

I have just returned from a visit to LaLa Land. It was my first visit to outer space and I found it a tranquil place filled with soft light, warmth, and gentle people, whose voices were kind and welcoming. As I left a man dressed all in white bent over me. He held my hand and said “We must do this again, so you’ll be coming back. Just make an appointment with my secretary”

My trip to Lala Land began in the early hours of the morning. I was transported to our local hospital by space shuttle, cunningly disguised as an ambulance. Strapped in and attached to ticking, winking machines we took off and I don’t doubt that the astronomical bill I will shortly receive will reflect the advances of modern space travel.

It’s been a long time since I was in hospital as a participator, though I have spent time there as a visitor, clutching my grapes or flowers depending on the situation. This was however an experience as a patient, and it was a revelation. How things have changed. While I wouldn’t exactly recommend hospital as a place to have a holiday, even if it is the portal to LaLa Land, I have to admit I was impressed. My journey began in Arrivals Hall where I was assessed in great detail and from there, having received the ‘go ahead’ for the next stage of my trip, I was sent to the Transit Lounge to check-in for my next destination, accompanied by numerous documents and identification bracelets for security screening.

Then finally to bed; and what a bed! There were wheels for mobility, rails for security and a remote control to alter the configuration to suit any shape and size. All it needed was power steering and a GPS and I could have found my own way to the Operations Centre.

All day long people appeared; doctors, nurses, health and community workers. I was probed, prodded, tested and asked some extremely personal questions. They all took notes; reams of them, which surprised me in this computer centred world.

I can’t comment on the food because I didn’t get any. However I saw what others were receiving and it looked good. Judging by the printed menu they gave me when I arrived I wouldn’t have minded staying a couple more days without the ‘Nil by Mouth’ sign above my bed.

I will get another chance however. As promised, I am going back to do it all again. My trip to LaLa Land will be longer this time, but while I know it will be a worthwhile experience, I hope it’s the last time. So when the man in white from Mission Control comes to ‘prep’ me for lift-off to Lala Land I’ll tell him before count-down “ It’s all been wonderful and I’m glad I came, but much as I’d love to stay, I do want to go home afterwards, so please make mine a return ticket”