

## Is Getting there Half The Fun?

It didn't start out very well.

The morning of my departure to Darwin, Australia I received this email from Cathay Pacific Airways:

XXX

*Re: Special Update - Tropical Cyclone Hato's potential impact to flights to/from Hong Kong  
Mon 8/21, 10:44 PM*

*Dear Passenger:*

*We are closely monitoring Tropical Cyclone Hato and its potential impact to our flight operations. Currently all flight operations remain normal, but we expect disruptions to flights in and out of Hong Kong on Wednesday, 23 August.*

*Special ticketing guidelines have been issued, waiving rebooking and rerouting fees; we advise customers to amend your travel plans if possible .....*

XXX

This is scary, but ever optimistic, Joe takes me to the airport at noon. The Cathay Pacific flight leaves O'Hare just a half hour late and the flight attendant tells me that the typhoon is hitting Hong Kong earlier than expected, and the worst should be over by the time we land. I later learn it is a level 10 typhoon - with level 12 being the most severe.

As we reach V1\* and head north (we used a polar route), I get the distinct feeling I am destined for an adventure.





Sixteen hours later when we land in Hong Kong incoming as well as outgoing flights are so backed up we wait for a gate.

Tick....Tick.... Tick

This is the transfer where in a best case scenario I have 50 minutes to change planes in this huge airport. Thankfully the Hong Kong to Brisbane flight runs late. I make it to the departure gate with just seconds to spare.

Oops! What does the departure board say? Hong Kong to Cairns to Brisbane. What's this? My documents indicate a direct flight. But it is not so. Four hours later we land in Cairns, Australia and everyone must deplane, go thru security (again!), then reboard. This takes over an hour. Back in my same seat, I am finally on my way to Brisbane.

Unfortunately the gate agent has no way of checking if my luggage made the transfer in Hong Kong. I would find out in two hours when I wait to be reunited with my luggage before going thru Australian customs and immigration.

Another late arrival getting into Brisbane and none of my luggage spews onto the conveyer belt.

Along with other passengers in the same situation, we queue at the baggage desk to file reports. The first thing the agent tells me is I have missed my flight to Darwin.

Darn that typhoon!

A sheaf of papers in hand, I find my way to the Qantas desk for re-booking. The agent can get me to Darwin via Cairns. So instead of a triple connection to get to my destination, I now have a quintuple connection.

So 35 hours after I check in at O'Hare and 10 airline meals later, I finally land in Darwin, the northernmost city in Australia. It has been quite a ride.

As for luggage ..... it didn't make it.



In order to end this vignette on a positive note, I must say that the three flights on Cathay Pacific to get me to Australia were wonderful. Seating is 1-2-1 and window seats have the equivalent of 3 windows. With pod-like cubicles, it was easy to be unaware of people seated around me. It is the most comfortable plane configuration I have ever experienced. Qantas within Australia wasn't bad either.

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- V1 is a new term for me. When a plane has reached the right speed for take off, it is the point where the pilot can no longer decide to abort and he must take off.

