

Dances With Words

by Nick Wolochatiuk and Keesha



Smaller can be better

Do you enjoy sitting in a 200-foot-long tube with over 300 other people for more than three hours? I don't. Do you like being confined relatively motionless with no window, just people, on each side of you, with less than fist-sized knee room ahead of you? Neither do I. Would you like to peer over the pilot's shoulder to watch what's going on throughout the entire flight? I sure like that!

Do you like to drive for over an hour to catch a commercial flight? I don't. Do you like to feel as though you've been subjected to an armed hold-up just to pay for airport parking? Neither do I. Do you like to see the aircraft you're going to fly in before you board it? Me too.

If you live near Cornwall or Prescott there's a regional airline operation that's only 15 minutes away, at an airport that provides free parking and can fly you to a major hub within one-hour flying time. It can also guarantee you an individual window seat and an aisle seat.

I've had recent firsthand flight experiences with Cape Air, a new service that offers non-stop flights to Albany, NY to connect with major international airlines.

Their terminals are cozy. There's no long procession leading to the security check. There's just one gate that opens to the ramp. It's just a short walk to the aircraft, not a long Jetway tunnel. After your return flight, you are handed your luggage; you don't wait for it like a chicken standing expectantly around a feeding carousel.

Cape Air operates a fleet of over 50 Cessna 402 twin-engine, nine-seat aircraft on all of its route system, one which serves five communities in New York, one in Vermont, half a dozen in Massachusetts, four in Florida and even seven in the Caribbean. Cape Air fills niches that deserve to be served.

Is winter driving fun? Not very often. Imagine driving from Cornwall to Albany or Boston during a winter blizzard. It wouldn't be pleasant, restful or quick. It would more likely be stressful, fatiguing and time consuming.

One option would be to drive to the big airports of Ottawa or Montreal, with their vast and expensive parking lots and complex terminals, to be part of the serpentine queue at the check-in counter, watch your luggage disappear into some black hole, then choose which of the seven security check portals will be the least slow to be processed. You await your turn to be called to gate one, or five, or 39, or.... Finally, you allow yourself to be swallowed up by the Jetway, the

tube that funnels you and the 199 other passengers who will share the five- to eight-seat-wide cabin with you. Intimacy—not!

At Massena's Richards Field, the terminal is less than three years old. Its atmosphere is relaxed, and it comfortably accommodates the needs of Cape Air's small bands of passengers. There are no corridors, just vestibules and alcoves. You can watch your luggage being loaded onto the waiting aircraft. It doesn't travel via a series of ramps and conveyor belts that rival the complexity of 'The Stack' of the downtown Los Angeles freeway system.

An hour later, we land at Albany. The terminal is as much an art gallery and museum as an airline service facility. The arts, crafts, industries and history of the Hudson Valley are on display along its wide corridors.

We take a shuttle bus to a nearby hotel to take in its well-known ambiance and excellent restaurant. The driver takes a shine to us. After a leisurely meal, we ask him where the nearest public transit stop is. In typical 'small is good' informality, as a favour, he drives us to an express bus stop several miles away, so we can avoid unnecessary delays and inconvenience.

Before we leave his minibus, he says, "You can catch the 101 directly in front of the Capitol building. It'll take you right back to the airport."

As you can see, by going smaller, i.e., smaller aircraft to smaller destinations, such as Cape Air's Cessna 402s to a smaller city, such as Albany, your chances for more relaxed travel get bigger. Travel need not be stressful; travel should be a relaxing opportunity to explore and discover.