



## GLOBETROTTING ADVENTURE IN THE

# WILD • WILD WEST

Text and photos by Dr Lee Kok Wei

Not many people fancy the idea of travelling with colleagues, and most want to bolt out of the office the moment the clock strikes 5.30 pm, much less spend weeks with the same people whom they toil with. But I have been blessed with truly wonderful friends that I have made on my journey in psychiatry residency – people that I will cherish for the rest of my life, and that have brought me endless moments of laughter and unhygienic jokes.

In May 2017, five intrepid psychiatry residents decided to fly 15 hours to the US to embark on a trans-America road trip and to explore the wonders of the “Wild Wild West”. The arduous flight was deep vein thrombosis-inducing, to say the least, but thankfully we made it in one piece on this pilgrimage of pleasure. We all arrived at staggered timings and dates due to differing schedules, so the few of us who were there first kick-started the tour by aiming to drink Napa Valley and Sonoma Counties dry

with a very thirsty wine tour of the region. After draining the land of its last drop of moisture, we proceeded to the very colourful San Francisco to drink in the famously beautiful sights and soak up the absolutely fabulous culture.

We reached the kaleidoscopic San Francisco like a bunch of horses seeing a unicorn meadow for the first time, and took our own sweet time grazing on the history of the gorgeous city – though grazing is obviously an understatement when we were gorging ourselves most of the time on obscenely obese portions of American food. As the esteemed Ryan Reynolds once said, “everything [in America] is just bigger, better, shinier”. Thankfully, we got a chance to work off all that grease with a vigorous cycling tour of the city, which is easier than it sounds, considering San Francisco’s famously seductive undulating curves with streets going up and down for what seems like an eternity. San Francisco is like a

gorgeously sequined drag queen bedecked in feathers and glitter, and bidding goodbye to it was a tearful thing to do.

We subsequently continued our road trip to San Diego, stopping by charming towns and cities like Monterey and Carmel-by-the-Sea – basically places which you wish you could stay in but could not afford. The seafood was fresh, the oysters plump and seductively moist, and we wolfed down seafood like a flock of ravenous seagulls. We finally reached San Diego, a sunny city overflowing with gorgeous beaches and half-naked, beautiful people. With tall palm trees lining its boulevards and its clear blue cloudless skies, San Diego reminded us of a sunburnt bikini-clad beach beauty sipping a pina colada. Since we were in the Wild West, we decided that it was customary to test our equestrian abilities by riding a horse. While the horses didn’t exactly gallop, we were equally happy and relieved that they trotted along the beach in a



sufficiently docile manner. We also managed to check out the famed San Diego Zoo, with a friend going absolutely berserk over every animal that he saw.

The highlight of our trip though was skydiving – the very reason for the azure skies in San Diego, in my opinion. After signing a thousand and one indemnity forms reiterating to us that we could be absolutely stupid and throwing away our lives for no good reason besides adrenaline, we finally got to put on our harnesses so that we could throw ourselves from the plane with wild abandon. We had a few minutes of safety briefing, which seemed scarcely enough for this increasingly hazardous mission. The walk to the plane and the wild growling of the engines was slightly anxiety-provoking, if not absolutely exhilarating. As we sat in the plane contemplating our lives and whether it was worth throwing ourselves out of the door thousands of feet above ground, we were

shoved into the wonderful blue skies of San Diego before we knew it, with the wind in our faces, our mouths, our noses, and a thousand and one crevices on our faces. It was hard to breathe for a second, and we wondered if it's because of the air in our mouths, or the breathtaking view of San Diego with its glittery lakes and rivers, and rolling green mountains. The jump lasted barely a few minutes, but that stunning beauty captured in our minds would last forever.

The rest of the trip was nice, though everything paled in comparison to our skydiving experience. Some of my friends went all out in the outlet malls trying to buy half of America, but that all came and went and before we knew it, it was time to wake up from this blissful dream and to return to the reality of coming home. It was a sad thing, leaving the land of liberty, but as we flew back we always knew in our hearts that we would one day return to this beautiful country. ♦

**Legend**

1. Getting ready to throw ourselves out of an airplane door
2. One group of animals about to terrorise another group of animals
3. We were not joking about the portions

Dr Lee is a psychiatry resident who relishes his time hanging out with his fabulous friends, sipping cocktails, going for long never-ending jogs (while dragging some friends along), and doing (hopefully) constructive work. He fantasises about having a puppy, being able to do art as and when he pleases, and likes foxes and similarly cute animals.

