

If you ignore the litter

Padre Island a sun-kissed haven for people who value solitude

Story and photo:
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PADRE ISLAND, Tex. — The Blue Heron and the Caspian Tern were here before the Spanish galleons shipwrecked on this wild, sandy shore. They flew like this, in sudden bursts of wing, before the cattle ranchers came and the Texas Rangers rode between the dunes.

The birds are here now, prime

tenants of the Padre Island National Seashore, and with only one enemy: litter. On any sunny day, you see a beer can glisten in the sun, but after the high tide the garbage comes in from the merchant ships and it carpets the beach from sealine to dune grass. Egg cartons, bleach bottles, parts of old ships, rope, shoes, construction hats, more cans, even electric light bulbs. Regulars here say that the beach is "pristine and pure" most of the time,

but environmentalists have noted of tinner and oftener that the sandpipers pick their way among the litter that comes in with the tide.

PADRE ISLAND has a dramatic history here, off the shore of tropical southern Texas. The Karankawa Indians, known as the Kronks, summered here centuries ago. They were fierce warriors, nomadic fishermen and cannibals.

Twenty Spanish galleons shipwrecked here on the Devil's Elbow in 1555, stranding treasure that still lures local treasure hunters out with shovels and sticks. History books call it the Flight of the 300, because 300 crewmen fled south down the island with fierce Kronk Indians behind. Only one sailor survived.

In the early 1800s, Padre Balli was given the island as a land grant from King Charles IV of Spain, and during the waning days of the Texas Republic, Texas Rangers left horse tracks on the dunes.

The only invaders now are tourists, although the natural landscape and the National Park Service limit what we can do to violate the land.

THE NATIONAL SEASHORE is 80.5 miles of this 113-mile-long barrier island that hugs the south Texas coast from Corpus Christi to Brownsville. Commercial development busies the sand and shell beds quickly trap wheels in the beach. Even these are regularly towed out of the sand by rescuers who drive or fly in from the mainland.

(You can also drive north about five miles from the park's southern entrance at Port Isabel before you must switch to four-wheel drives.) This is not a travel experience for those who like their fun wrapped in city streets and music, but it is a haven for those who dream of standing alone in the world with a fishing rod, or sharing the land with the birds.

YOUR FOUR-WHEEL-drive vehicle, which can be rented from operators like Jerry Foy of Corpus Christi, enters the northern Seashore from Malaguette Beach. The first few miles are smoothed and cleared of debris for the 750,000 visitors who come here every year.



The only invaders now are tourists, although the natural landscape and the National Park Service limit what we can do to violate the land. . . Commercial development busies the north and south ends of the island but sand beaches and low dunes form the only skyline, which ranges from a few hundred yards to three miles in width.

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Shades of '1984'

DALLAS, Tex. — I seldom hear about foreign travelers struggling through the logistics of travel in the U.S. I think about it now as I try to find my way around Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

A modern airport is like a concrete city that spreads to indefinite boundaries. I have this same sensation in Frankfurt, London and Chicago, a sense of walking through a time machine into a world where everything is made of concrete and glass.

People move down passageways into hollow-sounding rooms where they are redirected to other passages, in the spirit of Orwell's "1984."

Every airport has its own trap. Here, it is the Air Trans (Airport Transportation), a system of rapid transit that runs in four, color-coded loops between the gates of various airlines.

Imagine a European or an Asian who speaks as little English as I speak German or French. Picture the person trying to find the way from one plane to another.

The Air Trans are one level down by elevator from the main floor. I flew American to Dallas and would fly Braniff to Corpus Christi, but the transfer is not that simple.

A sign warns you to consult a posted schedule before you board because there are three different Braniff stops: Braniff A, B or C.

I was going to Braniff C.

I boarded the train with two Texans who also didn't know where they were going. On board was a man who said, "I just did the complete loop and I think I missed my plane."

As we were staring past the gaily colored seats to the tunnel walls outside, a voice came out of the wall, warning us to read the signs on the tunnel walls so that we would know where to get off.

Sounds easy enough if you can understand that wonderful Texas accent, but one nervous-looking foreign traveler sat staring out the window, frowning.

So here I am, checked in at last at Braniff C, and wiser by one more world airport. The moral of the story is not that it is really difficult to navigate an airport, but that you need time and a sense of humor to figure out where you are going, and how to get there.

In Los Angeles, you ride endless moving ramps. In Seattle, you ride a horizontal elevator. In Chicago, you change terminals.

And just as you get one small portion of the world figured out, the airport becomes obsolete and they rebuild it.

FROM THE MAILBAG

Mary Schoen of Birmingham has added another place worth visiting to the list of things to see and do while traveling Interstate 75 to Florida.

"Westville is worth a visit," Mary says. "It's on the Andersonville Trail near Plains."

Westville, 20 miles from Plains, Ga., is a collection of original Georgia buildings of the early 1800s. Buildings from early settlements in Georgia were authentically restored, furnished and placed in a village setting.

Tourists can wander through the houses and shops, have lemonade and cookies, and talk to authentically costumed guides about the history represented.

One of the purposes of Westville is to preserve the handicrafts and skills of West Georgia during the mid-19th century, so crafts are usually being practiced at the site.

Westville is just outside the town of Lumpkin, where the restored Beddingfield Inn graces the town square.

CHANNEL 56 has launched its travel season for armchair travelers on Mondays. The "Explorer Series" will show climbers on the Swiss Alps tonight, May 7; gold in Ecuador, May 14; the assault on Mount McKinley, May 21; and skiers on the Sierra Nevada, May 28. All are at 7:30 p.m.

The "World Series" will also show Australia at 9 p.m. tonight and the University of Rome at 9 p.m. Monday, May 14.

A new group of documentaries, called "Views on Asia," starts May 21 with Indonesia and continues May 28 with Thailand. Finally, the Cousteau Odyssey at 8 p.m. Monday, May 27.

Guidelines for the budget-minded

For travelers on a shoestring, the 1979-80 edition of "The Budget Traveler's Latin America" is out. The guidebook suggests ways to adventure without spending a fortune.

It's written by the Council on International Educational Exchange, a major student travel organization which is dedicated to helping people travel economically and wisely.

The book is set up country by country, with information on where to stay and eat inexpensively, what to see and do in major cities, small towns and isolated beach resorts, and hints on how and where to meet people.

It also includes practical matters such as health and entry requirements,

cheap but comfortable transportation, drug laws, geography, boating on the Amazon, snorkeling on a Mexican beach, visiting the ruins at Machu Picchu or disco dancing in Rio De Janeiro.

The price is \$4.95 in local bookstores, or from CIEE, Dept. PR-BTA, 777 U.N. Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017; or 238 N. Santa Cruz, Los Gatos, Calif. 95030.

Also, "The Budget Traveler's Asia," with chapters on 26 countries from Turkey to Japan, "Where To Stay U.S.A.: From \$50 to \$14 A Night" and "Whole World Handbook: A Student Guide to Work, Study and Travel Abroad" are available for \$3.95 from the same address.

Mexico a bargain in the summer

Summer is off-season in Mexico.

Most of the tourists who travel to Mexico go to forget winter and for obvious reasons would rather do so in December, January and February.

However, during the summer the prices are lower, the highways are not as busy and hotel rooms are easier to get.

The so-called rainy season from June to September is somewhat exaggerated. The Mexicans call it so only because the rest of the year is so dry. From June to September, the rainfall is about 17.8 inches, whereas in St. Louis at the same period the precipitation reaches 13.9 inches and in Chicago more than 16 inches.

Summer is a particularly good time to visit the small colonial towns or the archaeological treasures of the Yucatan. Many organizations offer summer school programs (in Spanish and especially in archaeology) at moderate prices and with room and board with Mexican families.

Because of the high elevation, it is not as hot on the high plateaus, such as Mexico City (7,500 feet) and Cuernavaca (5,000 feet).

Cuernavaca is located about 50 miles south of Mexico City, and the two cities are joined by a four-lane highway. Its climate is good year-round, neither too warm nor too cool, and it is a good base from which to visit the numerous tourist attractions that area has to offer.

Ontario tax break in effect to 1981

Ontario's 7 percent accommodation retail sales tax will remain suspended until March 31, 1981, according to Larry Grossman, the province's industry and tourism minister.

"Continued suspension of the retail tax on taxable accommodation and meals under the American Plan is aimed at stimulating the province's hospitality industry," he said.

"American tourists will also benefit from the devalued Canadian dollar with the American dollar now favored with an exchange rate of about 15 percent."

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