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## Home away from home

### Houseboat vacations offer mixed bag of options

Thom Gabrukiewicz  
Record Searchlight

May 26, 2002 — 8:53 a.m.

LAKE SHASTA — Big straw hat, cool cup of beer, fishing rods lashed to the deck: Matthew Burns was on full simmer as he waited for the rest of his 13-member party to hop aboard a houseboat the group rented for the Memorial Day weekend.

"This is our fourth annual trip up here," the San Francisco resident said Thursday. "And I want to go — now. I'm on vacation."

There are many facets to life, and in the world of houseboating, there is no exception. There are those vacationers who think a plastic slippery-slide into the water is the height of houseboat amenities. Then there are the people who want the Ritz-Carlton-meets-the-surf experience, with hot tubs, gas grills, gas fireplaces, satellite television, surround sound home theater equipment and staterooms featuring padded ceilings and solid maple panelling.

Jones Valley Resort offers the newest in entertainment with the Renaissance, a boat that sleeps 10 and features a hot tub, 27-inch television, Bose home theater system speakers, a five-disc CD/DVD changer, VHS tape player and a satellite television system that continually tracks a signal, so that you'll never miss a program while cruising on the lake.

"This boat is so far different than anyone's ever seen," Shasta Lake Resorts general manager Michael Hahn said. "Everyone who has been on it has been blown away."

The Renaissance — Jones Valley had seven of the \$200,000 cruisers built — also led to a little houseboat envy among Burns' departing guests. Even before they left the slip.

"Sign us up for the Renaissance next year," a woman in Burns' party yelled from the top deck of her hot tub equipped Odyssey houseboat. "That thing is sweet."

Still, not everyone is looking for a five-star experience on the 30,000-acre lake.

"No television, no radio, now telephone, we can offer that," said Steve Barry, president of Holiday Harbor Resort. "What experience do you want to have? We'll accommodate."



John Stubler

**>AHOY, MATEY:** A group of houseboaters leaves the slip at Jones Valley Resort on Lake Shasta on Thursday. A houseboat vacation can be luxurious or bare-bones, depending on what experience the vacationer wants.



**HOME AWAY FROM HOME:** Friends of trip leader Matthew Burns share a toast to their vacation while unpacking groceries on their rented houseboat.

## Home away from home

Each marina has a Web site, where people can look at the various floor plans and get an idea of what their vacation will cost.

A telephone call to individual marinas will give people an idea of what to expect, what to pack and how best get the most out of their vacation.

"Granted, we have the most luxurious boats on the lake," said Hahn, whose company also owns Sugarloaf and Lakeview marinas. "But it's the service we sell as well. You can talk about all the fancy things on your boat, but if it doesn't all mesh, they aren't going to come back."

It helps that Lake Shasta is a destination point. With 365 miles of shoreline, everyone can find his or her own private oasis in the hundreds of nook and cranny inlets that make up the lake. Lake Shasta is fed by the Sacramento, McCloud and Pit rivers, as well as numerous streams.

"You get to get out and get close to a wilderness experience, all while having the comforts of home," Barry said. "On a houseboat, you're exposed to a lot of wildlife, that's for sure."

The lake is home to osprey, bald eagles, numerous duck species, geese, wild turkey, deer and black bear.

"The most exciting thing, I think, about houseboating is the atmosphere," Barry said. "It's calm and tranquil and you're not going to be disturbed by the rest of the world."

"Why leave the city to go camping with 300 other people in one campground, when you can take your campsite with you wherever you go?"

What you do with your time on a houseboat is your own. Most people, marina workers said, rent the sleeper boats as a way to camp in comfort. People can fish from them (Lake Shasta is known for its diversity, with cold-water species like trout and salmon, and warm-water species like bass, crappie and catfish) and numerous hiking trails lead from the water's edge.

Most marinas also rent ski boats, personal watercraft and fishing boats. Some even have canoes, paddle boats, skis and wakeboards and inner tubes.

"It's a chance for a dad to go out and enjoy his kids, while mom is covered and has a place to quietly read a book," Barry said.

Each marina is very helpful in trip planning, Whitaker said.

"The funny thing is, people call us thinking that you need a special license to drive a houseboat," she said. "But all the marinas have a really great, 30-minute orientation."

"Besides, they have all the toys to rent, if you don't bring your own."

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