



“A Flight Beyond Imagination...”

8 September 2007... www.e-bay.com ... 16hr.29'.59:

“wiltine007 you are the winner of item SIA A380 1st Flight Sydney-Singapore 26 October, 2 Economy + window”...

My heart is suddenly beating very fast. Drops of sweat make pearls on my forehead.

Is this really true or am I just having a happy dream? I immediately pick up the phone and call Martine. “My dear, we go to Sydney, we will be part of history, out of the blue, a heavenly e-bay gift: we will be on the A 380 Maiden flight.”



From that day onwards, early September 2007, we started to look forward to this exceptional sky-journey. In the previous BLAS gazette our President gave us an insight in all the technical and other details of this super jumbo. On his request we would like to share this lovely experience and hope you will enjoy this article on our historical A380 experience. It really is “a class beyond First”!

Friday morning 26 October 2007. After spending five relaxing and interesting days in fabulous Sydney we wake up and for the first time in our lives we are looking forward returning back home. The A380 maiden flight SYD-SING is awaiting us!

After some necessary preparations (shower, nice suit, etc.), we head towards Sydney airport. Although departure time is only planned at 4 p.m., everybody (= 471 lucky passengers) is invited to check in from 12.30 p.m. onwards.

Some (always) well-trained and well-mannered “Singapore stewardesses” are welcoming us, offering Martine some beautiful orchids. A live band is hired for the occasion and entertains us while we are waiting for our boarding passes. Everybody is looking at each other in sheer excitement because *we* are apparently the lucky ones. We start guessing on who has spent a fortune on buying suite tickets, but somehow none of us looks richer than the other. The only ones we can really distinguish are the journalists who are surrounding us as if we are VIPs. Well, we are in way, right?

It is almost our turn to get our passes. Which will be our seats??? ...YES: Upper deck ones - 76K&H: exactly what we had hoped for! The lower deck (except for 12 unbelievable suites) is having economy class seats in a 3-4-3 set-up. The upper deck is housing the 60 business class seats and economy class seats in a 2-4-2 set-up. Romantic isn't it? We can enjoy 2 'private' upper deck seats in the A380!

After having received our 'historical' boarding passes we move to the check-in-gates. Through the windows we can admire –for the first time- the Queen of the air. What a plane!

Having arrived at the gates, immediately we are served a glass of champagne and all kinds of sweet appetizers. While enjoying those, we are being interviewed by the press. Have you not seen us in the Indonesian Post or consulted www.sq380.net? The Belgian press apparently forgot us!

After a pleasant hour of drinks, everybody is in the mood for some essential speech time. The CEO of Sydney airport, the Prime Minister of Australia and the CEO of Singapore Airlines elaborate on this milestone in aviation history. We try to listen attentively, but due to the amount of champagne we can not help but feel slightly 'tipsy'.

At about 4 p.m. an announcement informing us departure will be delayed due to the weather conditions. Indeed, a serious thunderstorm is developing above Sydney. Actually nobody can be bothered: more Champagne, please!

At about 6 p.m. boarding starts. Four entry gates are available. As we walk along the bridge, we feel really excited: the magical moment of witnessing the interior of the A380 is only just a few seconds away.

We enter along the business class seats: how spacious! They are the largest BC seats in the industry with a 15.4 inch LCD screen. We move on and soon we are seated at 76 H&K. We are welcomed and invited to enjoy relaxing in “the new economy class”.

Immediately we notice the extra legroom while testing out the 10.6 inch personal screen (with more than 100 movies, a Microsoft Suite, games, executive summaries of management literature, USB connection, personal power supply, etc.).

Having done a toast with a new glass of champagne, Martine and myself are starting to open our personalized gift bag. Some ‘exclusive’ gadgets have been well-selected for the 471 lucky ones!



Once everyone is seated, Captain Robert Ting welcomes all passengers and gives us some more details about the A380 and its flight about to make history. A remarkable element mentioned is that passengers and luggage are only 8% of the total weight of the “Queen of the air”...

As we start taxiing everybody is getting of course even more excited. A lot of people around the runway are watching the first take-off of the A380 from Sydney. As the plane starts to accelerate, all passengers turn silent. Surprisingly for such a huge plane there is almost no noise at all - it is really 50% more silent than the conventional B747 - ... and still, there we go! Immediately, a big applause of all passengers, is thanking the crew and the mighty plane’s inventors we are air born.

And yet the real party is only about to start. Delicious food and plenty of (alcoholic) drinks are served all night long. Everybody keeps walking around, talks to each other and is toasting on the First Flight. We also start to walk around, going to the lower deck by the staircase.

We meet up with the pilot and shake hands with the CEO of SQ. Mr. Chew Choon Seng who is informing me that SQ has bought 8 out of the first 10 A380’s on order.

Singaporean world class, rightlah?

While we are chatting with an Austrian guy who auctioned the cheapest ticket (560USD), the Australian and Asian Cooks, Matthew Moran and Sam Leong, are walking by to present their special made inauguration menu which is absolutely delicious and indulgent. A real feast for all our senses!

While enjoying an Elderton Barossa wine, we further discuss the luxury of this “summon” of European technology. It glides through the air with the easiness of a Condor and even the smallest details (up and into the restroom) are taken care of. The A380 is European technology to be proud of.

After a seven hours` party flight, our pilot, Mr. Ting is announcing we will be the first A380 passengers enjoying a fully automated landing at Changi airport. Our fate and an airbus of about 550.000 kg are in `hands of` computers...

Everybody gets silent again which is truly a challenge after all those drinks! Steadily we are landing ... touch down... very smoothly... big applause and cheers again!

We enjoy the last moments on board of this maiden flight.

Having received the typical `bye bye` smiles of the stewardesses another life band is welcoming us at Changi. Thanks to the well-known efficiency of the Singapore airport staff we pick up our luggage and drive back home. This taxi ride is not really something we looked forward to!

Happy, satisfied and somehow proud `we were part of it`, the taxi is dropping us at Ming Teck Park.

The first commercial A380 flight was a unique experience that will eventually be shared by millions of people, some of whom are yet to be born. Martine and I are fortunate to say we were the first to join.

Our recommendation? Book a city trip to Sydney... and fly with the A380!