. London here we come.

Wednesday, 22 May 2013



Got up quite early – packed and ready to go by 7.30 am – left at 8.00 am (image – Linda and Sandra just before we left) – to Bathgate station – bought one way tickets to Edinburgh station – went to the ticket office – asked to upgrade to first class – cost 310 GBP (forget it) – standard class is not too bad (no free food and wi-fi) – the image on the right shows some bags on the table – supplied by the café car to help you carry your stuff back to your carriage (the trains sways a bit).



We went to platform 2 – I spoke to one of the train staff – he put me right – our train was leaving from platform 9 – we got there with 15+ minutes to spare. The train guy took our cases and locked them in the guards van (I think he did that because Sandra is a scot).

The food car is some way down (have to walk down in the cars) – the train sways – thank goodness the morning coffee and eats are placed in carry bags (the coffee is terrible).

Got into Kings Cross London okay – the station was not crowded – made our way to the guards van and picked up our cases – got some more folding money – then in a taxi to our hotel – Holiday Inn Express Greenwich. The ride took forever and after some minutes plus we got there – the fare was quite close to what I was quoted. It is cheaper to travel by underground but if you have not done it before it could be a bit daunting. Anyway I can say that I was in one of those cabs you see on TV.

We crossed London bridge on the way to the hotel. Can't wait to walk across it.



Have you ever had that feeling when you get into a new hotel that it does not seem right? Both Sandra and I had that feeling right from the time we first arrived. The long ride in the taxi and the distance out of central London did not help. The reception is on the first floor not the ground floor. The staff have difficulty with the English language. We are discovering that most of the staff are from overseas.

We got a room with a double bed. There is no fridge or ironing board. They advertise that wi-fi is available but you have to pay for it. I overcame the wi-fi issue by buying a dongle in Falkirk. Our mobile phones work. My Pennytel does not.

Had dinner the hotel. You cannot charge to your room. You have to pay by cash or card. The lady taking my order must be from Russia. She insisted that I give her the information she wanted not the way I was telling her. Sandra and I looked at each other with some amusement. The food was okay – enjoyed it as we did the bottle of wine.

Thursday 23 May 2013

Got up at 0500 – in the shower by six and discovered that the water does not drain away – the area around the toilet and shower was awash. I was looking for the exhaust fan – found a red chord and pulled it – little did I know that it set off the alarm – you see we are in a suite that is used for persons who use a wheelchair – that chord is to alert someone that help is needed – I did not know that because there are no signs. Sandra was woken up by a phone call to tell me what I had done. A chap came up

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– conceded that the water would not drain away – he could not switch off the alarm – went down – came back up – found the right switch – one problem solved. They are going to put us into another room.

We went down to breakfast – quite a good spread – coffee a bit better than the stuff in the room. Back up and packing ready to move.

I am writing this whilst Sandra is downstairs. I would not like to be the person at the front desk when Sandra is making a point about something. Better her than me.

We need to find a bus to take us down to the train station in Greenough. Found someone at the front desk who pointed in the right direction for the bus (the girl on the previous night pointed the other way). Short walk – found the bus – took us directly to the North Greenwich station. Bought 2 x Oyster cards (for the week – they give us access to all public transport including access to most of what we want to visit and see [attractions] in London). Travelled on the grey line (called “jubilee”) to a station called “London Bridge” – changed to the black line (called “northern”) and exited at Kings Cross station.

We walked down to a hotel called “Arriva” – confirmed our booking – made sure we could store our luggage when we got there on Sunday this week. It is a bit of good luck that I booked for 4 nights at the Holiday Inn Express (both Sandra and I don’t like the hotel for various reasons and we would rather be in the centre of London).

We walked back to the Kings Cross station, walked out the Saint Pancras International terminal – checked the lay of the land for travel to Paris in 3 weeks’ time – bookings are really tight at the moment – very little room left. Checked where the London Big Bus starts from and spoke to one of their staff about what we could do. There are 3 different tours and you need to be on time to start. Once that tour ends, you just change to the next bus and go off on another tour. Change again and see all the things that make London such an attraction. We plan to get on and off as the day and mood takes us.

I wanted to see some of the City and suggested we get on a double decker (# 73) and just go where we felt the wind would take us. We ended up in North Islington. Got off and got back on the same bus this time towards Victoria station.



Lunch at the pub (if you look closely at MOI you can see my man bag) and then back on the #73 to Kings Cross. Then the underground on the northern line to London Bridge – change to the jubilee line to North Greenwich – then on the bus to the Holiday Inn Express . In by 4.00 pm and right into a cup of tea and toberlone. Dinner tonight is courtesy of the hotel (because of the problem we had with the previous room).

