

SFO to welcome 237 new GSTs

Virgin America's SFO station will soon be the home of a new class of 237 guest service teammates – the largest class of new hires in company history, and one that heralds a new direction in customer service. “We were tired of being so short-handed,” said Darryl Ellsberg, station director. “There have been a few times when the only person at check-in was our

baggage handler, and flights were being boarded by the staff of Natalie's and Pinkberry. So when we held group interviews at HQ last week, I was so impressed by the enthusiasm of everyone there, that I said heck, we'll take all of you.”

Under the new customer service plan, each traveling guest that arrives at the airport will be assigned their own GST, to

help them maneuver through check-in and security, escort them onto the plane, and then wave goodbye from the tarmac as the aircraft pushes back. After the guest arrives at their destination, the GST will telephone the guest to make sure the trip went well.

“It's like having your own personal shopper, but with airline travel,” explained

(continued on page 14)

BSO is cause of pregnancy, say scientists

Researchers studying the families of airport workers have found unusual phenomena centered on the water fountain inside the baggage service office of SFO's Virgin America.

“Everyone always said ‘there was something in the water’ in BSO that was causing pregnancies,” said one of the scientists studying the phenomena. “It turns out they were right.”

Virgin supervisor Molly Lynn said turnover has recently been high in BSO, due to the rash of pregnancies, but morale also remained high in the office, “probably due to all the fun baby shower parties,” she said.

With more than 188 unexpected pregnancies among Virgin workers and guests who imbibed the suspected water, scientists are at a loss to explain exactly how the pregnancies occurred.

“We checked with the company that provides the water, and they said it checked out as pure and normal,” one scientist said. However two female



The suspect water fountain in Virgin's baggage service office at SFO.

delivery workers who drank inside the baggage office also gave birth nine months later, a spokesman said.

“This goes against everything we know about biology,” one scientist remarked, puzzled. “Maybe it's the plastic cups?”

Supervisor Lynn had no insight into the situation but mentioned that she had imbibed the water from the BSO fountain herself, and felt fine.

“Just a little normal queasiness in the morning,” she added. Then she gasped, her eyes widened and she rushed out of the room to make a phone call.

Virgin plans move To eco-friendly Terminal 4

Plans are underway for the SFO station of Virgin America to make its biggest move yet – to Terminal 4, an \$80 billion domed edifice that will perch atop the airport's central parking structure and is being designed as the most environmentally-friendly building on the country. The terminal is not scheduled for completion until 2028, but according to airport officials, its green credentials will be impeccable.

“It will be like its own closed eco-system,” said one official. “Trees and grass will generate oxygen, and squirrels and deer will romp among the gates. All water will be recycled and repurposed. Additionally, all food for the terminal restaurants will be grown on site, and no artificial fibers will be allowed among the traveling public's clothing or luggage.”

Colorful parrots will inhabit the terminal's rainforest, officials said, and a warm ocean will

(continued on page 22)

“FLOOR IS LAVA!” DAY criticized as half-baked idea, with many imaginary injuries, page 15

ELMER FOOD: Restaurant critic reviews ‘First Friday’ fruit, including a dodgy banana, page 16

Checking in at kiosks to pay off big for Vegas guests

Las Vegas-bound guests on Virgin America will soon get a new motivation for checking in at lobby kiosks – a chance to win big, even before they arrive at the legendary land of casinos.

“We wanted to raise our percentage of guests using the check-in kiosks,” said Remi Potemkin, Virgin's director of special planning initiatives. “Offering guests an incentive to use the kiosks, especially our Las Vegas guests, who probably already like to take to gamble, was seen as a sure thing. Our science is tight, bro.”

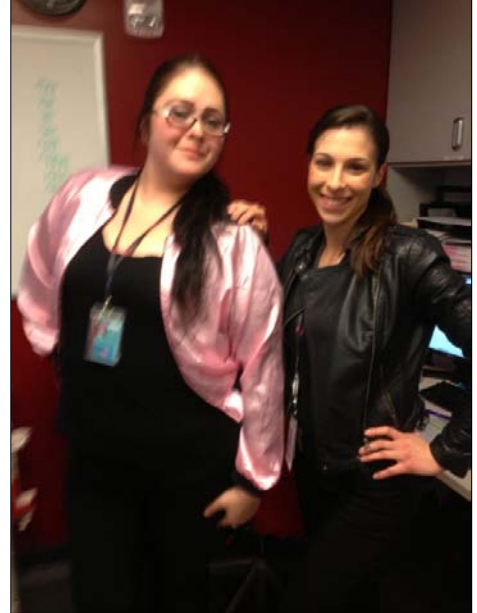
Under the new plan, Potemkin said, guests heading to Las Vegas who bypass the check-in counter in favor of checking in at the kiosks will have a 1-in-100 chance to be upgraded to Main Cabin Select. They can take that MCS seat or “let it ride” and try for a 1-in-20 shot

at a First Class seat. If they win that First Class seat, they can continue to “let it ride” and try for a 1-in-20,000 chance to become co-CEO of the airline.

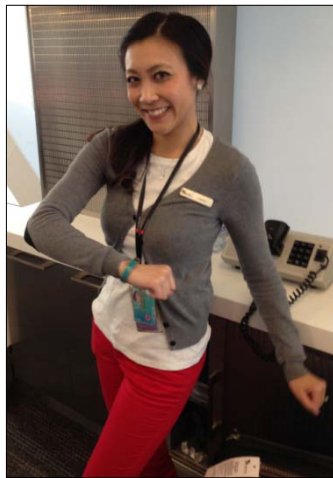
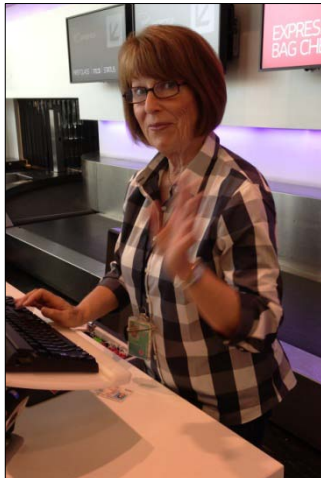
“We figure that if someone ‘lets it ride’ and becomes co-CEO, well, that's the sort of good luck we want to have on our side,” said Potemkin. “In today's tough business climate, we'll take any advantage we can get.”

To add to the Las Vegas feel, check-in kiosks will be outfitted with flashing lights and an audio system that continuously plays the sound of quarters dropping. The lobby hosts, sporting new sparkly uniforms, will mingle in the lobby offering guests complimentary cocktails.

'GREASE' WAS THE WORD



Valentine's Day was the occasion for a "Grease Day" at SFO, and SFO Virgins dressed up as characters from the John Travolta/Olivia Newton-John movie (or, to be honest, as generic '50s types).



Dressing up, from top left, are Jenna Parisi and Lisa Larsen, Claudio Breschia, Victoria Vanslambrouck and Natalie Bouscal. Center, clockwise from left, Karen Wagner, Lauren Tameguia, Karen Funk and Jackie White-Leung, Zoey Rothenberg and Andre Lara, and Steve Freitag.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

You forgot to bring lunch, and you're starving, but a supervisor just awarded you a meal voucher for your outstanding work ethic. The voucher is only good for today, and only good in Terminal 2. Where do you go to get your meal, and what do you get?

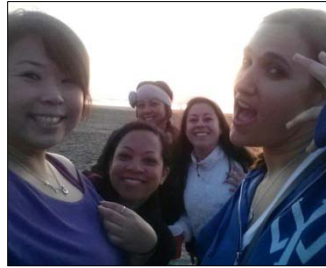
Several GSTs were picked at random and asked what they would do with this scenario. Here are their responses ... one of them also this time in limerick form!

- ▶ I would go to Cat Cora simply because I cannot afford it! I would order the huge lobster that's always starring at me when I'm walking by!
 - ▶ I take a walk to Andale and order the cheese enchiladas. However, I ask them to make it with the chipotle sauce on top and ask for some queso fresco on the beans. Then I top them off with the green and red salsas and stir the beans and rice together. Yummy!
 - ▶ That's easy! I'd order a hamburger from Burger Joint, cooked medium rare, with a side of fries! I can eat that bad boy up within 5 minutes or less!
 - ▶ My first choice (without a doubt) would be to buy a salad at Napa Farms. "Field of dreams" is the name of my favorite salad.
 - ▶ I'd get a tortilla soup from Andale. I call in my order ahead of time. So by the time I get there, it will be ready. And why soup? Cuz oftentimes that's what you can get for the amount of voucher I normally get in the past.
 - ▶ Andale. Chorizo breakfast burrito.
 - ▶ I'd go to Burger Joint and order the mini cheeseburger. It's bigger than most restaurant burgers, comes with fantastic fries and costs less than eight bucks! I always order it rare. Well worth the health risk!
 - ▶ First, I'd say thank you to the supervisor! Then, I would go to Wakaba and get rice and miso soup... since that would only cost four bucks (the cheapest meal at the airport). I'd get something for one of my teammates too!
 - ▶ Pinkberry! Because they're the only place that I love that I never get hooked up!
 - ▶ *Although known for their coffee and tea
Peet's is the place where I'd be
For a sandwich so tasty
That nothing goes to waste
And they're always so friendly to me.*
 - ▶ Easy. Burger Joint for turkey burger, or Andale for shrimp burrito.
 - ▶ Napa Farms: Sandwich, chips, soda, and a side of their mac and cheese. Runs about \$19, and I'm looking to get some mileage out of that voucher!
 - ▶ \$10 voucher...what to get...what to get. I'd say Andale. Not as pricey as some other places and it fills you up! Not to mention it probably incorporates more food groups than any other place for the price you pay.
 - ▶ I would go to Wakaba and I would get a salmon bowl.
- And one GST responded:*
- ▶ *Ha ha ha ... outstanding work ethic ... ha ha ha ha!*



HOO-RAY – In late February in-flights Erica Imbrecht (shown with Ray Wong and Abbey) were inspired to show their appreciation for GST Ray Wong, and threw a Ray Wong Appreciation Day. "Coming into the Village in August of 2012 as newbies, Abbey and I both felt the warmest welcoming from Ray and we have noticed he shows this same warmth to all teammates who come through SFO," Erica said.

FOND FAREWELLS



Claudio Breschia and Mark Freitas start up the bonfire, at left, as Peishou Liu, Stefanie Lewis, Kim Roth, Sara Rodriguez and Lora Reichhold have fun. Below, gathered at the bonfire, are Peishiu, Claudio, Sheetal Singh, Angelo Vinco, Lora, Sara, Annette Margolis, Kim, Sheetal's sister Gurgeet and Stefanie.



I get up every morning determined to both change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning my day difficult. – E.B. White

As the seasons change, new teammates (hopefully) arrive, and inevitably, old teammates go. San Francisco GSTs recently held a bonfire at Ocean Beach and a dinner at B.J.'s to say goodbye to some departing friends – Jenna Parisi, Lisa Larsen, Angelo Vinco, Sheetal Singh, Debra Caudra, among others who have recently left guest services, the latter four heading to in-flight.

Attending the farewell get-together for Jennifer Parisi are from left, Larry Sexton, Pesihou Lou, Willie Suenaga, Geraldine Posadas, Jenna herself, Annette Margolis, Angelo Vinco, Sue Wilk, Zoey Rothenberg and Lisa Larsen.





So . . . what's there to do in the desert?

The first thing you need to know about Palm Springs is that it's a resort community, but it's also a retirement community. Although this desert city (and the neighboring cities of Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, etc.) has plenty of golf courses, bars, restaurants and Indian casinos, this isn't Las Vegas. It's not a wild town of clubs and drinking – it has its share of that, but it's quieter and more relaxing, with an older population. So, if you've non-revved on Virgin America down to the open-air airport in Palm Springs, said hello to our desert GST counterparts, and have booked a stay at a resort like the modern, colorful Saguardo, where Virgins get a discount ... now you might be asking yourself, what is there to do?

Enjoy the beautiful weather. Between March and June, and from September to December, the weather is warm enough to spend the day by the pool without getting overly broiled. Many resorts and hotels have terrific pools and lush foliage – this is an oasis, after all, and not just a dry, barren desert. So, lay out a towel on a comfortable lounge chair, and enjoy the sun, the water, the music, seeing the unusual view of palm trees waving in the breeze with snowcapped mountains beyond them ... and, at some places, waiter service! In summer you could also cool off at the Knott's Soak City water park. The winter months of January and February can be too chilly to use a pool unless it's heated, but the town is still green and full of flowers, and it can be very pleasant during the day although cold at night. The mild weather is what draws Canadians, who have invaded Palm Springs in a big way as their winter destination of choice, as have gay men and women, who are retiring to the desert in droves.

Take the tram up the mountain. Palm Springs is surrounded by some of the tallest mountains in Southern California, and you can take a suspended tram up to 8000 feet for a great view of the whole Coachella Valley. The lodge at the top of Mount San Jacinto has two restaurants and a bar, and until June or so you can even play in the snow left over from winter. The cost is about \$20 per person for the tram, which takes about 15 minutes to reach the summit.

Shop, shop, shop. Just out of town by the highway is Desert Premium Outlets, one of the largest outlet



Pastrami is piled high between latkes at Sherman's deli in Palm Springs.

malls in California. In neighboring Palm Desert is El Paseo, which rivals Rodeo Drive for the opulence of its stores, galleries and restaurants. Inside Palm Springs and neighboring Cathedral City are dozens of antique stores, many of them specializing in mid-century modern furniture and accessories – so whether you want your house to look like the Bradys’ or the Jetsons’, this is the place to shop. Modernism Week every February is the largest such event in the country!

Eat and drink. Downtown Palm Springs has dozens of restaurants and bars. Bill’s Pizza serves up the best pizza I’ve had on the west coast (but bring cash – they don’t take credit cards). The Mexican food is almost always better here than in San Francisco. And the delis! Try the enormous sandwiches or giant creampuff at Manhattan In The Desert or the pastrami sandwich at Sherman’s (which can be served between two crispy potato pancakes!). Downtown Palm Springs also has its share of steakhouses, seafood restaurants, diners, Italian joints and other places to eat ... but compared to the bay area, there’s not much Asian food. Three of my favorites: Roscoe’s Grill, Rick’s Desert Grill, and the vegan restaurant Native Foods.



A tram car full of passengers arrives at the base station.

Sports. Golf! Swimming! Tennis! Hiking! Bike-riding! (Elmer Tosta has flown to Palm Springs just to ride a bike around town!) And if you take the tram up the mountain, you can hike up at 9000 feet and stay cool as a cucumber even in the hottest weather.

Gamble. There are several Indian casinos, complete with their mainstay buffet restaurants.

Shows. The various casinos frequently bring in touring musical acts, generally geared towards baby boomers. Recent shows in the valley have included Earth Wind and Fire, Robin Thicke, The Turtles, John Legend, Matchbox Twenty, George Clinton, the Beach Boys, MC Hammer, etc. And every April there’s the huge Coachella Music Festival (this year featuring headliners Blur, Phoenix, the Stone Roses, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Lou Reed and the Wu-tang Clan) and the Stagecoach festival for country music (this year with Toby Keith, Lady Antebellum, Hank Williams Jr., Roger McGuinn and Dwight Yoakum, among many others).

Spa pampering. There’s tons of spas, but the biggest one is probably the one connected with the Spa Casino right in downtown Palm Springs. Get a massage, a mani, a pedi, a seaweed wrap, or have hot rocks piled on your head. Typical spa stuff. Be prepared to pay.

Museums. A number of options, from artwork at the Palm Springs Art Museum to nature at The Living Desert and history at the Palm Springs Air Museum. Palm Springs also plays host to a number of art galleries, including one run by hipster artist favorite Shag.

Nature. Hike or walk among the gardens and canyons of Palm Springs, or take the hour-long drive over to Joshua Tree National Park. The fascinatingly photogenic Salton Sea is also just a short distance away (but beware, sometimes it smells).

Street fair. Every Thursday night (except for Thanksgiving) Palm Springs cordons off its downtown for a street fair featuring live music, food vendors, artists and lots of shopping booths, selling everything from dried dates and homemade soap to candle holders and clothing. If you’ve seen the caricature of me that accompanies my Virgin e-mail, the artist who did it, John Murasky, is there every week selling his original artwork and prints, so say hello ... and buy a print while they’re still affordable.

And the best thing of all about Palm Springs – the relaxation. It’s a slower pace of life in the desert. There’s rarely a wait for tables at the restaurants, the streets are wide and there’s not a parking meter to be found anywhere. You could get by without a car by taking cabs, but the cost would probably be around the same. I’d recommend a rental car – just get lost and see some of the beautiful modern homes of the stars, back when this town was Hollywood’s secret playground. It’s still a beautiful place.

– Steve Freitag

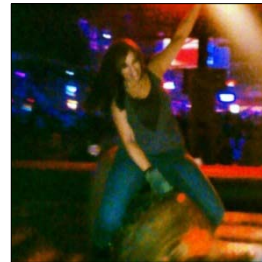


Your Virgin Villager editor mixes cocktails at home in Palm Springs with his husband, Jack.
Artwork by John Murasky.

WOWCATION IN DALLAS



In late February the WOW committee sponsored a “WOWcation” in which a group of SFO GSTs non-revved to Dallas for a quick trip of bull-ridin’, barbecue-eatin’, line-dancin’, sight-seein’ and other fun Texas-style activities.



Angelo Vinco, top left, takes a turn riding the mechanical bull at Cowboys Red River. Above right, Claudio Breschia, Mark Freitas, Robert Corcuchia and Sara Rodríguez see the spot by the grassy knoll where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Center left, Claudio, Willie Suenaga, Lora Reichhold, Kim Roth, Katie Fung, Carolyn Giusti and Ashley Begley eat and drink at Red Hot and Blue, and Lora takes her own turn on the mechanical bull. Lower left, Carolyn, Annette Margolis, Lora and Ashley enjoy their night out on the town.

Sydney – not just for convicts anymore

by Elmer Tosta

The first non-rev trip to Sydney, Australia, was taken around 1788 by British convicts sent over to set up a penal colony. They probably didn't have to worry about the administrative details, since all booking and guaranteed passage had been taken care of by the British government. They also didn't need to log into *myldtravel* to check if there were happy faces next to their bookings to indicate space available. Nor were visas or valid passports required. All was taken care of. Fortunately for us, the conveniences of the electronic age and our booking system have insured that we can have a seamless journey without being in shackles. Listed below are a few tips on the process as well as a couple of interesting bargains in this very expensive city.

Even though we speak the same language, visits to Australia require a visa in addition to your passport. These are easily obtained electronically at http://www.immi.gov.au/e_visa/eta.htm. While the approval process is instantaneous, there is a 10- to 12-hour lag time between the electronic approval and the notification to Australian customs, so best to do this right after you have your travel listing. Note that this is NOT automatically done for you by the airline.

Checking availability on flights is simple now that Qantas and Virgin Australia are listed on my ID travel. Also, the team at Qantas reservations (1-800-227-4157) is extremely helpful.

Considering the high cost of visiting Sydney, there are a couple of real values to be had. The transit system offers weekly passes to all travel zones for AUD \$61.00. This includes transit to the outer suburbs, the Blue Mountains (as well as the local bus that takes you to a couple of the gorge viewing sites). Train, light rail, and ferry service (not the high speed, though) are all included. Make sure you choose the "all zones" pass which gives you access to the outer reaches of the Sydney Metropolitan Area and Harbor. The monorail is also not included in the pass, but it's also not worth the AUD\$10.00 ride. It makes a short loop that is quite walkable. The monorail is scheduled to be demolished in the near future, a testament to its civic uselessness.

The second great value is for those interested in keeping up their vFit Healthmiles. One of the best bargains is the low cost of working out in one of Sydney's fantastic facilities. Sydneysiders (as the locals are called) are big fans of aquatics, and consequently, their public swimming pools are more than just local swimming holes. Most of them include a 50 meter pool for lap swim, as well as one or two pools for recreational swim and children. Some of the facilities also include gyms with aerobic equipment and free weights, as well as sauna and massage services. Upscale cafes are also on site. Price of admission usually doesn't exceed AUD\$6.00. Some are indoors and some are out. Check out <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/explore/facilities/swimming-pools> for all the details. Quite a bargain. Also, for you swimmers out there, try the Bondi Icebergs, (pronounced bond-eye). This is a private club with a low cost of public admission and a heated saltwater pool right on the ocean. Waves from the Pacific break over the edge of the pool during high tide making for quite an adventure. <http://icebergs.com.au/>

If swimming or beach lounging is not for you, consider any of the self-guided walks around the Sydney Harbor, as well as the Sydney Harbor National Park. There are walks and hikes of varying difficulty and they provide some exciting vistas of the harbor, beaches, and the ocean beyond. Bring your pedometers to get those vFit Healthmiles! Recommended paths are listed on the website for the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/parkwalking.aspx?id=n0039>



The Sydney Opera House and harbor bridge.

Try the tourism web site <http://www.australia.com> and select Sydney (or any other city you plan on visiting for that matter). The official tourism site has a wealth of information to help you prepare for your visit. A favorite hard copy travel guide is the *Eyewitness Travel* series. The Sydney guide follows the typical Eyewitness format with an overview of the city, recommended tours that you do individually using the book as your guide, as well as Sydney by neighborhood and what lies beyond Sydney. The biggest bonus from this book is the plasticized pull-out city map, which includes an inset of the transit system. Our copy made it through our two week stay, lots of rain, constant unfolding and refolding, and still remains intact for another trip.

Time permitting, catch a performance at the Sydney Opera House. Why the word “iconic” has not been included in its name is a mystery. Every reference to the building is prefaced by the word iconic, and rightly so. The controversial design, conceived in the pre-computer age, and the fact that it was funded by a lottery when it ran over budget, all come together with many other tales of politics and scandal to produce this Sydney landmark. Tours are offered of the building, and after the tour, you are directed to the box office where tickets can be purchased (any many cases at a discount for those who took the tours). Keep in mind that the opera house isn’t just for opera. There are numerous venues. Two main halls are devoted to productions that draw large crowds. One is reserved for classical opera, but the other is used for popular and rock concerts. Smaller performance spaces book everything from lectures to cabaret to jazz and modern dance. There is some type of performance here almost every night of the year.

If you’re the type who enjoys museums, there are many in Sydney, just in case the rain is keeping you indoors. There is every type of institution from Aquarium, Maritime, Modern Art, Sydney history, as well as a collection of Australian art (and many more that I haven’t mentioned) throughout the city. Many of these museums focus on traveling exhibitions as well as highlighting their own permanent collections. And the greatest bargain is to be had in the art museums. There is no entrance fee unless you are visiting one of the travelling exhibitions. All have websites and apps with current details.

The convicts never had it this good.



Sydney Harbor with the Botanical Gardens in the foreground as seen from the Sydney Tower, at top. Center, Bondi Icebergs pool with high tide wave breaking over the edge. At bottom, Elmer and Jill Tosta enjoy the Australian sun.

Sydney at a glance

What you need:

Valid Passport

PNR (Can't get your ET visa without some sort of booking, even if it's space available)

ET Visa http://www.immi.gov.au/e_visa/eta.htm

Where your money goes furthest:

Art Museums (free entry)

Beaches (free entry)

Transit (weekly passes) Best Value, MyMulti3. <http://www.cityrail.info/tickets/which/mymulti>

Any of the public swimming pools, aquatic centers, and gyms

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/explore/facilities/swimming-pools>

Self guided walking tours of the city. (Free-download the PDF's and save them on your smart phone or tablet)

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/explore/places-to-go/attractions-and-tours/historical-walking-tours>

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/explore/places-to-go/attractions-and-tours/historical-walking-tours>

historical-walking-tours

Any walk through the Sydney Harbor National Park (Free-see website for map and details) <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/parkwalking.aspx?id=n0039>

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/parkwalking.aspx?id=n0039

Expensive indulgences:

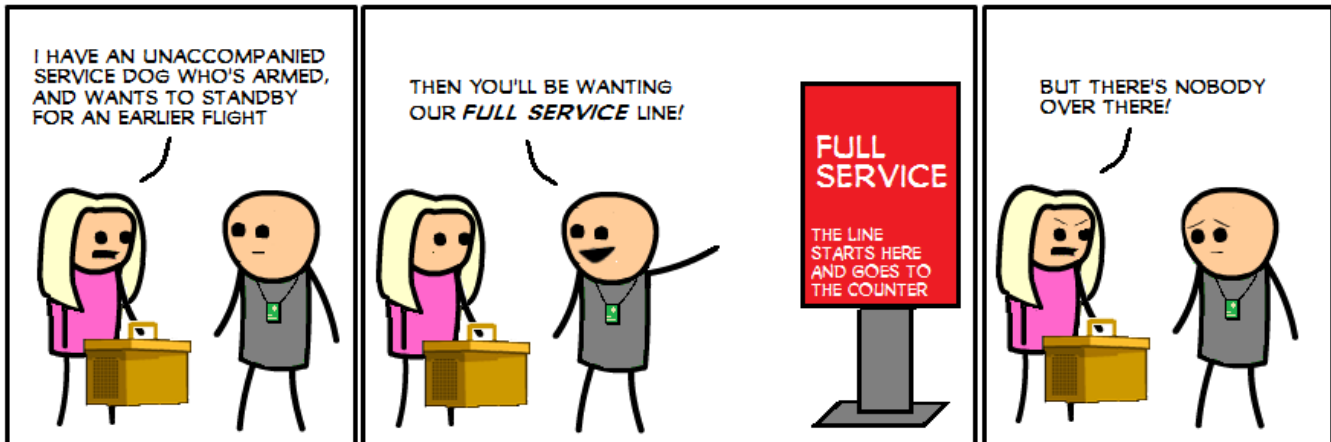
Any of the fine restaurants. There is a very vibrant food scene in Sydney, much like San Francisco Bay Area. There is a lot of excellent food to be had, but it comes at a price. Most restaurants have websites with menus and pricing. The food section of the Sydney Herald is a good place to start, as well as the publication "Time Out Sydney," available at newsstands and free at large hotels.

Sydneysiders are also preoccupied with coffee. If the convicts could only see them now. Most neighborhoods are filled with cafes serving coffee brewed one cup at a time for about AUD\$4.00 a cup. Don't look for a free refill, it doesn't exist. On the plus side, the coffee is quite good and there are many different resources to sample.

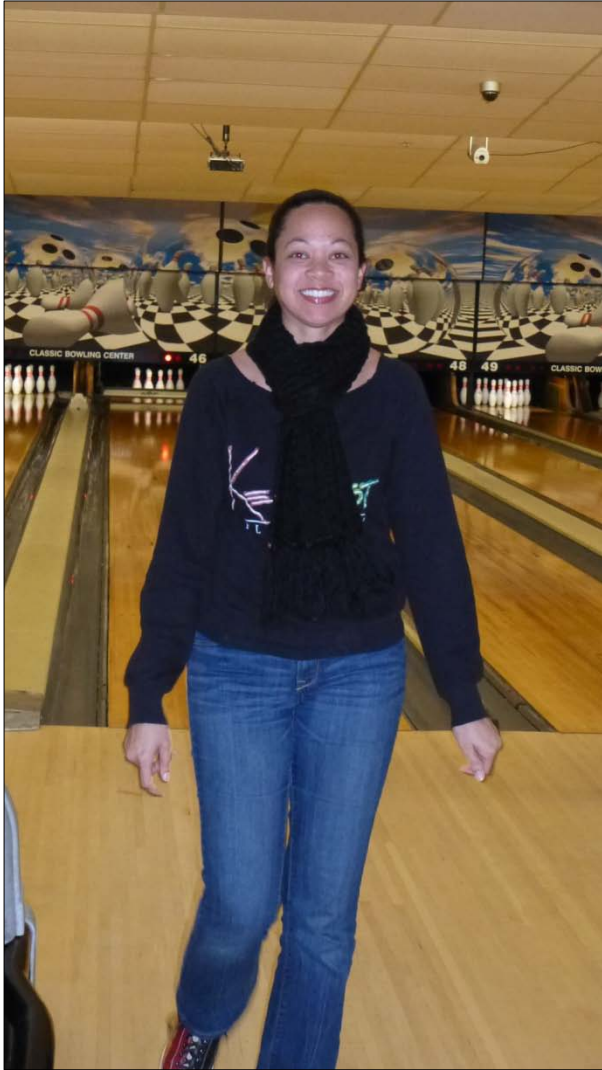
A performance at the Opera House; (Yes, that one, the iconic one). Visit the website before you go so you will know what's being presented during your stay. There is also an app for your smart phone or tablet.

<http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com>

THINGS WE HEAR TOO OFTEN

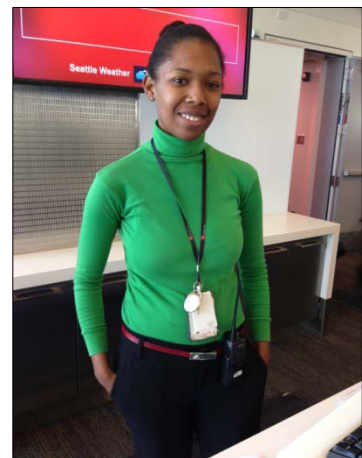
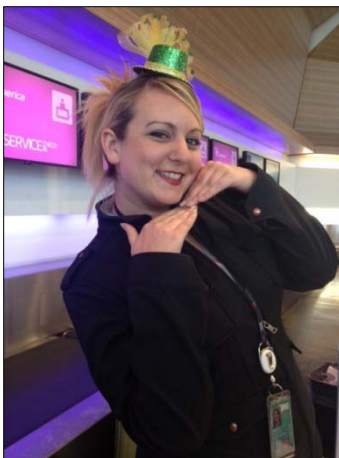


BOWLING FOR VIRGINS



The WOW committee sponsored a bowling night in February at Classic Bowling in Daly City. Clockwise from left, Stefanie Lewis on the lanes; Angelo Vinco, Lisa Padian, Peishou Liu, Stefanie, Sean Jaochico and Bernadine Lopez have fun; and Angelo shows off his form.

GREEN FOR ST. PADDY'S



Wearing green for Saint Patrick's Day are, from left, Carolyn Giusti; Bernadine Lopez, Geraldine Posadas and Edward Espiritu (with photobombing in the back by Robert Corcuchia); and Asia Spragan.

VIRGIN TERRITORY

Soon we'll be saying goodbye to a handful of valued teammates who are moving to the new San Jose station. Personally speaking, on my first morning at the gates, back in the international terminal, **George Maseda** took me on a driving tour of our parked planes in early morning – and our profession has never seemed more glamorous to me than it did then, with our planes softly lit by the rays of the new rising sun, as George explained about RONs and overnight security searches. The very first time I worked a flight delayed due to weather, **Joyce Manolo** was there, laying down the law and communicating effortlessly with the guests in what seemed to me like a very chaotic situation, but one she had complete control over. **Larry Sexton** came along in the class after mine, and I think most of our teammates would agree that he has always made our workplace better just by being his smiling, super-competent self. The same with **Geraldine Posadas**, whose good humor and cheerful smile pretty much make her the chief sweetheart of the station. (I once freaked her out by telling her Gate 52 was haunted!) And then there's **Brooke Ziel**, whom I haven't really worked with, because swing is swing and mornings are mornings are never the twain shall meet. But we'll miss all these folks, and wish them best in their new digs, just a few dozen miles to the south. With any luck we'll still see them around, at company events and when they pass through SFO to non-rev.



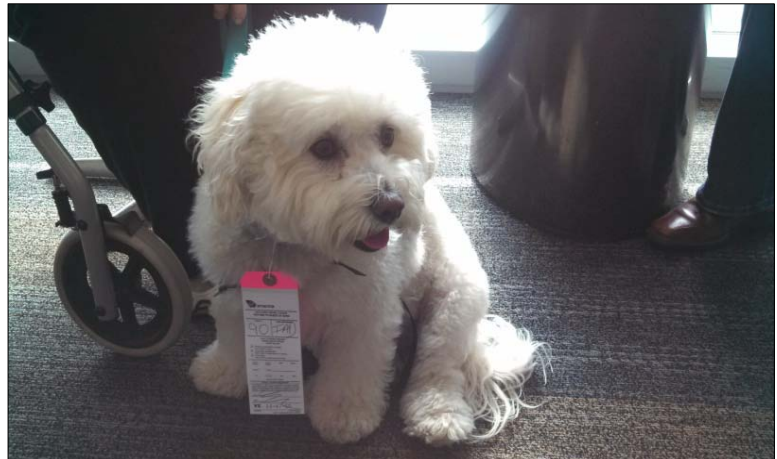
New **headset kiosk signs** (with the higher \$3 price) mean one thing for the grammarians: no more signage with the incorrect "DROP \$2 BUCKS IN THE SLOT." That wording used to grate on many of us with that redundant "drop two dollars bucks."



Have a **meal voucher** and hoping to get something from Andale? Perhaps one of those favorite Mexican dishes mentioned earlier in this newsletter in the "what would you do" feature? If so, it had better not have a date on the voucher ... two separate Andale employees told me those vouchers are only good on the date listed. Have never heard of that restriction with any other dining establishment in T2, so I suspect those Andale employees may be just making it up as they go.



The comic strip on page 10 was done by me in the style of one of my favorite online web comics, **Cyanide & Happiness**, and is based on something that bothers me when working as lobby host and someone needs to go to the full service line. If you direct the guest to the full service counter with a hand gesture, you sometimes get the response, "How do I get there?" but if you gesture at the sign leading to the counter, you sometimes get the response, "but there's nobody there!" referring to that there's no person standing right there by the sign. So, sometimes you're forced to be condescending and explain: "You'll need to go to the Full Service Counter (gesturing at the Full Service counter) by taking the line that begins there (gesturing at the Full Service sign)." You'd think people would know how lines work! At least the bag drop sign is clearer now, but if you remember the bag drop sign back at the International Terminal ("*Checking In? Drop Bags Here!*") then you'll recall that yes, occasionally guests would come up to the sign, read it ... and then leave their untagged luggage right there by the sign.



A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING – On a recent Washington, D.C., flight, GST Joanie Raffo said, "I gave our guest the pink tag for her walker and she placed it on the service dog instead of the walker. One of our other guests took the picture and asked me if this was normal because he has never seen this before ... This is why I love my job!"



Congratulations to new SFO supervisor **Tim Valdivia**. Tim Horn wrote about Tim when announcing the promotion: "Tim V has been with the company since August 2010 and during this time has served as both a Guest Services Lead and Ops Lead. These roles, combined with his 17 years in retail management, make us extremely confident that the station will benefit in all areas of our business- both above and below wing. When Tim V is not at SFO charming guests, supporting teammates and minding to ramp business, you might find him perched on his couch engaging in his other passion as a couch potato watching *Real Housewives*, *The Young and the Restless* or *Animal Planet*. But if you go to visit him at his home be sure to bring lots of kitty food as he has three cats

-Boo, Storm and Kat. Following a few hours of television watching he just might allow you to accompany him to another of his passions at the House of Glitter but be prepared for him to dress you up for some theatrical fun!"



Recently our learning coordinator **Aracely Sandoval** mentioned that we had a guest traveling with birds as emotional support animals. As she wrote in her VXellence e-mail, "Normally we do not allow guests to travel with birds. Guidance from the Department of Transportation (DOT) is that birds as emotional support animals should be handled on a case by case basis. When assessing the situation, some things to consider are: how to deal with potential waste disposal, safety hazard (could the bird possibly fly around the cabin) or other disruptions. If a guest has medical documentation that meets our qualifications a GST should call a CRO in order to carefully assess the situation."



Congratulations are due to **John Gray** and **Paul Fung**, who recently stopped TSA agents who were trying to board our planes undetected. It's part of the TSA's job to make sure that our planes are secure, but it's part of our job to make sure they don't get by us! So keep an eye out ... if they do slip by and get aboard the plane, Virgin could be hit with thousands of dollars in fines. And they seem to travel in groups, so if you stop a TSA agent, alert your co-workers to remain on the lookout at their own gates.



A handful of new Virgin destinations coming down the pike -- in addition to **San Jose**, there's **Newark**, **Anchorage** and the one I'm the most excited by, **Austin**. Not only is Austin the live music capital of the U.S. (there's musicians playing everywhere!), it also has the best barbecue I've ever had. Once we start flying to Austin, you should non-rev there just to try the barbecue at the Salt Lick and Kreutzer's. At the latter restaurant, prepare to get your hands dirty -- there are no utensils, and you just rip into your barbecued meat with your hands like a caveman! It's all very Texas.



One more observation about last issue's "sad story" about how senior citizens get ripped off by scam artists. Seeing some of the ridiculous scams my mom fell for, I wondered to my brother how anyone could fall for these things, since they have typos and grammar errors and often just don't make a whole lot of sense. Couldn't these scam artists just run a spell-check on their phony solicitations? My brother has studied the issue more than I have, and he explained to me that the misspellings and other errors are usually intentional. The scammers don't wait to waste their time on people who will eventually think, "Can this lottery be right? Am I being ripped off? This so-called lottery even misspelled the word 'millyunair'! I'm calling the police!" They want to target the stupidest and most desperate people, the ones who will fall for the scam wholeheartedly, and not question that they're getting ripped off. By throwing in misspellings and other errors, they're eliminating right off the bat the smarter people who notice misspelled words. And you have to be pretty stupidly desperate -- unfortunately, like my mom -- to believe "I've won a million dollars! Great! But first I have to pay you \$30,000 for taxes? Okay! I'll get right on it by maxing out my credit cards!"



Rumor has it that Southwest is now playing **techno music** in their lobby. Wonder where they got that idea? In any case, they're behind the times -- when I started work here, back at the international terminal, it seemed all we played at the counter was electronic dance music, of the Lady Gaga and Black-Eyed Peas variety, but lately I've heard a much more eclectic mix of music being played. I welcome this development for several reasons: the Virgin brand was built on music of many different styles and genres; it's very Virgin to empower the teammates to decide what music to play, rather than having a directive come down from above; and different styles of music work better at different times of day. Sometimes you want to increase the energy at check-in (or the gates), and sometimes you want to chill it out a bit.



A **new class** (class 38?!) starts training at HQ this month! Reportedly we'll be getting 16 new teammates by the end of April, a mixture of full- and part-timers. I think I can speak for everyone in the station when I say, **WELCOME!** And no doubt the last class to come in to SFO (in spring of 2012) especially welcomes a new class, so that they are no longer at the bottom of the seniority list. (And it's always amused me how teammates respond to any personnel changes at the station with the first thought, *how does this affect my seniority?*) And in other news, welcome back to SFO (from FLL) Christine Wascholl!

-- Steve Freitag

This fifth edition of **THE VIRGIN VILLAGER** was edited by Steve Freitag, with our usual editorial board of Suzette Rabano, Sue Wilk, Ian McFaul, Elmer Tosta, and photos by a host of others. Supervisor Leilani Oster is our head honcho and overseer. Join us and contribute to our next issue, which should be out around June 1. Send your contributions (photos, stories and ideas) to stephen.freitag@virginamerica.com and you too can get your name in print ... and possibly win meal vouchers, like the winners from our last issue, Elmer Tosta and Claudia Umili.