

The Island LeisureLAND

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Snakes on a plane force Qantas to ground flight

16 Apr 2009: Four baby pythons that disappeared from their container in the cargo hold of a Qantas plane have forced the airline to ground the aircraft after staff failed to find the missing reptiles.

In scenes reminiscent of the 2006 cult film *Snakes on a Plane*, four of 12 Stimson's pythons escaped during a two and a half hour flight from Alice Springs to Melbourne.

On the ground in Melbourne, staff were unable to find the escapees among the luggage in the hold and the aircraft was removed from service.

Joe Aston, Qantas spokesman, said the 12 juvenile pythons measured about six inches in length and were travelling in "an appropriate" container. He said it was not clear how the four had escaped.

"While (the container) was intact on departure (from Alice Springs), it was discovered on arrival that four of those animals had broken free," he told the Australian Associated Press.

Snake experts said the reptiles had probably slithered into the wamest parts of the plane, such as a motor or heater unit.

However, the company did not want to run the risk of the snakes reappearing mid-flight, so after establishing that the species was not threatened or endangered, the aircraft was fumigated to kill the four pythons.

The plane is now back in service.

Native to the arid and rocky parts of western and central Australia, the Stimson's python eats its prey whole — and this includes small mammals, birds, frogs and other reptiles.

The snake, which grows to between 20 and 40 inches, is not venomous.

They are common as pets and can live for more than 20 years.

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Excuses for being non vegetarians



Everyone's life is strewn with incidents wherein they have a chance to become bigger than themselves, to be nobler and kinder and happier. Some people don't recognize these opportunities but they return again and again - so you still have time to open your eyes. However some people go in the opposite direction - they take the chance that life gives them and they abuse it and strangle it till the little luck they have squeezes itself out the window and runs for its life. They then intellectualize their decisions and blame the loss on someone else.

Take for example someone who has the good fortune to be born finally into a vegetarian household. Why they would lapse into a carnivorous diet and pick up disease, obesity, bad odour, and bad karma is beyond me. But people do. Every now and then, I see people from proud vegetarian families eating meat. When confronted, they do look terribly sheepish and come up with such weird excuses that I thought I would list them for you. These are a selection of the reasons spouted by ex-vegetarians for breaking the faith.

"I belong to the privileged Brahmin class. I need to do something to show my solidarity with the downtrodden Dalits and my antagonism to my own class. So I will eat what they eat - meat. (So why not live in the same place and manner they do? Or even better, invite them to share in your own privileges? But that would be asking too much of our fashionable leftist!)"

"We don't want to look old fashioned. We need to keep up with the times. It's far more sophisticated to eat shrimp and steak than vegetables and dal. (Even if the rest of the world is going the other way?)"

"My college friends say I am a nuisance at picnics and shouldn't be such a fanatic." (So you should suffer cold ecoli-ridden chicken sandwiches just to go along with the gang. Giving up your



beliefs to suit others' convenience is pathetic. If they don't value you, change your friends, not your food.)

"Eating meat makes me seem more normal and fit in" (The same argument is given by smokers and drinkers. Being like everybody else is just so boring.)

"It makes it easier to choose because I can eat anything on the menu." (So its not food you want, its choice???)

"My parents think it is important for me to eat meat until I am old enough to make my own choice. So I will try again when I get a job" (So until you're employed, you have no right to choose your books, movies, clothes, the friends you make or anything else? If that's not so, why just the food you eat?)

"I can't get protein any other way and I need to put on weight" (Soyabean and dal are the highest sources of protein. All the world's biggest and most powerful animals, elephants, rhinos, giraffes, bulls and horses are vegetarian.)

"Poor people grow goats and if we stop eating them they will be deprived of their livelihood" (So you're actually

eating meat as a social service? Give up your car and ride in a tanga to support the poor tangawallahs, and wear hand-spun material to support the poor weavers and eat in earthenware to support the poor potters.)

"Food is a personal choice. I retain my individuality within the family by choosing what I eat." (How about choosing not to wear clothes? Or speaking in a different language? Or sleeping during the day instead of the night? Or working as a coolie - or would that be too way out?)

"One should have a balanced diet. Otherwise even the brain gets very one-sided" (Great then include drugs, alcohol, tobacco, insects, mud, worms and human flesh—that's proper balance)

"I eat the most conscientiously raised meat I can find; and I don't eat much of it. I'd be vegetarian if I lived in the West where they have those terrible factory farms. In India, humans and animals live together more naturally.

(So you check out where every restaurant you eat at procures its meat from? And you've visited poultries

where chickens are grown in cages and injected antibiotics and hormones. And you've never seen trucks overloaded with animals dead or dying from overcrowding or market chicken shops.

"It's traditional, mainstream and if everybody eats it, it can't be bad" (And you also approve of dowry, corruption and casteism because they're traditional, mainstream and since everybody practices them, they can't be bad, right?)

"My boss eats meat". (If the only value you provide at work is flattering your boss, you need to brush up your job skills.)

"My wife/husband eats meat and I can't cook separately because it's too exhausting." (Why not just lump everything together — soup, main course, dessert because it's too exhausting to make them separately? And why not share clothes to reduce washing and ironing. Put the whole family in one room to reduce cleaning area. All the more reason to cook vegetarian because it's what both people can eat. Should your partner want meat, let him/her go hunt for it.)

"I was vegetarian when I was young but I'm not that young, bleeding heart activist anymore. One has to be practical" (So the only time to be concerned about anything is when you are young and powerless. As soon as you are in a position to make a difference, you must not. And given that meat is bad for health, economy and environment, what makes it a practical choice?)

"I need to be free of all my parents' rules and do what I want on my terms." (So then presumably you are no longer brushing your teeth since that are what they taught you to do. Or using cutlery, or reading or even thinking?)

"I eat meat when someone offers it to me. I don't want to impose my upper middle-class / caste / political views on other people." (So then you would go anywhere you were taken, watch anything you were shown, read anything you were given. That's just what this world needs - mindless robots.)

"It's more important for me to be someone that is respectful and considerate rather than concentrate on dietary preferences" (And killing animals and destroying the environment is the way to demonstrate respect and consideration?)

"I travel a lot. We must show respect to other people's cultures by eating what they eat. I don't want to appear uncultured" (So no doubt you wear a kilt in Scotland, a kimono in Japan and a burqua in Dubai. You also learn the native language of every place you visit and adopt the local religion. A true world citizen.)

"I don't want to put others down by seeming to be superior and challenging them all the time." (Waiting for the meek to inherit? So naturally you must be opting to come last in class, last in sports and right at the bottom of the office heap? You would never accept a promotion or a raise because it might put others down, right?)

"The papers say that vegetarians will have strokes if they don't get Vitamin 12 which is in meat (there's much more in soya bean but you don't want to know)

Do you recognize yourself?

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in

Leisure Land inside



Husband builds 12-seater chapel in back garden for wife



Aamir offers to get theatre toilets cleaned