

FREQUENT FLIER

On Adventure's Trail, Some Endings Bring a Blush

Published: January 10, 2011

I GUESS my first crazy experience with planes was when I was 18 years old and went sky [diving](#) without a tandem. I was instructed to hold onto the wing of the plane and use my hands to scoot to the very edge. My instructor counted to three and told me to release my grip and fall backward. He also said the parachute would self-release. It did.

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Rana Florida

But my earpiece malfunctioned and I couldn't hear the instructions on how to steer. I landed in a tree and had to be rescued. The only thing hurt was my pride.

The same thing is true with [business travel](#). Sometimes, it turns into my worst nightmare. Other times, I relish it because I get away from all the things that suck up your time during a normal business day.

I remember when flying used to be fun.

One time I was in an overbooked plane and got to join the pilots in the cockpit. This was years ago, when I was in Greece. The pilots offered to show me where they lived. I thought they would just point out the window. Instead, the main pilot did this low dive right over his home. Everyone on board was shocked. Me, too. But it was kind of fun.

A little more than three years ago, I took over as chief executive of Creative Class. My husband is the founder of the company. One of the first things I did was work on a huge regional economic conference. It was scheduled for February. The location? Siberia.

My husband I were married for about a year at that point, and we decided it would be fun to celebrate [Valentine's Day](#) together there.

Right before we left, we were alerted about reports of orange

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snow coming down over the region. That should have been our first indication that things might get a little odd. We flew into Moscow and spent the night. It was lovely. We were then invited to fly with a Russian dignitary on his private jet from Moscow to Krasnoyarsk in Siberia.

He was five hours late. When we finally boarded the plane, there were six other men on board, all of whom took a liking to me. Their way of making friends was to offer me cigarettes, meat and Scotch. I didn't want to be rude, but I declined as politely as I could, since I don't smoke, I'm a [vegetarian](#), and I don't drink Scotch.

By the time we arrived, I just wanted to shower and go to sleep. We were guaranteed an early check-in with the hotel since we had prepaid. But once we arrived, we still had to wait for two hours in the lobby. Finally, we were given a room key card. I was so excited.

We went up to the floor, found the room, and I did the honors of swiping the card. The door opened and I walked in a few feet only to find the room was already occupied by a rather large man. He was in the bed. When he heard us, he yelled and got out of bed. He was naked. I was speechless.

He then chased us out of the room and yelled at us in Russian as we tried to make our way back to the elevator. I can't say I blame him.

We went back to the lobby and tried to explain the situation to the desk clerks. No one really cared, but we did finally get an unoccupied room. I didn't see the man who yelled at us during the rest of the trip. I'm thankful for that. I already saw enough.

By Rana Florida, as told to Joan Raymond. E-mail: joan.raymond@nytimes.com.

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