



# Houseboating Tips

Simple preparation makes a great trip!

PART I



Houseboating can be a lot of fun for any age, size or type of group. The following suggestions and ideas are the result of many years of experience, and are intended to help make preparation for your trip easier. What works for one person does not necessarily work for another, so you may find only bits and pieces of this useful to you. The idea is to have fun, reduce stress and have a great houseboat adventure.

### Organizing a group to go houseboating

Modern, larger houseboats generally sleep 10-18 people, so most people try to fill up the boat to keep the cost per person as low as possible. Putting a group together is easy. Often great friends make a tradition out of an annual houseboating trip together. Their children have lasting memories, and the adults have fun, too. If children are of varying ages, you may want to consider allowing them to invite friends as it may increase their enjoyment of the trip. There are no limits to who you might invite, and many times your friends might bring their friends and new friendships are formed!

### Dividing the work

Planning the trip includes contacting everyone you'd like to have participate, getting commitments from them, planning the food and booze, planning the transportation, and making provisions for the payment of money.



### Setting a Date

The first challenge for any group, will be picking the date. If you know exactly who will be going on the trip, you simply talk to everyone and find out what dates they are able to go and select dates that work for everyone. It is strongly recommended that your group agrees on a second and third choice of dates in case you're planning on vacationing during a popular time. As soon as you have the dates established, you should make a reservation. Even though there is frequently last minute availability of boats, all of the boats of any particular size could easily be reserved for any particular week. (Additionally, you'll want to consider taking advantage of off-season discounts.

With several people who have independent schedules it is not easy to find dates that will work for everyone. If you don't know who is going on the trip, reserve the houseboat for the dates that work for you, and then invite other people until you have commitments from enough people to make the trip possible.

### Arranging for Payment

It is a good idea to have people give you the cash for their share of the rental cost at the time they make the commitment, because if they've paid there is less chance they will change their minds. If someone drops out at the last minute and hasn't paid, it puts a burden on everyone else. You are likely to find that most people have a hard time actually making a commitment, and will not feel locked in until they have paid. You can pay for the boat as early as you want, so the sooner you collect the money and pay for the boat, the better.



Be sure to keep a good record of how much money you have received and from whom. In some cases it might make sense to let people pay you a small amount of money each month over a six month period. You will be required to pay a deposit when you make the reservation, and then pay the

full amount of the rental 60 days prior to your trip (75 days for Shasta rentals). You will get the deposit back after your trip, less the cost of any damages or losses to the vessel. You can generally use the deposit refund to pay for the gas to fill the houseboat at the end of your trip, if the marina has sufficient funds to make change for the refund check.



### Planning the Food

This can be done in several ways, depending on the type of group and the likes and dislikes of the people. The boat will have a stove, an oven and a barbecue, so the choices for cooking are varied. Roasting something in the oven for three hours on a hot day may not be the best idea, since it could contribute to making the boat uncomfortable. It is a good idea to stick to things that are simple to prepare.

### Here are some ideas to make your meal planning easier:

- (1) Have one person prepare a menu for the entire trip, and buy all of the groceries for the menu. Type up a sheet explaining what food is for which meal, and showing what the menu is. Of course, if someone eats the wrong food at the wrong time it will upset the plans, and could upset some people. However, this approach results in a minimum of excess food, and with planning could make it easier to handle food storage. If you go out for a week, storing all of the food for a large group is a challenge. One thing to consider is the possibility of packing the meat for the second half of the week in an ice chest with some dry ice, and tape the lid shut. After four days everything will still be frozen. Try not to bring too much stuff that needs refrigeration, because the refrigerator capacity on a houseboat is limited, and the propane refrigerators are not as efficient as the ones you have at home.
- (2) Assign meals to various people, making each person responsible to bring one, two or three specific meals. This spreads the work around and lets everyone participate, without any one person having to do too much. It spreads the cleanup job, too!
- (3) Let each individual or family take care of their own food. This might be a good idea if one family has special eating demands, such as being vegetarians. Generally, though, it is more fun to all eat together.
- (4) Drinks are an important consideration. Usually it will be easiest to have everybody bring what they want to drink. You should use the ice chest that comes on the houseboat for the drinks, because the drinks stay colder in ice. Also, frequent opening of the boat's refrigerator door to access drinks will result in the refrigerator not working adequately, and nothing will be very cold. If you buy common drinks for everyone, be sure to estimate the cost high and collect the money before the trip. Also, expect to buy at least a couple bags of ice per day during your trip. The exact amount of ice you will use will depend on the outside temperature.

The division of food costs is an important consideration. If you use the first method, there will be an easily calculated cost that can be divided by the number of people on the trip, and everyone can be charged for their share. It is important to be fair in allocating costs, to prevent anyone from possibly 'getting their feathers ruffled.' If you use the second method, try to give each group comparable meals to bring. If you use the third method, money may not be an issue.

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