

Day 32 – Quake and start of marathon to Chile [Tuesday 22-Feb-2011]

We got up fairly early and wrapped up our packing for our departure today. After we were ready, we headed down to the office/restaurant of the Bodega hostel where we ate breakfast. One of the first headlines that showed up on CNN was in regards to another earthquake in New Zealand. I sent a note to John, asking if things were ok:

Breaking news

Cathedrals in Christchurch, New Zealand are badly damaged, and the airport is closed after a 6.3-magnitude quake.

February 22, 2011 -- Updated 0117 GMT (0917 HKT)

Considering the scope of the damage that is now emerging from the quake in Christchurch on the 22nd (11 days after we left Christchurch) the damage is quite extensive, compared to the big quake that hit them in September of last year.



Christchurch Cathedral was heavily damaged in today's earthquake. Photo: Twitter - @tesswoolcock

What we saw on 2/10/2011

When the limo bus arrived, it was 20 minutes late, but we had plenty of time. I suspect the same could not be said about other passengers on the bus since they looked a bit distressed. The ride up to the airport took an hour and the driver darted back and forth between lanes, as have noticed with other taxi drivers, without using indicators.

What you see today (2/23/2011) after quake

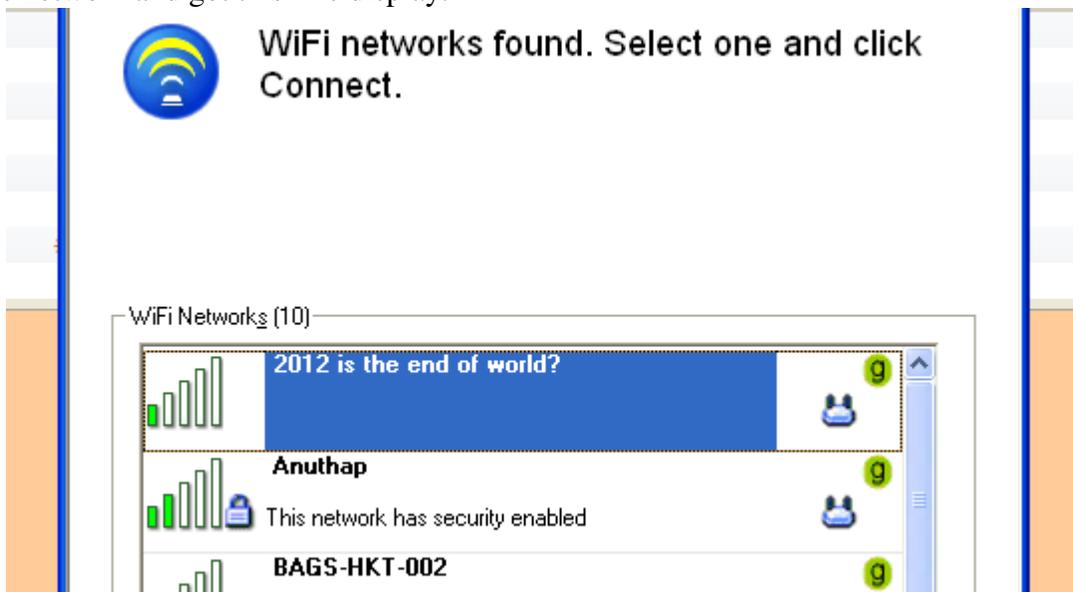
When we got to the Phuket airport it was quite chaotic. Fortunately we had plenty of extra time. Lots of people lined up in pre-screening of luggage before we were even routed to our check in counters. I checked the weight of our stuff and it looked as if we were just a tad above 50Kg. I was not too worried about it here, since I had pre-paid extra to bring up to 60Kg when I bought this detour. I could see others were sent away from the counter to jettison things with just as worried faces as we had when we got stuck in Sydney. Since we have to change airport in Kuala Lumpur (and hence cannot check our luggage through), I am a bit more worried that we'll have weight problems when we check in there. But we have several hours to spare there, so we should have time to deal with it.



I could not find our flight. Then I noticed the monitor had been stuck for 2 weeks 😊

As I looked for our flight, at the gate, I could not find. I feared that we had been exposed to the same error as for our Tahiti flight. I then noticed that the date on the display was two weeks out of date! I reported this to a staffer at the airport who was very surprised. How could something like this not have been noticed?

Just after I reported this, the terminal had a power failure and then came back. The working monitors turned black but the stuck one quickly came back with the wrong date. I spoke with someone from New Zealand and they said that several people had died in the quake, mainly people working on restoring buildings that were damaged from the previous quake. I tried to get onto the network and got this fine display:



In trying to connect to a WiFi network at the airport, I was reassured. This is 2011!

Lilli bought some snacks at the airport while I tried to find a plug for the laptop, to charge things up a bit more. We were at the head of the line when it came time for boarding. That was good, because it turned a bit chaotic shortly after that with passengers picking seats they were not assigned, etc. The stewardess seemed to ignore the whole thing.

As we reached immigrations back in Kuala Lumpur, we could hear the man in the line next to us asking for a visa because all flights to Egypt had been cancelled. The Middle East is really busy these days. We found the transfer bus and use that to get from the Low Cost Carrier Terminal airport to the regular one. It cost us less than \$1/each to take the ride. The luggage situation on board the bus was comical since there was no under-side storage and there was no space inside it either, to speak of. One guy had a large surfboard. But we got to the other airport. After checking our luggage through to the other side of the planet, we located a McDonalds so that we could sample the Double Prosperity Burgers we saw signs for when we went through Malaysia last week.



We sampled McDonald's Double Prosperity Burger in Malaysia. Yum!

We boarded our flight for Male with Malaysian Air. It was a 727. It felt a bit weathered. The plane was perhaps ½ full, which is odd these days when airlines are hyper-competitive. The flight to Male was a bit bumpy. Most of the people on the plane were Asian.

We landed on a rather simple airport. We were the only plane being processed. Everyone took pictures of what they saw and you could tell people were on their way to a significant vacation. We were the only ones who went to the transfer desk. They insisted on having a staff member from their airport do the job rather than us walking over to a transfer desk. Once we had our boarding cards we headed over to the main waiting area. They had a few duty free shops, but things did not look very interesting or cheap.



Our one week vacation in the Maldives was reduced to a picture of a sign!

It felt odd to have our vacation in the Maldives be reduced into just a fly-through their airport. But we did get a several days extra in Kuala Lumpur plus a 5 day side trip to Phuket, Thailand, instead. We both thought that offered much better value for our money.

We plane out was a new 777-300 run by Emirates. It looked spacious. We had individual entertainment centers. The stewardesses had funny dresses.