

The Experience



It's Tuesday morning, car is packed and Neville Fitzgerald and Julie Harris are off to Heathrow for their Virgin Atlantic flight to America's West Coast... San Francisco to be precise. They're off to 'The Experience', a Line dance event run by Sandy Albano, Diane Petoskey and their West Coast partner Amy Oyang. Neville and Julie report...

It's the first time this event was being held in California and it was to be a new 'Experience' for the locals too. This is a 'UK style' event with all the action going on in one large ballroom. US events are usually multi-room with several workshops going on at the same time. This was to be mainly an Intermediate and Advanced event.

After a long 10plus hour flight we arrive and easily make our way to the Hyatt Regency on the airport shuttle. The hotel is great but we don't stay in the room long as we are starving. We head off to Downtown Burlingame and find a lovely Italian restaurant to fill our empty tanks.

On Wednesday Amy Oyang, who runs Amy and Friends Line Dance club, took us to see the sights we hadn't seen on our last trip to this great city. We took a ferry to Sausalito, sailing between the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, both of these are must visits if you're here. We spent a great day with Amy. In the evening it was the welcome

party. Dining and dancing at a local bar meeting new dancers and lots of familiar faces with Big Dave keeping the dancing going until late.

Thursday and we stepped in to the ballroom for the first time. It had already been set up by Pauline, Sandy, Diane and lots of helpers and it looked fabulous with a very nice looking dance floor. We joined our fellow instructors, Scott Blevins, Guyton Mundy, Will Craig and Joey Warren from the USA, Craig Bennett and Ria Vos from this side of the pond.

The dancers flooded in to the ballroom and there were lots of hugs, kisses and photos. We still find it strange that people from so far away come running up to us for hugs and pictures, strange but very nice. The dancing got underway with Dave keeping those feet on the floor all night with a great mix of stuff. His new display showing the playlist is very useful, you can access it on your phone from wherever you are, which means you can pop out and

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still not miss your favourites and you can also request from your table using your phone. During the evening we were treated to a teach from Julia 'Ring My Bells' Wetzal of her new dance Get Ready which went down very well. We danced until late then off to bed.

Friday was workshop time. Dances were all great and taught to a packed ballroom each time.

Between the two of us we learned every dance that was taught and have taught most of them in different classes since we got back. There was a break in the afternoon where we went through a practice of the Saturday Night show... then more dancing until the early hours... I think someone superglued Dave into that DJ seat.

We had some more workshops on Saturday. Another day of eager dancers cramming in all those steps, I don't know where they get their energy from. More practicing for the show and a race around a costume shop for last minute bits and pieces.

The show finally arrived and kicked off the evening, 'Once Upon A Time', a fairytale spectacular.

Featuring, Little Red Riding in the Hood - looking a bit like Will Craig in a little red number. The Big Bad Wolf Guyton, after disposing of Granny Wolfie lay in wait for Little Red... then instead of eating her... they danced.

Sleeping Beauty (Julie) was cursed by the evil Maleficent (Diane)... pricked her finger and fell into a deep sleep, there's only one way out of this, 'true loves kiss'. This calls for a handsome prince... What's that I hear you cry "Neville". How did you know? In strides a magnificent beast of a man to the swoons and gasps of the crowd, he kisses and strokes the lovely stricken Beauty but it's only the beat of the magical music that gets her feet tapping and awakens her to dance with the man of her dreams! The Evil Queen appears (a strangely good looking woman that Scott Blevins makes).

"Bennett Mirror on the wall, who is the greatest dancer of all." "I cannot tell a lie," says the Bennett Mirror. "There's a hot new chick in town from The Netherlands, Snow White. In an X-Factor style dance off the Evil Queen is whopped by the lovely Snow 'Ria' White who in front of the big promoter in town Joey 'Cowell' Warren, Snow White was ably supported by a posse of manic dwarves. And they all lived happily ever after...

Back to reality. The dancers had made great efforts themselves with dressing up. Dancing was once more to a great mix by the new DJ for the night, DJ Robin Hood.

The last workshops on Sunday morning were all well attended. Then it's goodbye time. The 'Experience' has been a great event. Run like clockwork with all the little details thought of. Great music, dancing and workshops.

If a trip to California is on your bucket list then go for it... you won't be disappointed.