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Swine Scare Forces Raid on Plane



It was the start of a normal vacation originating in Phoenix, Arizona and Ending in Tokyo's Narita International Airport in Japan. The family was on a 10 hour flight the second leg of a trip connecting through Portland, Oregon.

The flight was without incident with most passengers occupied by the in-flight entertainment systems on the back of each seat on the North West Airline Airbus A330 Jumbo bound for the orient. But as the plane drifted effortlessly over the Aleutian Islands on its route to Japan the passengers had no idea of what was in store.

Upon arrival at the gate

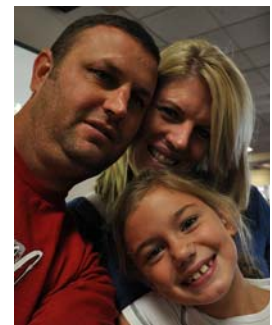
the Captain informed everyone of a temporary quarantine of the plane and that the Japanese government would have health inspectors boarding the plane. Upon hearing this, the passengers began to become highly concerned and discussions broke out about the current outbreaks of Swine Flu.

Like some kind of scene out of a movie a crew of health inspectors armed with Thermal cameras raided the plane checking each passenger's body temperature for signs of fever that would indicate if someone was infected with the Swine flu. The inspectors placed a red dot on each seat that had

signs of the flu and without delay scurried through the cabin placing their marks.

Upon completion of the inspection the unaffected passengers were released with the Henry family cleared to leave. The passengers marked in red remained on the plane with reports of a 7 day quarantine in store for them.

We were informed from the Henry's that after they left the plane they went through a secondary inspection from the Health Department and had to file a form stating there symptoms and where they had been. They also said that after leaving the customs area people everywhere were wearing masks in fears of the Swine flu.



From Sea to Sushi: Tsukiji Fish Market



A vendor displays boxes or red fish that will be sold to and shipped around the globe.

We have heard the stories about the World's largest fish market "Tsukiji" but nothing would have prepared us for this. Tsukiji is the place where all the big tuna are sent to be auctioned off and then shipped around the globe to supply restaurants with the pricey ahi filets.

We arrived there via the Toei subway line from Roppongi Hills in East Tokyo. Exiting the station it was only a 5 minute walk to the market with a swarm of trucks, forklifts, motorized carts and hand carts entering and leaving the Tsukiji market.

Right away you enter the buildings and walk through corridors of vendors displaying their stash of our tasty underwater friends. The market is endless and you become overwhelmed by the size. You can buy

about anything that is found in the ocean with each vendor specializing in a certain kind of sea creature. Each vendor has about 500 square feet of space with thousands of vendors occupying the market.

There were vendors with only Octopus, ones with shrimp, others had only eels, red fish, squid, sea urchin or clams. The most impressive though is the big tuna vendors with

halves of the fish looking like sides of beef in a slaughter house.

In the entrance to the market there are about 10 sushi restaurants each with a line of a hundred people. For the local Japanese these are a must do to get the freshest sushi possible. For us though we would not endure the 2 hour or more wait to have the sushi experience of a lifetime.



Do You Read a Japanese'a

Walking into a subway station makes one realize that you need to have a little understanding of the language.



All the maps, all the ticketing machines and all the directions are 95% in Japanese symbols called "Kanji". It is not as easy as learning an alphabet where you have 26 letters and 10 numbers; no Kanji has thousands of symbols.

For the foreigner this is a time to get in touch with

one's ability to learn on the go. But it is not that easy as you have to also know how to sound out the words and how one "u" is pronounced compared to two.

Maybe I will be able to ask how to find a toilet by the time I leave this place.

Until then I might need a box of Depends.

Maid in Japan

Crazy trends are the norm in Tokyo where one of the latest is pretty young Japanese women dressed in French Maid costumes.

They are hostesses at cafes and coffee shops that can charge \$10 for a cup of java. There are 50 such cafes all over Tokyo

and there is an abundance of customers willing to pay for this odd display of fashion.

You can get heart shaped hamburgers or bunny wunny ice cream cakes from a maid waitress that addresses you with "welcome home master". The cafes are mostly found in the electronics section of Tokyo called Akihabara.

As seen in the photo the maids do not like to have their picture taken and will run away with something covering their face. But unfortunately for them the photographer new a trick or two to get the picture.



"Young Japanese girl dressed in a French maid outfit handing out flyers in Akihabara."

Top of the World

Starting on the 45 floor and going up from there this Tokyo hotel has a feeling like you're in a blimp over the city.

Located in Roppongi hills the hotel is situated in the Tokyo Midtown complex comprising of office buildings, 4 levels of shopping, over 50 nice restaurants and a market. In the center of the complex is the tower with the hotel located on the top floors. To get to the hotel you have to take a 45 floor express elevator

that dumps you out at the lobby which has a view like no other lobby.



From the room the view is as good as the visibility as Tokyo quite often has clouds, rain or fog. The building is so high up that when waking one morning the room was up in the clouds

Tokyo sits next to some major faults and I would wonder how much the hotel moves during even a mild earthquake. I guess it is better not to know the answer to that question as I would not want to be up here during any kind of shake.



"Close up picture of a child's vending machine, one of a thousand inside of a department store."



"The girls outside the tea house in Roppongi Hills."

Girl Going Wild

Imagine going to a Fry's Superstore then adding bacon and cheese to it, shoot it up with steroids, super size it, then make it 8 stories tall and finally add a food court with 30 restaurants on the 9th floor. That is what a Japanese version of a Best Buy.

For every camera or laptop we have in the United States that is the U.S. version of that product. In Japan they display all versions made for all continents so that selection is mind blowing to say the least.

For instance we needed a pair of nail clippers and they had a selection of over 100 different types and different shapes.

But for a child this place is a world of wonder with floors of gadgets and isles of toys beyond imagination.

For the kids though the vending machine isles are

the best with over a thousand individual machines each with some prize to spit out at you. Most of the machines cost 100 or 200 yen which at this rate is equal to about 1 or 2 dollars respectively.



Tea's Me

The Japanese enjoy their teas and there is tea everywhere you look. The best place to go is a tea

house where they will have a wall full of different varieties of teas that you can choose from. You

can either by the tea by volume and take it home to brew it or you can enjoy a cup right there in the tea house.

On our exploration of the tea house we bought a box of Sakurambo, a Black tea with cherry flavor, and we brewed it in our hotel room. In the room there is a coffee pot full of water always kept at the perfect tea brewing temperature so you can have a cup on demand.

