

## December 04, 2005 – Last Day of Honeymoon

Today is our last day of the honeymoon. We woke up at about 9 AM, packed up and checked out of the hotel. We drove to South Beach to visit this most famous of sights in Miami. This is a long stretch of road running along the beach. On one side are hotels, shops and restaurants. On the other side are parks, sand, and the beach. We walked along this stretch to check out the shops, and bought souvenirs at several places. The weather today was the hottest it has ever been since we came here; 80 degrees F with even higher humidity, and almost no breeze. We had lunch at a Cuban restaurant on the beach, and then drove back to the car rental place. We dropped of our car, took the shuttle to the airport, and took the 4:30 flight to Dallas – Fort Worth. At the airport we ate dinner at Taco Bell and finished up some leftovers from the Cuban restaurant we had carried with us. From there we connected on a different plane back to Phoenix, and arrived at Sky Harbor around 10 PM. Again both flights were on American Airlines, and like our flight to Miami, everything was on time. Newton parents picked us up at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport at ~ 10:30 PM and drove us home.



All in all, we arrived at several conclusions about our trip. First, we saw very few mosquitoes, or any bugs at all, even when we were in the Everglades or the mangrove swamp. This was quite nice. We had bought bug spray before coming here, and never even opened the bottle. Some of the locals we met made remarks to the same effect; this winter was quite good in terms of few mosquitoes. We had asked about this phenomenon to some of the park rangers we met. One of them told me that all the hurricanes in the preceding months had dumped salt water everywhere in South Florida, and thereby flooding out many potential mosquito-breeding sites. This sounded plausible as mosquitoes require standing fresh water to breed in. Yeeeh lucky us!!!

Second, South Florida is quite expensive, especially considering that we visited there during the low point of the tourist season; between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hotel prices quickly rise after Christmas; some of them double. We assume prices of everything else touristy also rise after Christmas. Admissions to nature parks, museums, and tours were more expensive than what we see in the Southwest or West Coast states, including Hawaii and Alaska, and were higher than what we have seen in Michigan and Ohio.

Third, outside of the aggressive atmosphere that reigns on the street, Florida has a relaxed social atmosphere. People on the streets wear t-shirts and slacks or jeans; very few ties in view. Many of the young men looked and dressed like frat-boys. We quickly learned to distinguish a local from a tourist. Locals were more likely to have tattoos, body piercing, or other sorts of decorations. Overall, working out and looking good (hip) seemed to be of higher value here than in Arizona; even though both are sunny states.

Fourth, we saw very few Asians. By and large we were the only Asians whenever we went. We saw some Orientals, very few Indians, and almost no one of Middle Eastern descent on this trip. Maybe there are more Asians living in North Florida as compared to South Florida?

Overall, we had a good trip. We enjoyed our honeymoon at Florida, but would probably not visit there again, except maybe Orlando to see Disney World.