

## Airports



No matter what you may want to do, you have to make a living.

A company I used to work for five years earlier cut out the section that I worked for, sold it off and was given a new name. The new company came calling in April and I joined them in June. So, I'm back being a technical expert for mining chemicals. I enjoyed the work then, but there are certain downsides to working for a sales-orientated company when you're not a salesman. But I'll blog about that some other time.

My job involves travel. Lots of travel. And we're not talking about exotic locations. I fly over those. We're talking about renting a car at the airport and driving into the middle of no where to a mine site making gold, or copper, or zinc, or coal, or etc. There's no laying on the beach with margaritas. There's eight to twelve hours a day in work boots, hard hat and safety glasses trying to fix or properly apply chemistry. There are also a lot of places in the world where all I've ever seen is the inside of their airports.

Now, airports are all basically the same. There are gates for the planes, long hallways for people to get to gates, and the security zone where everything you have goes through a screening process. The food is pretty much the same as well. The hub airports are huge. You can really get your exercise running from one gate to the next. But when I book travel, I always try to get a decent layover. It significantly lowers the chance of losing your luggage. But the major bonus is I have down time I can commit to my writing.

July was a prolific month for my writing. I had two trips for work and, combined with writing during flights, in airports waiting for connections and time in hotel rooms (summer TV sucks royally), I produced over 18,000 words, or about one quarter of my upcoming novel. Through August, I completed the first draft (another 10,000 words). I still have a trip to go this month and hope to get some serious editing for the new novel put to paper, figuratively speaking. A good slice of *The Great Celt* was written in the air on my way to Turkey in the fall of 2016.

It's a far cry from trying to write at home. There are too many distractions, like shovelling snow to mowing the lawn to walking the dog to making dinner to cleaning the house to running all sorts of

errands. At home, you live your life. On planes and in airports, there is freedom. If you don't make constructive use of that freedom, it can get pretty boring when you're traveling alone. I used to read. Now, I write.

I have been asked in the past what is my favourite airport. It is always easier to name my least favourite and I always avoid it. And that would be Pearson Airport in Toronto, Canada. Three unattached terminals, a maze of roads with poor directions, the most expensive flights go through there, and the poorest customer service anywhere on the planet. That place, and its main airline, Air Canada, give air travel a bad name.

On my "very good" list, there is Denver. No complicated terminal assembly. Just one big long "tent" assembly over the main terminal. A subway connects to the three gate terminals. The big gate terminal (B) is straight with about 70 gates with another 15 or so at one end for regional flights. The terminal has to be over a mile long with moving walkways every ten gates or so. I have gotten from one end of the terminal to the other in under ten minutes. No crowds piling up coming out of hallways. Along with its 14,500 foot runway (the longest in the world), the Denver airport ranks right up there in design, efficiency and an enjoyable place to be. And if a tornado shows up, apparently the washrooms are anchored to the ground very well. The only weak spot would be its location. I suppose Denver might expand out to where the airport is some day, but right now, you might think it's in the next state. The nearest hotel is quite a jaunt from the place.

I haven't flown through Denver in a while. Most of my trips to Nevada involved a direct flight from Calgary to Salt Lake City. The Salt Lake airport isn't anything to write home about, but they are doing renovations. We'll have to see how that works out.

Here's hoping novel #4, tentatively named "The Tachi", gets finished in less than a year with the help of airports and planes.