

Leg 10 – Return to Los Angeles

Day 42 – Sunday 30 January 2000

Today we return to 'The City of Angels' (Los Angeles) after our trip around the USA that started on the 20th December 1999. Today the USA is gripped with 'Superbowl' fever but not knowing anything about the game, all we are interested in is catching the Amtrak train from San Diego to Los Angeles.

When we left San Diego it was overcast but by the time we reached Los Angeles it was raining but from our shuttle bus taking us to Santa Monica it is good to see the streets being washed with rain and the lawns and gardens getting some water in this dry part of America.

Unfortunately I listened to our travel agent who insisted that at least she should book one of the hotels on our trip as we had worked out most of the accommodation and transport ourselves. On no, our hotel 'Pacific Shores' is the worst hotel we have ever seen and stayed in ever and if we had not pre-paid for the accommodation we would have walked out and found another place that doesn't say:

WARNING THIS AREA CONTAINS CHEMICALS INCLUDING TOBACCO SMOKE KNOWN TO THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO CAUSE CANCER, OR BIRTH DEFECTS OR OTHER REPRODUCTIVE HARM.

The room shows its age and needs renovations; it stinks of smoke, no coffee or fridge and found out later the sign on each floor was put there as a courtesy to the hotel guests, but as Sheryl Crow (All I wanna do: 1995) sings:

Hit it
This ain't no disco
It ain't no country club either
This is L.A.

'Cause all I wanna do is have some fun
I got a feeling I'm not the only one
All I wanna do is have some fun
I got a feeling I'm not the only one
All I wanna do is have some fun
Until the sun comes up Over Santa Monica Boulevard.

These words ring loud and clear in my ears as the hovel (Hotel Pacific Shores) is close to the pier so we walked downtown for lunch and did plenty of window shopping. On all of the television screens they are showing the Superbowl between the St Louis 'Rams' and the Tennessee 'Titans' with the actual game starting at 3:00pm and finishing at 7:00pm. Crazy game for those who have no idea at what's happening as there are so many stoppages, changing of players, razzmatazz, hype and commentators talking over each other revealing just about every statistic they can find except how many times each player changed their underpants during the season. Sorry USA give me Australian Rules or Rugby League any day, at least it is free flowing and no time to stop and analyse ever pass and catch. I read that a 30 second advertisement of the big screen during the Superbowl will cost \$2 million, what a waste of money give the amount of poverty we have witnessed during our journey

around the USA. Oh yeah, better let you know that the Rams won 32 to 16 and was their first Superbowl win in 24 years, congratulations.

Day 43 – Monday 31 January 2000

The rain eased around 10:00am so I didn't get to see 'the sun comes up Over Santa Monica Boulevard' this morning but it was good to see have a sunny day so we can go walking without getting wet.

We caught the bus to Venice Beach to check out the weird, the wonderful and the fancy having had a brief glimpse during our LA tour when we arrived. The surf was up with 5 to 6 foot swells and the smell of the surf was a great contrast to the smoke smell in our hovel. Good window shopping walking past the many and varied stalls that line the footpath as you could buy anything and everything that has ever been manufactured and there are real bargains if you spend the time searching and comparing between stalls.

The homeless who hang out at the beach do anything and say anything to fleece money from your pocket and I don't blame them for their attempts to survive without having a job, sometimes I wonder who the disadvantage is especially when you have such a beautiful strip of coastline, wide sandy beaches, surf, beautiful looking women and temperatures like they are today.

After lunch at Muscle Beach Venice where the fit and those who want to be fit flex their bodies and muscles doing all sorts of exercises and playing games on the installed rope climbing, and acrobatic bars exercise equipment we walked back along the beach and late in the afternoon witnessed to most magnificent sunset as the sun dipped into the Pacific Ocean with the lights of the pier coming alive and people out exercising by running, riding, roller blades, skateboards and walking in the warm night air, a great place to live yet so close to LA.

The news on the television tonight is all about the Alaska Flight 261 an MD-80 series commercial jet aircraft that crashed about 2.7 miles (4.3 km) north of Anacapa Island, California approximately two hours into the flight. According to witnesses the plane crashed off Point Mugu about 60 miles from LA and fell from around 17,000 feet upside down. The two pilots, three cabin crewmembers, and 83 passengers on board were killed and the aircraft was destroyed. Analysis shows that the horizontal stabilizer assembly was subjected to aerodynamic forces that it could not withstand and failed. Following the investigation and FAA hearings, both Boeing and Alaska Airlines eventually conceded liability for the crash, and all but one of the lawsuits brought by surviving family members were settled out-of-court before going to trial. Not good news when we fly out of LAX for Brisbane tomorrow.

Santa Monica is a beautiful city at night with all the trees along the ocean and the decorations and lights in the mall that is crammed with people eating in the food courts, shopping, sightseeing, street life and entertainment. By now the night air had cooled and with the gentle breeze you still need a jacket.