

Travel

ITINERARIES

ONLINE SURVEY

Fliers' views of airlines mixed

Most Americans are pretty content with air travel and prefer paying separately for food, drinks, entertainment and luggage instead of buying an all-inclusive airline ticket.

At least that is what Airlines for America, a trade group for the nation's airlines, says it has learned from an online survey of 3,019 American travelers.

Of those surveyed, 80 percent said they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their air travel experience in 2015 and 67 percent said they prefer paying a la carte for onboard extras.

But another survey released recently found that air travelers are not so happy with life at 30,000 feet.

A survey of 4,290 Americans commissioned by a Washington, D.C., travel coalition called Travelers' Voice found that only 46 percent of respondents rated the airline industry as "favorable," while 59 percent said a series of airline mergers over the last decade has led to higher fares.

Still, both surveys agreed on one thing: Airline seats are a problem that should be addressed.

When asked what advice passengers have for airline executives, more than 70 percent of respondents to the Airlines for America survey said they would recommend investing in "onboard comfort."

When the survey for Travelers' Voice asked fliers what airline issues should Congress target, 61 percent said "air travel experiences such as seat size."

"If you look at these numbers, it clearly shows that travelers are frustrated," said Trey Bohn, executive director of Travelers' Voice.

SAVING MONEY

Delta eliminates fee booking fees

The nation's biggest airlines combined to generate an estimated \$18.1 billion in revenue last year from bag check fees, food and entertainment charges and other income, such as the sale of frequent flier miles.

So why would one of the most profitable carriers in the country forgo a chunk of that money?

Delta Air Lines, the nation's second-biggest carrier based on passenger traffic, recently eliminated a \$25 fee for booking reservations by phone and a \$35 fee for booking at ticket counters in U.S. airports.

Most major carriers in the U.S. charge between \$15 and \$25 to make a reservation via a phone call.

But Delta may not be losing much revenue by eliminating the booking fee because most people book flights online, said Michael Bentley, a partner at Revenue Analytics and former pricing strategist for Delta.

He also noted that the booking fee is one of the most hated fees charged by airlines.

"I don't see this fee as a big part of the company's budget," he said.

Bentley suspects that Delta killed the fee as part of its efforts to differentiate itself from its competitors.

Delta may also have the funding cushion to withstand losing the fee. The carrier recently reported \$946 million in first-quarter net income, a 27 percent increase over the same period a year earlier.

The hike is largely the result of a 34 percent drop in quarterly fuel costs year over year.

— Los Angeles Times



GIGI STAHL

Anderson Marsh State Historic Park near Clear Lake is a bird watchers' paradise, with 156 species spotted.

ANDERSON MARSH STATE HISTORIC PARK

Birds, history among the tule marshes

Park once slated for closure now a great place to hike, kayak or break out the binoculars

By **YVONNE MICHIE HORN**
FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Anderson Marsh State Historic Park is glorious to visit right now. Given the abundant winter rainfall, nearby Clear Lake is filled to the brim. Cache Creek, the slow-moving waterway that passes through the park's tule marshes on its way to open water, makes for perfect kayak paddling. Or lace up your walking shoes. Five trails of varying length circle through untouched sweeping grasslands, magnificent stands of ancient oaks and wetlands rich in wildlife.

Whether you visit in a kayak or on foot, bring your binoculars. This is a bird watchers' paradise, with 156 species spotted.

Regardless of how you visit, you will be passing through a site that is California's only state park acquired to preserve and interpret Native American heritage. Claimed within its 1,065 acres are 14,000 years of human history that include archaeological sites representing the Koi people, the first to colonize the area and whose descendants remain in the Clear Lake Basin to this day.

Representing the less distant past, the Anderson family's intact ranch house and out buildings bring to life the 19th century arrival of European settlers. Scottish immigrants Sarah and John Anderson acquired the land that now encompasses the park in 1885, and used it to grow grains and operate a dairy. Their children shifted the land's focus to cattle ranching.

Given its rich natural and human heritage, it's a mystery why it has been such a struggle to protect this chunk of land. The work began in the late 1970s with a developer's plan to build out the acreage. The highly controversial plan was halted by archaeological finds that documented 47 sites with evidence of human habitation and a treasure-house of artifacts.

It was determined that the best way to protect the area was to place it under the California State Historic Park umbrella. In 1982, Anderson Marsh became a historic park, remaining intact and purposefully undeveloped, with 540 acres designated as a natural preserve.



JIM DUCKWORTH

A great egret takes off at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park



JIM DUCKWORTH

An American white pelican is spotted at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park.

By the mid-1980s, Anderson March Interpretive Association was in place, a Lake County volunteer organization dedicated to raising money to fund educational and interpretive programs, habitat conservation and trail maintenance. As the years went by, the association took on more and more volunteer and money-raising responsibility in an effort to take up the slack as state funding and staffing decreased.

Despite the group's efforts, in 2011, Anderson Marsh found itself alphabetically placed as number one on California State Park's list of those slated for closure.

Henry Bornstein and his wife, Gae Henry, had retired and moved to Lake County several years before. They bought a house on Cache Creek directly across from the park and immediately fell in love with Anderson Marsh.

"As avid birders and kayakers,

we knew we had landed in one of the most beautiful spots on earth," Bornstein recalled. Both became active volunteers and members of the organization's board of directors. In 2011, they were among those heading the fight to save the park and found themselves as its spokespersons.

"We had to gear up fast," Bornstein said. "AMIA didn't want the park to close, nor did the Lake County community."

The association doubled its membership and was able to raise enough money to finance a three-year partnership agreement with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The group also became eligible to receive funding under a matching program made available from \$10 million discovered in 2012 in unreported state park funds.

"Lake County is far from a wealthy county," Bornstein said,

IF YOU GO:

Anderson Marsh State Historic Park's gates are open Saturday and Sunday, with a \$4 parking fee, but the park itself is open seven days a week, with visitors encouraged to park on the entrance road and walk in.

Entrance is always free, as are all activities. Spring and fall are the best times to visit.

The park's five mostly-level trails begin at the ranch house complex and wind through various habitats. The Cache Creek Nature Trail features interpretive displays, along with a boardwalk into the tule marshes.

Kayakers can paddle Cache Creek, with kayaks available for rent near the park from Shady Acres Campground, shadyacresclearlake@gmail.com, 994-2236.

With the exception of September, December and January, guided nature walks occur on the second Saturday of each month. Many include a tour of the ranch house.

Anderson Marsh State Park is off Highway 53 just past its junction with Highway 29 at Lower Lake. 279-2267, andersonmarsh.org.

"which makes the local outpouring of generosity to keep the park open absolutely amazing."

With the three-year agreement up in June, the association is lobbying the State Parks Department to allocate enough money to fund minimal requirements to keep Anderson Marsh open. Meanwhile, its dollar-raising efforts continue. For two years, volunteers took over the opening and closing of the park's gates. They continue to provide educational events and help with building and trail maintenance.

"Hundreds of school kids come each year," Bornstein said. "We pay for the buses to get them here."

Docents guide nature walks, tour visitors through the ranch house, interpret archaeological finds. A Koi volunteer regularly patrols the acreage to ensure all is in order.

"What I'm most proud of," Bornstein said, "is that not only did we keep the park open to the public, but thanks to the groundswell of community support, Anderson Marsh State Park is thriving."

Yvonne Michie Horn is a Santa Rosa-based freelance writer.