

mile high style LA STORY

ALI DONALDSON met some of the airline's newest international recruits, who then showed her around LA – and shared their hot tips on what to do and what to pack to do it in.



In the night sky – flying under the stars – they really do look heavenly. Is it that uniform? Has anyone ever been dressed better for work than the Virgin aircrew?

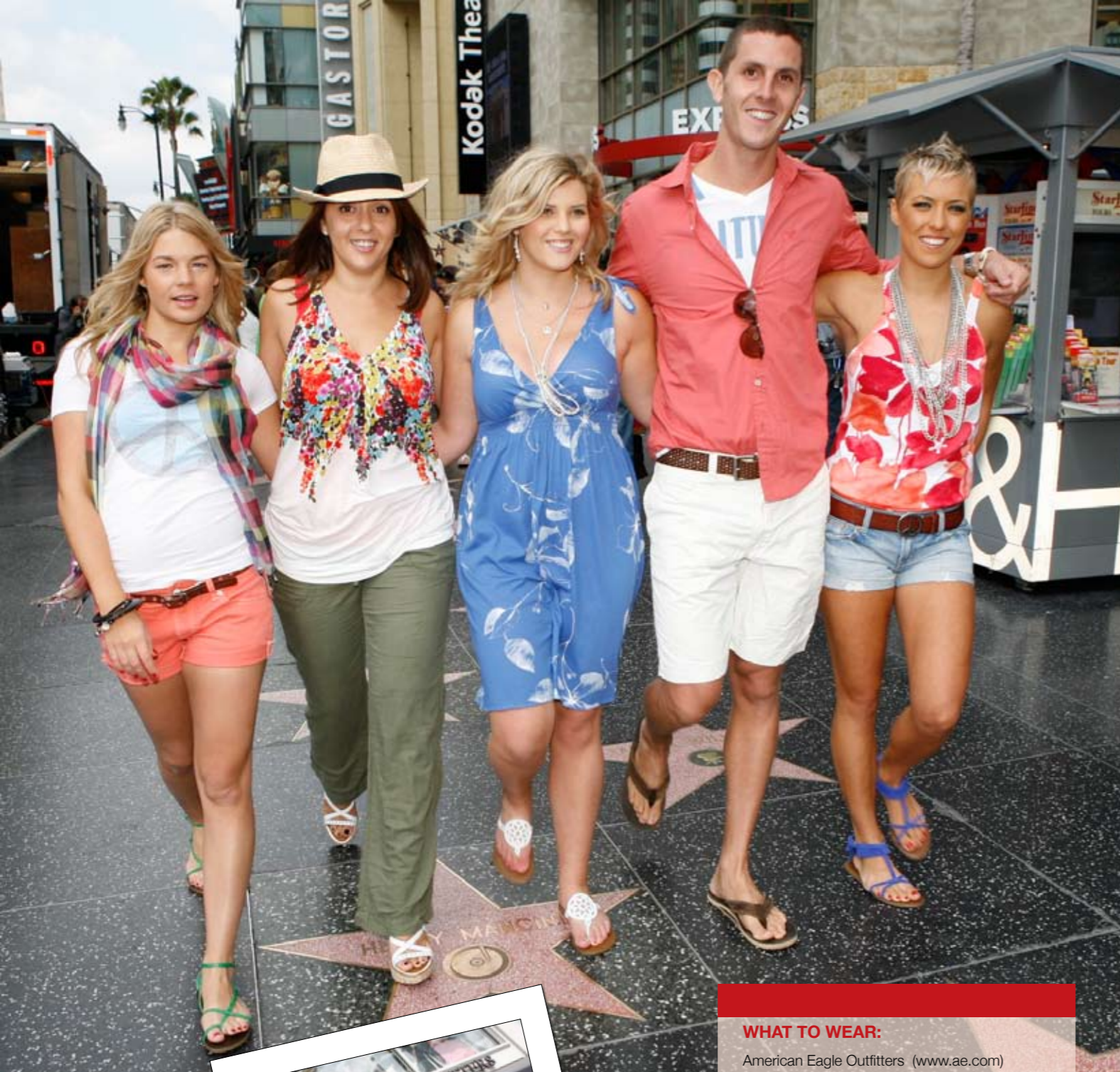
By signing up to take care of us in the air, these guys and gals get to look instantly stylish in timeless-cut cream pants, cherry red skinny belts, and white shirts that know the most flattering sleeve is one that cuffs just above the elbow. It's a uniform that has achieved the impossible and manages to make every shape and size look great.

But as we discovered recently, Virgin's crew are style-meisters in their own right.

When Sir Richard Branson stretched his corporate wings even further this year, launching V International's first direct flights between Australia and Los Angeles, Silver Magazine tagged along for the ride.

Let's take a look inside their suitcases.





WHAT TO WEAR:

American Eagle Outfitters (www.ae.com)

Cassan - Chequered scarf, \$19, peace T-shirt, \$22, orange denim shorts, brown skinny hole belt, green gladiator sandals, \$28.

Leane - Watercolour tank, cargo pants, white espadrilles, fedora hat.

Alex - Empire waist double v-neck dress, \$40, sunrise sandal, \$42.

Dan - Salmon shirt, v-neck graphic T-shirt, flat front shorts, leather loafers.

Jodie - Twisted tropical tank, \$27, distressed denim shorts, \$30, peace belt, blue gladiator fringed sandals, \$42.

THINGS TO DO

Cassan – Burgers seaside at Loews Hotel.

Loews deliver atmospheric dining at its best – the Santa Monica beachfront with its human circus stretches out in front as palm trees reach for the almost-always blue skies above. LA is big on its burgers, but Loews is also well-known for its healthy options. Wraps filled with organic produce, much of it sourced from the Santa Monica Farmers

Market, are popular. All Loews Hotels have “adopted a farmer” – buying from their local best.

Jo – The Santa Monica Pier.

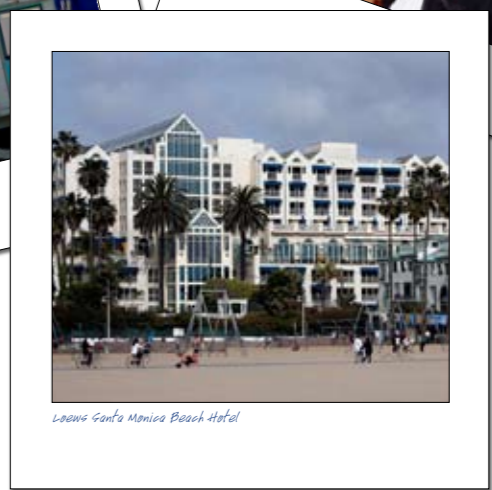
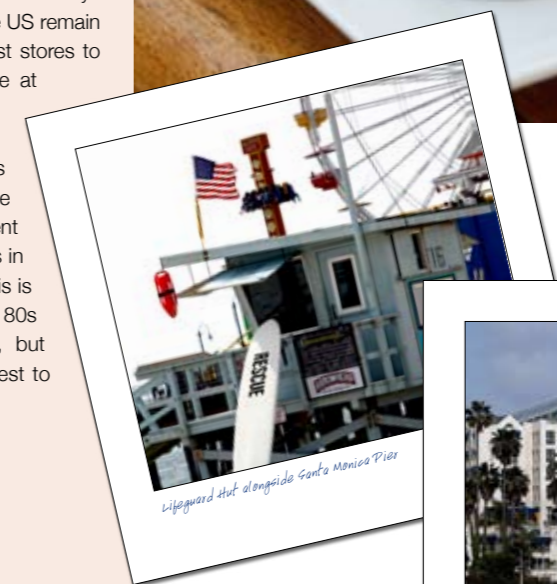
Bring the American picture postcard to life. There’s the funfair, lobster bakes, musclemen, Baywatch lifeguard towers. When the sun dips, the pier lights up like a Christmas tree. It’s a pretty sight and if you step inside, it doesn’t disappoint on its promise of fun.

Jo recommends: “Hiring a tandem bike to ride along the Ocean Front Walk is a great way to get amongst it, go to the local weekend street markets, it takes a few days to soak it all up, then buy a new CD, hire a convertible with some friends and take off up the coast road.” Even Aussie tourists can go on spring break!

Hollywood stars

There’s a lot to see and do in LA but the star attraction has to be the shopping!

The value of the Aussie dollar will always fluctuate but the retail bargains in the US remain a fabulous constant. Among the best stores to hit are the ones we just don’t have at home. American Eagle Outfitters is huge with locals because it has the magic trifecta – it’s fashionable, it’s affordable and it’s wearable. While much of Australia must now be content with the black palette that dominates in winter, AE is flush with colour. But this is smart colour. There is no doubt the 80s are back screaming fluoro brights, but at AE they’ve also muted the brightest to make it comfortable to wear.





Jodi and Alex – The Chamberlain Hotel.

This is a secret worth knowing. One of the best boutique hotels in LA is the Chamberlain in West Hollywood. You can't help but let out a sigh entering the foyer, which transports you back to the golden age of Hollywood.

And when the elevator doors open on the rooftop pool bar, try not to gasp. It's spectacular. There's sun beds lining the heated waters, and if you're travelling with friends or just made some new ones, the daybed corner just screams "luxury lounging". After enjoying some sunset cocktails, dress up for a big night out – although once you step back into that foyer you probably won't want to leave.

Left - Alex in the Chamberlain West Hotel foyer

Karen – The Mondrian Hotel.

OK this is all very rock star. And there's a very good chance you will spot a few real ones in the funky orange accented foyer with its own plush swing – ideal for those "just hanging around" moments.

The Mondrian is also home to SkyBar. This is where the Hollywood IT girls, such as Lindsay Lohan, come to drink overlooking the pool that overlooks the City of Angels.

We spotted a few Aussie celebs enjoying the view – Tania Zaetta was kicking back with Big Brother's Mike Goldman and his talented fashion designer fiancée Tania, along with songbird Deni Hines.

You can be guaranteed entry to Skybar if you spend a night at The Mondrian.

Right - Jo at the Mondrian Hotel & Skybar



Jodie at the Chamberlain West Hotel

Insider tips

LA is a car-lovers dream. But despite what the locals insist, you don't need one to get around some of the city's hippest neighbourhoods.

Abbot Kinney Boulevard –

Shoots off from Main Street in Santa Monica. Among its 10 blocks you'll find Ten Women, with its 10,000 square feet of space showcasing the work of local female artisans, including paintings, jewellery and knitwear. Also head to Surfing Cowboys for modern design furniture and vintage surfing collectibles or Ananda for trendy Indian-inspired clothing.

West Third Street –

Located on the Westside, the Farmers Market at Third and Fairfax houses more than 20 specialty food stores and 30 restaurants. It first opened in 1934 and continues to thrive. Right next door is the new kid on the block, The Grove, which is proving just as big a drawcard. Resembling an open-air Tuscan village, it has all the big-name shops, as well as a fountain choreographed to music.

Santa Monica –

Celebrities love to shop at Planet Blue and Fred Segal but the locals rave about Chocolate Sun which offers a cutting-edge spray tan that costs the same as a normal one but uses only organic products, no chemicals, no smell and no orange tandoori results. Show it off The Huntley Hotel's penthouse where the vibe is cool but not too cool for outsiders and enjoy the view.



Karen at the Mondrian Hotel



Ausiea Collaba with some of the v International team enjoying the view