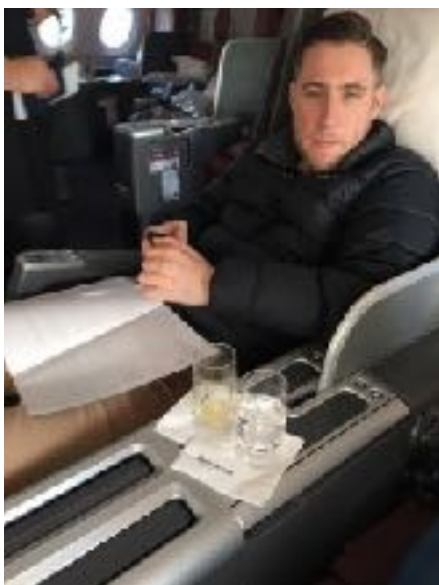


## JOEL'S JOURNEY – Sunday 5th June 2016



Flying to America for rehab was quite a big deal to most people except for me. I was trying to keep a lid on things and concentrate on the task ahead. Knowing full well what lies ahead of me, I didn't want the gloss of the united states to distract me from what I am really over here to do.

The plane ride itself as comfortable as it was, proved to be more difficult than predicted. The cabin pressure on the plane had quite an effect on bowels and bladder (ill let you use your imagination). Once we landed with fresh pants, a different outlook on international flights, the culture shock sunk in and excitement followed. We picked up our accessible roll in van from LAX, plugged in our coordinates to Elisa's iphone and begun our extremely tense drive on the right hand side of the road on a 12 lane highway, surrounded by massive SUVs going twice as fast as we were.

After a couple of missed turn offs and a traffic filled trip, we SAFELY arrived at our hotel in Carlsbad, San Diego. After now nearly being awake for 24 hours we checked into our new room. This is where disaster struck and we noticed our WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE bathroom was indeed NOT accessible!

The supposed roll in shower was a bath, and there was nothing accessible of our room other than the sign on the door. We were told that this was the only option in the hotel with regards to accessibility. The holiday that had begun so smoothly had suddenly come to a halt. Without somewhere to shower physically could not stay there and it was left up to the staff to sort something out. Things were looking grim. Fortunately, we had a hotel next door from us who were happy to take us in at the expensive of the initially intended hotel. This room was larger and had better facilities excluding a kitchen.

With accommodation sorted, the following day we headed out to check out our surrounding and get our bearings. It seems that America is a country of excess, with everything bigger and cheaper than what we would come to expect in our country (2L of Smirnoff vodka for \$16USD)!! We headed to the favourites Walmart, Macy's etc.

Being in the state of California, there are a number of wealthy areas around one of them being Newport, Orange County. We decided to make our way there, after what should have been an hour's drive, 2 hours later we arrived in Newport. What an amazing town it is! With streets that belong to scenes of the Truman show and Wisteria lane, we were amazed at what this town had to offer. A world renowned surf spot known as the wedge, something I have watched and dreamt of and possibly even surfing at myself for as long as I can remember. Unfortunately, the surfing gods weren't with me and there was no surf to witness. This did not detract from my experience of Newport.

So far San Diego has given me sunny weather, good food and happy locals. Tomorrow I begin the real journey and reason I am here. Stay tuned for an update on week 1 of rehab.

Joel