

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE JANUARY 24, 2016 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL

Which way is best to cut your screen time?

By Ron Driscoll
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Domestic air travel soared to record levels in summer 2015, with more than 220 million passengers, eclipsing the standard established in 2007. You can expect plenty of company at the gate in 2016 as well, if a year-end survey is any indication. Expertflyer.com found that 83 percent of business travelers polled expect to fly

more frequently in 2016.

An antidote to the sometimes chaotic airport experience is to enroll in one of two available programs that speed the process of getting from curbside to gate — or in the case of international travelers, back

TSA, Page M3

Having TSA PreCheck and Global Entry means shoes and coats stay on.



SHUTTERSTOCK

TSA programs, by the numbers

Global Entry
Launched **2009 (Boston)**
Cost for 5 years **\$100**
US enrollment centers **89**
NE enrollment centers **1**
Enrolled **2.5 million**
Airports **46**

TSA PreCheck
Launched **2011**
Cost for 5 years **\$85**
US enrollment centers **350**
NE enrollment centers **19**
Enrolled **2 million**
Airports **250**



KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

SAN FRANCISCO

Just one way to escape from Alcatraz

Triathlon competitors from all walks of life and skill levels take on the bay waters

BY KARI BODNARCHUK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

SAN FRANCISCO — Chills shot through my body even though I wore a thick wetsuit, neoprene socks, and two swim caps, and shared tight quarters with 2,000 other athletes on a ferry. Anxious chatter filtered through the air.

“I’m so nervous!” the woman next to me said as we ate energy chews and sat on the floor stretching.

“I just don’t want to miss the beach,” said another woman. “I heard that if you end up on the rocks or the next beach over, they jokingly call it ‘the walk of shame’ because you have to walk all the way back to the transition.”

Let’s not do that, we all agreed.

Our boat, a historic sternwheeler called the San Francisco Belle, held athletes from more than 40 countries who had traveled to San Francisco to compete in the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon. The race, inspired by the original Hawaii Ironman and now in its 36th year, tops many triathletes’ bucket lists. It drew 64 participants from all New England states last year, including people like Georgia Nicholls, 46, who started training for Alcatraz because

ALCATRAZ, Page M2

Competitors in the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon get started with a leap off a ferry.

Inside

‘ALWAYS OVERPACK’
Boston restaurateur Nick Varano talks travel in the VIP Lounge.
M7

INN GOOD COMPANY
There may be ghosts among the guests at La Posada in Arizona.
M5

KEEP ‘EM BUSY
A Captiva Island resort is just what this mother-of-two needed.
M4



UNTRAP THOSE PHOTOS
An on-the-go printer lets you make photo prints with your smartphone.
M4



WE’VE MADE YOUR
WINTER ESCAPE
HARDER TO RESIST

B
THE BREAKERS
PALM BEACH

Visit thebreakers.com,
call 877-536-3996 or consult
your travel professional.



Triathletes dive in to Escape from Alcatraz

► **ALCATRAZ**
Continued from Page M1

she hates cold weather and thought it would help her get through Boston's cold, long, dark winters; Steph Jones from Rhode Island, who wanted to celebrate her 30th birthday by "doing something a little bit crazy"; and Jim Evans, 48, of Manchester, Conn., who decided to overcome weight, drinking, and general health issues by buying a bike, learning to swim, and taking on triathlons.

Roger Little, 75, of Bedford, has completed the race five times and best summed up its appeal: "The anxiety of being on the San Francisco Belle next to The Rock and anticipating the swim, and then jumping off from 10 feet or so into the murky shark-infested water with huge swells, and then popping up like a cork and looking for arms at the tops of the swells to see which way to go, and then navigating in a long arc while spotting San Francisco's towers, grassy banks, wharfs, and other landmarks to the swim exit at the yacht club with the red roof, and not being carried past it by the strong currents and out under the Golden Gate Bridge and on to Japan can't be matched anywhere."

I liked his lively description, but to clarify, swimmers are more to likely see seals or sea lions than sharks. Although a great white attacked a sea lion off Alcatraz Island last October, that was "the only predation attack ever recorded in the bay," according to David McGuire, director of San Francisco's shark conservation group Shark Stewards, and there has only been one recorded shark attack on a human, in 1926.

Rather than dodging sharks, the biggest challenge is swimming 1.5 miles across a bay where 5 million gallons of brackish water — including freshwater runoff from 500 miles of the Sierra Nevada mountains — funnel through the channel per second. Other challenges: Landing on a narrow beach beside the St. Francis Yacht Club on the mainland, and handling the water temperature, which averages 55 degrees in June.

After a half-mile run to warm up

and reach a transition area, participants hop on their bikes for an 18-mile hilly ride by the Golden Gate Bridge, through quiet residential neighborhoods, and out to the peninsula's sprawling, sandy beaches, and then back again. Then it's an eight-mile, challenging run on dirt, grass, gravel, beach sand, and asphalt in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

The out-and-back run takes athletes along the bay, up and down steep steps by the Golden Gate Bridge, across the beach, and then up the infamous Sand Ladder, a set of 400 steps made with wooden slats buried in the sand, and with a chain railing so you can pull your way up. Then it's mostly all downhill or along flat terrain back to the finish at Marina Green.

"Alcatraz is not for newcomers to the sport," said announcer and long-time participant Eric Gilsenan, originally from Boston and Cape Cod. "You're jumping off a perfectly good boat and swimming across a frigid bay when you could be snuggling in bed and watching the news. But on this day, you are the news."

The event draws some of the sport's top professional athletes, people like Andy Potts, who's won the race six times, and Mirinda Carfrae, an Australian triathlete and three-time Ironman world champion. It also attracts amateurs of all ages and abilities, about 24 percent of whom are women.

"We've had people from all walks of life — teens, senior citizens, blind racers, amputees, cancer survivors, Olympic medalists, and average Joes," said Shelbi Okumura, a spokesperson for the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon. "It's a tough race, but really something anyone can do with dedicated training."

You can earn a race spot by throwing your name in the lottery in September (along with 8,000 other athletes) in hopes of being selected during random drawings in October or November; qualify through the Westchester Triathlon in Rye, N.Y., in September, or the Kemah Triathlon in Texas in April; join an official charity team, such as the Challenged Athletes Foundation or Livestrong Foundation;



PHOTOS BY KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

or organize a corporate team. Or you can attend one of Gilsenan's Escape Academy clinics, usually held in the fall and spring, which offers detailed information on the event, and a chance to practice and complete all three legs of the race with coaches.

Many athletes arrived in San Francisco a few days early to scope out the course and mentally prepare. I took a ferry over to Alcatraz Island to see the swim course from the right vantage point, and to take a fascinating audio tour of the old federal prison, which included wild tales of failed escapes. It was hard to imagine that with wet-suits and the right timing, 2,000 of us would make it across the bay (organizers time the race around the tides, and the Coast Guard closes this major shipping channel for one hour on race day).

Some athletes drove or pedaled along the bike and run routes to get a sense of the terrain. For me, the best preparation came from taking a swim clinic the day before the race with coach Pedro Ordenes, founder of Water World Swim in San Francisco. Ordenes holds the world record for Alcatraz swim crossings — more than 900 — and is the only person to complete a roundtrip crossing of the Beagle Channel between Chile and Argentina. He now teaches swimmers how to embrace open-water swimming in the Bay Area and beyond, and runs three Alcatraz swim clinics in the days preceding the triathlon.

At 6:15 a.m. the day before the race, Ordenes took 40 of us out to Alcatraz by motorboat, offered important tips, and then gave us the option to do the entire crossing or just part of it, so we could get a feel for the water and currents. We ended up swimming the whole route, an experience that helped eliminate a lot of the fear.

That's why I felt relatively calm the next day when Gilsenan's voice boomed over the loudspeaker, "Now is the moment you've been waiting for! Good luck racers, and remember to have fun!"

A loud horn sounded and the professional triathletes took off. The rest of us inched toward the outer deck, throwing empty water bottles, energy-food wrappers, and even unneeded goggles into garbage bags — it's a one-way ride, after all.

I crossed the timing mat, quickly scanned the water below so I wouldn't



The Golden Gate Bridge loomed in the background as runners competed in the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon, some wearing prison-themed running attire.

jump on any swimmers — all 2,000 athletes must exit the boat within 7 minutes — and then I leapt in, holding my goggles so they wouldn't shoot off my face when I hit the water. I swam hard to get away from the ferry, and then briefly paused and spun around to take in views of the ferry looming above me and lit up on this overcast day, the dark and imposing island, and the sea of red- and green-capped swimmers bobbing and splashing their way toward shore. A fog horn bellowed in the distance.

More than 100 vessels lined the swim course, including kayaks, SUPs, jet skis, and boats with Coast Guard, fire, and rescue personnel. Athletes can hold onto a boat and even get repositioned without being penalized or asked to drop out of the race.

I set my sights on Sutro Tower, a 997-foot-tall communication tower, and then swam hard toward it. To calm my nerves, I counted my strokes, focused on my breathing, and sang a children's song in my head over and over again.

Sutro Tower and other onshore landmarks quickly passed out of view as we were swept south in the ripping currents, just as planned, and the beach beside the yacht club came closer and closer — and then suddenly shot off to the left, meaning I was about to miss it. "Not the walk of shame!" I said to myself. Two other swimmers cut in front of me and I followed them. We lost a lot of time fighting our way back, but we eventually made it to the right beach.

Thankfully I had driven the course the day before because much of the route was fogged in, or just a blur from the excitement on race day. I remember passing Mirinda Carfrae as I started my run and she wrapped up hers —

IF YOU GO . . .

Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon
www.escapefromalcatraztriathlon.com
Cost: \$750 (up from \$450 last year)
June 12

San Francisco Triathlon at Alcatraz
831-373-0678
alcatraztri.tricalifornia.com
Olympic distance
900 participants
\$450
Aug. 21

Water World Swim
415-617-5209
waterworldswim.com/
triathlon-clinics
Runs 2-hour Alcatraz Clinics
\$55-285
(15 percent off with code HAPPYTRIYEAR)

TriBike Transport
800-875-0120
www.tribiketransport.com
Drop your bike at a participating shop, and it will get packaged up, shipped to your destination, and reassembled so it's ready to go for race day.
\$180-\$350

it's not often you get to race with pros — and the thrill of running by the Golden Gate Bridge with the fog horn still bellowing in the distance. And I will never forget the chills I felt from finally crossing the finish line after months and months of training, and anticipating that sweet moment. That feeling simply can't be matched.

Kari Bodnarchuk can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us.

HEART OF EUROPE

15-day Tour of Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France, Belgium & Holland by Image Tours

\$4190

June 22, July 6 & Aug. 1 departures
Includes AIR from BOSTON

Price reflects \$600 Savings per couple

Includes 22 meals, 13 nts. hotels, air taxes, transportation and escort in Europe, per person, double occupancy. BOOK BY 3/9/16. Call for a FREE brochure.

DEDHAM TRAVEL - Ph: 781-329-1160

#1 TO EUROPE - BEST VALUE, TOP QUALITY!

Simply the best value to Europe! Award-winning all-or mostly-inclusive tours featuring air from Boston, transfers, hotel, at least 2 meals daily, escort, expert guides, daily sightseeing, more

Last call for winter/early spring tours - book now for Spring, with new Fall 2016 tours being added daily!

Visit our website for a list of our tours and group-rate discounted cruises including our European (SAVE 40-50%) & Russian River Cruises

We are also a full-service travel agency for all your travel needs

Durgan Travel Service

DURGAN TRAVEL SERVICE

125 MAIN ST. STONEHAM 800-234-9959

Complete trip listings at www.durgantravel.com

Hate to Fly?

Cruise Round-trip from Boston, MA

Sail away to Bermuda, Canada or the Caribbean from under \$100 per person per day!

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE 7-Night Bermuda from \$549* pp. 14-Night Canada/NE from \$1,659* pp.	Holland America Line 7-Night Bermuda from \$799* pp. 7-Night Canada/NE from \$999* pp. (Requires Return Flight)	Royal Caribbean INTERNATIONAL 7-Night Canada/NE from \$557* pp. 12-Night Caribbean from \$1,010* pp. (Requires Return Flight)
--	---	---

Choose from FREE Beverage Packages / Shore Excursion Credits / Internet Packages / Dining Packages / Onboard Credits up to \$400

Call one of our specialists to find out how to get all 5 offers included!

All offers available on select sailings. Offers vary by cruise line and category booked. Restrictions apply. Call toll free to speak to one of our cruise specialists for details on these amazing offers.

Visit www.DirectLineCruises.com/bostonglobe for a special BONUS cruise offer available to Boston Globe subscribers.

Travel Insurance **Included** with sailings 5-nights or longer. Senior and resident rates available on select sailings!

Direct Line Cruises Inc.

Official Agency for the Cruise Industry

Call toll-free for a FREE Brochure & Reservations
1-877-589-7519
www.DirectLineCruises.com

* Rates shown above apply to select sailings and are subject to availability. Gov't. taxes and fees are additional.

ARUBA

One Happy Island!

Book Now and Save Big!

8 DAYS 7 NIGHTS

Holiday Inn

\$1725pp

- NON-STOP FLIGHTS
- SUP. ROOM W/FREE UPGRADE TO PARTIAL OCEAN VIEW
- BREAKFAST BUFFET DAILY
- \$100 MATCH PLAY CHIPS PER ROOM
- ROUNDTrip TRANSFERS • ALL HOTEL TAXES

Hilton

(FORMERLY RADISSON)

\$2149pp

- NON-STOP AIR • GARDENVIEW
- \$150 RESORT CREDIT PER ROOM
- ROUNDTrip TRANSFERS • ALL HOTEL TAXES

RIU

Palace Antillas (ADULTS ONLY) ALL-INCLUSIVE

\$2395pp

- NON-STOP AIR • JR. SUITE OCEANVIEW
- ALL MEALS ALL DRINKS (INCLUDING ALCOHOL)
- ROUNDTrip TRANSFERS • ALL HOTEL TAXES

PLAYERS CHOICE TOURS INC.

"The Aruba Specialists"

Call 1-800-79 ARUBA (27822) or visit: ARUBA4U.COM

Rates are based on Tues Wed Thurs Call for Availability

All packages include non-stop air where available, round trip transfers, all air and hotel taxes. Travel dates are January 4, 2016 through April 1, 2016. Rates are based on mid-week travel Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday departure. Other days are available at slightly higher price. Rates are based on availability. Some blackout dates apply. Rates are per person based on double occupancy. New bookings only. Call for availability.

Earn an A+ when you go away

Give back to local schools by donating the value of your newspaper.

The Boston Globe

news in education

Visit bostonglobe.com/education

BELIZE

Free Adventure Guide & info: 1.800.667.1630 | islandexpeditions.com/bg

immerse | explore | enjoy

Island Expeditions.com

EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

2 for 1 Cruise & Up to FREE AIR!

GRAND EUROPEAN TOUR - 14 Nights
Amsterdam to Budapest from **\$3,962 pp**

ROMANTIC DANUBE - 7 Nights
Budapest to Nuremberg from **\$2,056 pp**

RHINE GETAWAY - 7 Nights
Amsterdam to Basel from **\$2,156 pp**

DANUBE WALTZ - 7 Nights
Passau to Budapest from **\$2,156 pp**

LYON & PROVENCE - 7 Nights
Paris-Rouen-Paris from **\$2,156 pp**

Book Before Jan. 31, 2016 & Receive FREE Cancellation Coverage for Any Reason Up Until Departure!

VIKING RIVER CRUISES

Exploring the World in Comfort®

Call Cruise Travel Outlet for Viking's Latest Offers
1-866-867-6538

FREE Door to Door Airport Town Car Service!

Valid on new bookings only as of Jan 8, 2016, subject to availability and may not be combinable with any other offers except Viking Explorer Society Travel Credits and Referral Rewards. Offers expire Jan 31, 2016. Up to FREE air valid on 2016 Europe River Cruises. FREE air based on departures from BOS, EWR, NYC, PHL, PIT or WAS in Mar, Apr, Nov & Dec, other gateways and months higher. Free air applicable for CAT D & above. CAT E and F receive \$1,000 off per person. Add'l restrictions may apply. Viking reserves the right to correct errors and to change any and all fares, fees and surcharges at any time. Prices are based upon lowest price point and category at time of print and are subject to change without notice. Additional terms and conditions apply. see Passenger Ticket Contract at vikingrivercruises.com (US) or vikingrivercruisescanada.com (Canada). CST#2052644-40