

Airport parking lot a blessing to Christmas travelers

Detroit holiday travelers can save time and money by using an airport parking lot that most people don't

even know exists. It is the remote lot run by the Wayne County Road Commission, and it will be expanded, if necessary, to accommodate Christmas travelers.

If I suggest that you park in a "remote lot" where would you go? Most people would go to the private lots on the opposite side of Interstate-94 from the airport terminal because most drivers don't yet know about the remote lot opened nearly a year ago by the commission on the airport grounds. It's much closer to the terminal than the private lots and it costs only \$1.50 a day.

Follow the airport signs off I-94, which will place you on Rogell Drive approaching the terminal complex. The first traffic light you reach will suggest you turn right towards the international terminal. Turn left instead and you will pass a Texaco station. Follow the signs to the parking lot.

Adjacent to the public lot is a 1400-space, employee parking lot which will be converted to public use if holiday traffic gets too heavy.

Delphine Fairbanks, management coordinator for the Board of the Wayne County Road Commission at Metro, says she does not think there will be a need to convert the employee lot, however, because airline



travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones

officials are expecting a lighter holiday load than usual this year.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS WILL continue to be a problem for travelers, even if it is not so chaotic at the airport this year. Pack gifts in your luggage if possible. If you must carry them aboard, don't wrap them first.

If you buy your nephew a toy and wrap it in ribbons and bows, it must still pass through the X-ray machines at domestic and international airports. If the security officer is alerted to something he sees but doesn't understand, he has no choice but to ask you to unwrap the item.

You will be surprised and probably furious if you are asked to unwrap your nephew's gift, and you will probably be left standing with a handful of wrinkled tissue paper.

You and the security officer will both be frustrated enough dealing with holiday crowds, so don't add to it. Wrap the gift when you get there.

OTHER CHRISTMAS TRAVEL TIPS from American Airlines include calling airline reservations phones during off-peak hours, especially between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.; picking up your tickets at city offices or at your travel agent instead of at the airport; using public transportation or other means to avoid traffic jams; allowing extra time for check-in; making sure your bags are tagged; carrying medicine, cash, jewelry and other valuables aboard instead of checking them.

Most of all, don't be a "no-show," that thoughtless traveler who makes a reservation but doesn't keep it or cancels it.

VIA RAIL, CANADA has added an extra mid-day train between Toronto and Montreal for holiday travelers. A train will leave each city at 1 p.m. and arrive at the other at 6:55 p.m.

CHRISTMAS NEWS FROM THE MAILBAG — The Delta Steamboat Company is offering three-and-four-day cruises during the Christmas season.

If you are going down Interstate-75, you might be interested in 12 days and nights of Christmas programming at Calaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga. A Madrigal dinner kicks off the season Dec. 20. An old-fashioned Christmas dinner will be served Dec. 25 in the Plantation Room. A New Year's Eve dinner dance is also scheduled.

Callaway Gardens also has its usual interesting variety of Christmas craft demonstrations, nature walks and a Christmas flavor at its wonderful gardens and indoor greenhouses.

There are 2000 poinsettias, cyclamen, kalanchoes and Christmas cacti in the greenhouse.

Padre Island recovers from massive oil spill

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

In May I wrote an article about the beautiful wilderness beaches of Padre Island, Texas, and the ankle-deep garbage swept onto those beaches from the Gulf of Mexico.

That plight worsened in August when an oil slick from a Mexican oil well washed up on the southern Texas coast and made headlines around the world. The mess was cleaned up in two weeks, but the tourists haven't come back.

Elmer Whiddon, the chief of media relations for the Texas Tourist Development Agency, takes bad publicity gracefully as long as it's truthful, but he thought it was time to let northerners know what is happening now on Padre Island National Seashore.

So he invited me to join a group of writers to inspect the beach this month. I wasn't able to accept his invitation, but I was eager to know whether this favorite wilderness beach had recaptured its wildness. Apparently it has.

You will always find tar balls on the beach, because they are produced by the same natural seepage that creates crude oil for undersea wells. They'll blacken the soles of your feet, but they are natural to the beach.

Centuries ago the Spaniards reported finding these tar balls and using them to caulk their ships.

A CERTAIN AMOUNT of garbage is also inevitable on a barrier island like Padre as long as the merchant ships continue to dump their waste in the ocean.

The major current that washes Padre Island comes from the Louisiana coast and is held offshore by rivers until it hits Little Shell Beach on the island. Another such current comes up from the south and is held off by the Rio Grande until it hits the adjacent Big Shell Beach.

These two currents, converging on Padre Island, bring the natural flotsam as well as a variety of hard hats, egg cartons and other people-made debris dumped by ships.

The tourist beaches on hotel row in South Padre and at Port Aransas on Mustang Island, the barrier reef adjacent to Padre, are cleaned regularly to make pristine beaches for the tourists.

The National Seashore is another matter. It's not really designed for you and me, although, we are allowed to loiter there. It's designed to preserve our natural heritage, and you and I are allowed to camp or picnic on the beach as long as we don't walk around on the fragile hill grass or mess up the natural balance.

SO THE WILDERNESS beach will always have some of that debris on it. Beachcombers love it. Environmentalists hate it. Elmer tells me that during the writers' trip early in December, he found the beach littered with sand dollar shells.

"I picked up an egg carton and filled it before I quit," he said. "A Canadian writer found a note in a bottle. Every word was misspelled. It was from a young man in Galveston who said he wanted a friend, and it asked the finder to contact him. Unfortunately, it didn't give either a name or address!"

I asked Elmer what the oil slick had done to the tourist business down there.

"Down on Padre Island when the publicity about the approaching slick hit the front pages, Padre was at the peak of its season. The



Strolling on Padre Island beach.

A certain amount of garbage is also inevitable on a barrier island like Padre as long as the merchant ships continue to dump their waste in the ocean.

next day, even before the oil hit, occupancy was down to 30 percent," Elmer said.

"When the oil hit the beach, it was two inches thick and as wide as a two-lane highway. Everybody was upset and wringing their hands. Ten days later tropical storm Elena hit near Corpus Christi. It had petered out to 30 knots but it still churned up badly.

"That was followed by tropical storm Frederick which made high tides and cleaned things up. The whole disaster lasted 10 days, but the tourists haven't come back yet."

That kind of situation, painful as it is for local hotel and restaurant owners, usually creates bargains for the traveler. I checked that and can tell you that some of the resort hotels on the south end of the island and in nearby Brownsville and Harlingen offer single accommodations for about \$200 for six nights,



Windswept Padre Island beach has recovered from the massive oil spill which threatened the holiday resort's future earlier this year. Inset: Holiday makers are back again at Padre Island.

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