

A Bird's Eye View

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Some people say that the best part of the trip is the journey, not the destination. Having been born in an era when humans can fly, it's difficult to imagine how science and society has advanced so far. Traveling has been a core part of our nature since the beginning of time. We are motivated by all the beauties nature has to offer and therefore constantly strive to reach new heights. However, most of us can travel halfway around the globe without even looking through the window to see the path we take.

I've flown so much in my life that the plane is practically my second home. The plane has always felt more like a crowded room than a mode of transportation to me, it's packed with people and yet it feels so empty. So many people are traveling to the same place for different reasons and yet the room is filled with silence as no one dares speak up. The plane's cold walls entrap me and I struggle to think clearly. The seats must have been designed by the same guy who invented the electric chair. I fidget in my seat until I give up on trying to find a comfortable position. Soon after, the sharp silence and lack of a sun threatens to make me fall asleep as my eyelids gain a few pounds. I surrender in my fight to stay awake as my subconscious takes over.

I wake up because the guy next to me just sneezed directly onto my television screen. In a frantic struggle to change my mind, I search for a hint of the estimated arrival time. Having noticed my probing, the passenger who had just sneezed on my screen tells me the time. My heart drops to the bottom of my chest when I realize we are barely half way through the flight.

The last hour of the flight seems to take longer than the rest of the trip combined. The flight attendants gracefully stride through the aisles pushing carts filled with heated meals. Mass produced and designed by some of the worst prison chef rejects known to man, I know exactly what to expect. At this point I'm ready to eat the guy next to me but the smell of the food keeps me from taking a bite. In a desperate attempt to distract myself I open the window shade...

Wow... The mountains shoot past the clouds. The extravagant hills reach from the sea to farther than the eye can see. Everything around me starts to disappear as I am no longer in a room, but resting in the clouds gazing upon the beautiful landscape below me. Soon everyone around me is opening their window shades to gaze upon the unbelievable view. Why didn't I open the window sooner? As the plane lands, the brakes stop working and we smash directly into a building. This flashes through my mind before I snap back to reality. Instead we land with a short bump and as the plane decelerates, I am released from my restlessness. Who knew a place could be so liberating yet limited? Although the experience on the plane hardly changes, I never get used to the conflicting feeling of being trapped and yet free to go anywhere I want.

Leaving my home is difficult. My memories with this place and the loving people here are so hard to leave behind. I start to have second thoughts about my departure as I think about what I will lose. I say my goodbyes and force myself to the airport as I get ready for the next adventure.

Frantic and stressed out that I might not find my gate or something goes wrong with my papers, I rush to arrive early. This is my first time traveling outside the city and I excitedly await new experiences. The thought of being thousands of feet above ground sends chills down my spine as I imagine everything that could go wrong. I am the first one to get in line as I listen closely to the announcer.

As I board the plane, I am instantly shocked by the space's size and the amount of people it can fit. Can this thing really take off with all this weight? I observe the people around me and I am taken aback by the diversity and absurdity of the situation. I quickly rush to my seat. I introduce myself to my neighbors looking forward to listening to their stories. I am so restless that I highly doubt I will be sleeping during the flight. The plane reminds me of a family dinner as we all get ready to fulfill our hunger with this moment. Too busy in my own thoughts, the chairs and temperature don't bother me while I try to take everything in. The plane takes off and I feel all my bones surge to the back of my body. I clutch the armrests as if my life depends on it.

I continue my conversation with my neighbor and offer a tissue to a person in front of me who had just sneezed. So much has happened and yet it's only been one hour. After a while, a flight attendant comes to our row and offers us drinks. I am not thirsty but they have my favorite beverage, so I gladly ask for a cup of orange juice. As I sip on my orange goodness, I think of all that I have experienced so far and how much more awaits me.

Later, the flight attendants bring us food. Not being too picky and not knowing what will be available later, I wipe my plate clean and my body starts to digest the meal. I can tell that we have almost arrived as the downward acceleration of the plane hits me. The speed at which time has passed confuses me as I ponder at how it can already be over. I see the person in front of me open his window shade and I decide to take a look as well.

Woah... the proximity of the clouds makes me feel like I can practically touch them. The sea and sky fills in the empty space surrounding the hills and mountains that rise to heights that put skyscrapers to shame. I am so caught up in the view that I lose all sense of place and in that instant all my fears disappear and are replaced with new hopes. When I come back to reality, I wish I had opened my window shade earlier.

The plane bounces once and I imagine the tiny wheels skimming the ground. We come to a stop and eventually they start letting us out. I think back to before the ride and how scared I was that it would be boring and long. Then I begin to reminisce about all the experiences I had on the plane and the ones that are to come next time. I don't think I will ever get used to the feeling of soaring across the sky while sharing the experience with others.