

## No Time to Spare

ON AUGUST 2, 2005, A FULLY LOADED AIR FRANCE AIRBUS A340 ARRIVING FROM PARIS CRASH-LANDED AT TORONTO'S PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND CAUGHT FIRE. ONLY FOUR OF THE PLANE'S EIGHT EXITS WERE USABLE, YET ALL 309 PEOPLE ON BOARD MADE IT OFF THE AIRCRAFT IN TWO MINUTES—BEFORE IT WAS CONSUMED BY FLAMES. HERE, FIVE OF THE PASSENGERS RECOUNT THEIR ESCAPE.

### Eddie Ho (seat 16B)

“The first words from the crew were ‘The aircraft is fine. Stay calm, remain in your seats.’ But passengers at the back were screaming ‘Fire!’ Then the crew told us to jump out but said nothing about leaving behind hand luggage or taking off shoes. The closest exit was a few rows in front of me, but there was no slide there and a lady was blocking my way, too afraid to jump. People were pushing from behind. I ran to a business-class exit, but the slide was not inflated. With no other option, I leaped out about four to five meters and tumbled onto some people below me. It was a mess.”



Witnesses say the fire began on the left wing of the plane, though its exact location has yet to be officially determined.

### Lisa Popov (seat 36F)

“As we were landing, there was this banging and shaking, and the lights were flickering on and off, and people were screaming like crazy. They were jumping over seats to get to the exits. The flight attendant in front of me was directing everyone to the rear of the plane. I had to go twelve rows back to reach the exit. I would have been closer to the exit at the wings, but those didn't open because of the fire. I was holding on to my friend the whole time. We got to the exit and went down the chute. All of us were directed to a transport truck. We were in there when one of the fireballs exploded.”

- Usable exit
- Unusable exit
- Inoperable slide, but exit used

### JoAnn Cordary Bundock (seat 2E)

“I could tell we were coming in very fast. I cinched up my seat belt tighter than normal. We landed hard, and then it was like we were going a hundred and fifty miles an hour over a road that was filled with giant potholes. The plane skidded on its tummy. I could smell jet fuel as soon as we stopped. A flight attendant rushed to the front of the cabin and told us to evacuate immediately. I went to the exit on the left side, saw black smoke, and thought, ‘No way am I going down that.’ So I went to the exit on the right. The chute was twisted up a quarter of the way down, but I went anyhow. Flight attendants weren't instructing people to leave everything. I went down barefoot behind this guy who had a carry-on. He was sort of stuck, and I got thrown into another guy.”

### Yasmin Ladak (seat 25K)

“I looked toward the back of the plane and could see flames and then thick black smoke. I was heading toward an exit in the front when a man yelled, ‘I got the door open, we're going to be okay!’ Once off the plane, I made my way to the highway. Motorists were starting to stop at that point. One stopped his car and gave us all rides back to the terminal.”

The slide opened but deflated. (Passengers were told not to use this exit, but two did anyway.)

### Philippe Lacaille (with his wife and two children; seats 45 DEF)

“After touchdown, the lights went off. I looked over to see my daughter's face surrounded by an orange halo. It was fire. I unbuckled my seat belt and grabbed the kids. Nobody was telling us what to do. People were grabbing their belongings and taking pictures while the cabin was filling up with smoke. A flight attendant struggled to open the nearest exit. The chute deployed, and we were almost the first ones out.”

