

Thoughts from the Paris Airshow

Well, I had never been to an Airshow before, and I didn't really want to go...but I was drafted to try and help sell Electronic Flight Bags. We had worked hard to get the first 777-300ER (WD501) outfitted with our gear, and I wanted to be there to show it off. We got to fly there on an SAS A340 and I didn't like it much. The business class seats weren't very comfortable (SAS problem) and instead of the usual 10 inch armrest, there was a 4 inch armrest...doesn't sound like much, but I noticed it.

We didn't stay downtown, but stayed near the airport (Bourget) near a little village called Roissy en France. Most of the other folks stayed in Paris and paid the transit penalty. After crashing on Friday night, we were there Saturday to see the 777 get tugged in. We had to wait an hour or so for the doors to be opened (rumor was that we were waiting for the French nose-wheel straightening Union to show up). We found ourselves in a tent outside the Boeing Pavilion. We called it the Kettle Korn tent as it looked like one of those you see outside of Home Depot.



See those tall stairs to the 777, I got to run up them at least 300 times during the show. It was hot and muggy (as Paris is) but at least I didn't have to wear a suit. The good news was that the best view of the show was from the top of the 777 stairs.



The hotel we stayed at was just fine (the air conditioning worked) but the staff didn't speak much English and my French is pathetic. I asked them if they had high speed internet..."Oh yes". It didn't work. They had the hookup, but it didn't light up. We went to the desk and ask, they took our electronic keys and disappeared for a while and said it was fixed...but no joy. Finally, we had a tech come to the room and he told us, "sacre blu, it's not hooked up". Another mystery solved.

Our poor little tent got way too much attention, especially when it was hot or it rained. It rained one day, and things almost got out of hand.



They flew in the last Air France Concorde and it was a big hit.



Since we had worked many shifts with the mechanics, we got to be good friends. They had a two hour ride in an un-airconditioned bus to Paris. Being good Boeing Mechanics, they rustled up a cooler filled with cold beer...however, during the journey home they also realized that the bus had no bathroom. They were dancing by the time they got off....especially since the French Unions were generally striking at the time.

Like I said, we were in a quiet French village and were home in 20 minutes. People were actually quite nice. We only got asked once why George Bush let us come to the show. It was a non-English speaking Taxi driver and so we politely said, "eat me". He smiled.

I saw the French President, Cretain, at the show, but didn't get a chance to talk to him....just as well. Anyway, here's a last picture of the village we stayed at.

