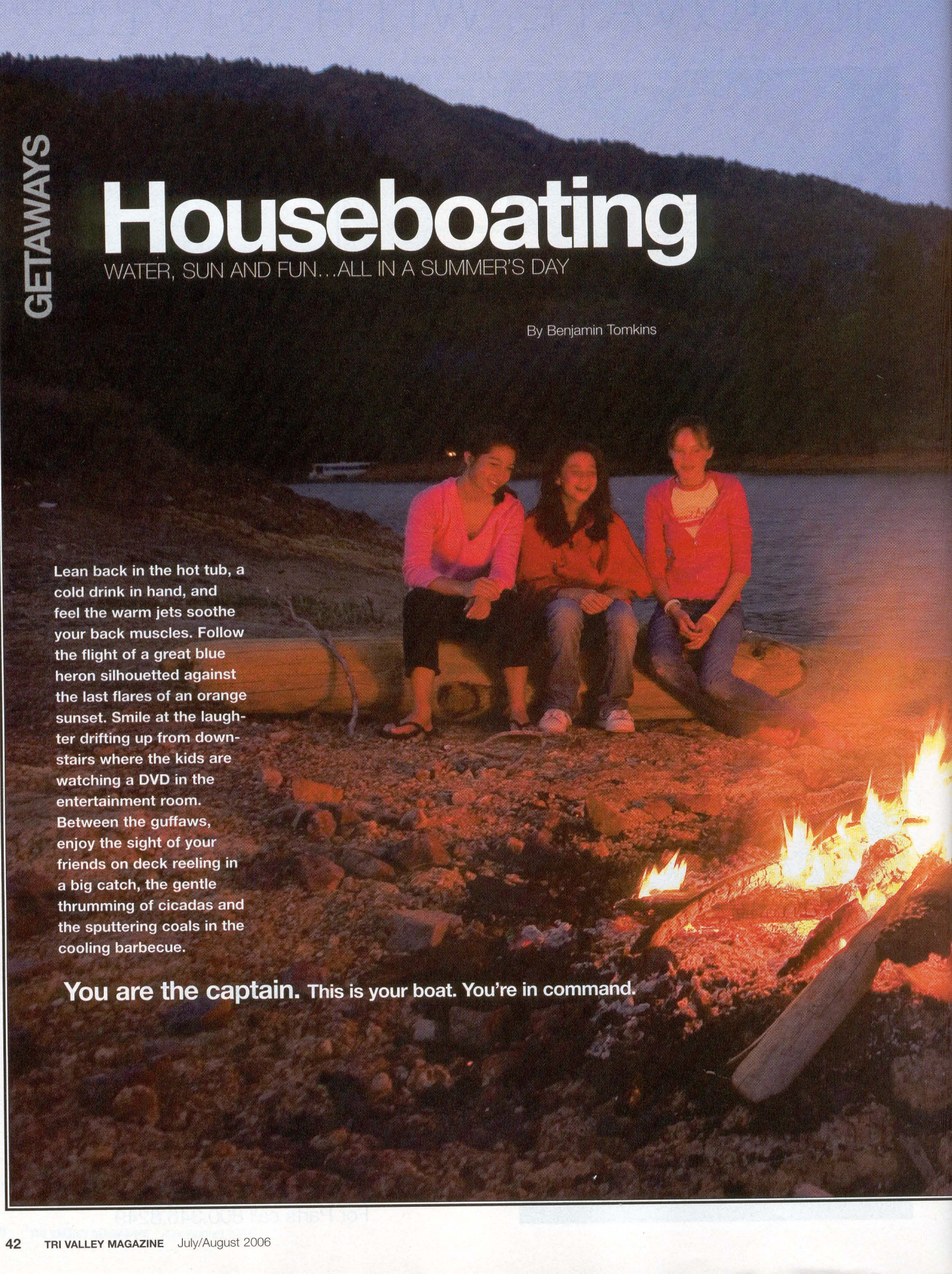


Houseboating

WATER, SUN AND FUN...ALL IN A SUMMER'S DAY

By Benjamin Tomkins

A photograph of three people (two women and one man) sitting on a large log on a rocky shore at dusk. A campfire is burning brightly in the foreground on the right, casting a warm glow. The background shows a calm body of water and a dark, forested hill under a twilight sky. The people are dressed in casual summer clothing. The overall mood is peaceful and relaxing.

Lean back in the hot tub, a cold drink in hand, and feel the warm jets soothe your back muscles. Follow the flight of a great blue heron silhouetted against the last flares of an orange sunset. Smile at the laughter drifting up from downstairs where the kids are watching a DVD in the entertainment room. Between the guffaws, enjoy the sight of your friends on deck reeling in a big catch, the gentle thrumming of cicadas and the sputtering coals in the cooling barbecue.

You are the captain. This is your boat. You're in command.



GETAWAYS

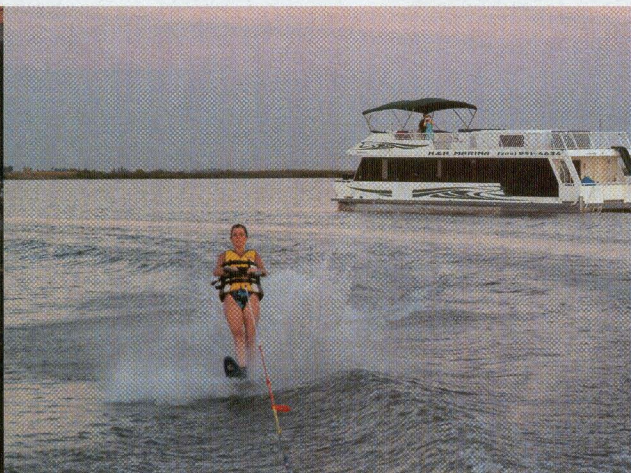
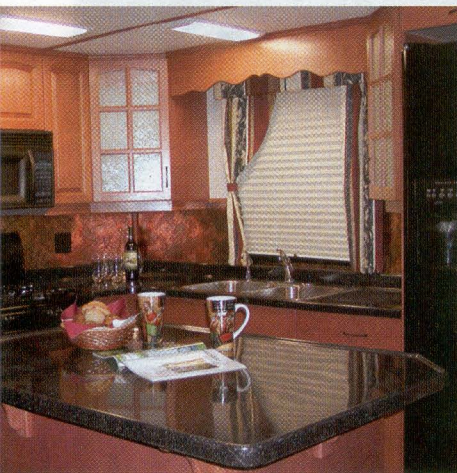
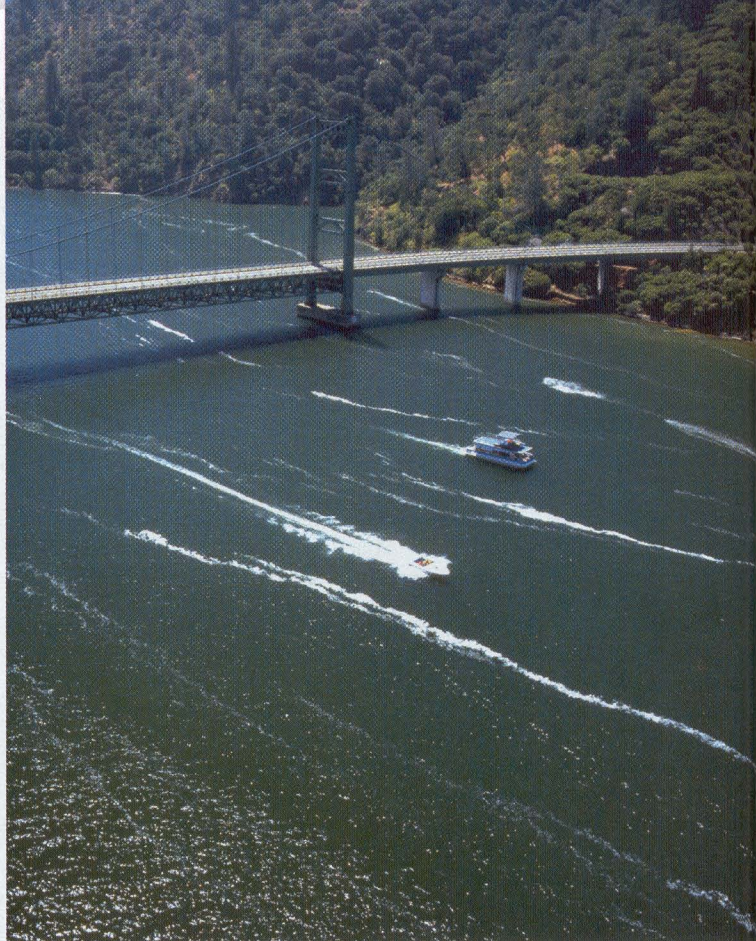
No cruise ship director or resort staff to tell you what you can do or when. That's what makes houseboating so appealing, drawing growing numbers of Californians to this ultimate vacation on water. Lounge in the sun, fish, barbecue, water ski, hike, kayak, swim, take a nap, or dock for a spell and do some wine tasting. In the water or on deck, there's something for everyone to do from young children to seniors.

The Tri Valley lies within striking distance of more than a dozen scenic lakes and rivers from Lake Shasta's splendor to the Delta's winding channels to Lake Oroville's warm waters. Take in some of Northern California's most breathtaking scenery and interesting tourist sites, surrounded by all the comforts

and luxuries of home, aboard a deluxe dream boat.

But first you'll need to reserve a boat. Start planning now. Because it's so popular, last minute jaunts are improbable. Three-night minimums are common and reservations often require months — in some cases a year — of lead-time.

Just as houses differ widely in their style and taste, so, too, do houseboats. Some are simple with few frills, but many ooze luxury, boasting amenities such as DVD-equipped theatre rooms, hi-tech sound systems, and full-service galleys. The more luxurious the accommodations, the more you pay, but sometimes those amenities -- like watching the sunset from a deck-top hot tub — are worth every penny.



Northern California's rich houseboating options are as diverse as the boats themselves, from Lake Shasta's splendor to Lake Oroville's warm waters to the Delta's winding channels. If you've never been houseboating, it's time to start planning and if you're a veteran, consider trying a new destination.

The California Delta

With more than 1,000 miles of snaking channels, California's Delta is a boating

paradise. Formed by the confluence of the San Joaquin, Mokelumne and Sacramento Rivers, the Delta is a constantly changing tableau of wildlife, open water recreation and intriguing onshore diversions.

The Delta has something for everyone and it's so close to the Tri Valley that Mt. Diablo's always in sight. The enormity of the Delta makes it easy to find your own spot: just motor until the scenery changes. The water skiing

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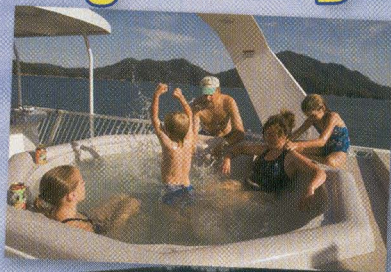
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here is legendary, but so is the birding and the fish draw anglers year round. Bass is the marquee sport fish, but the catfish are huge, too. Depending on the season, you can also hook steelhead and salmon.

If you tire of on-water diversions, the Delta shores will tempt your palette with more dockside restaurants, bars and cafes than you can count. Indulge in a champagne brunch at the historic Grand Island Mansion along Steamboat Slough, north of Rio Vista, or tie up in Clarksburg, along Elk Slough, 15 miles south of Sacramento, and sip some of Bogle Winery's award-winning Petite Syrah and Pinot Noir.

Lake Oroville

Nestled in the foothills of the northern Sierra, boaters find Lake Oroville's warm water and excellent fishing irresistible. Taking a cue from the nearby mountain peaks, Oroville specializes in height. The tallest earthen dam in the nation — 770 feet — holds back 15,000 surface acres of water and one of the highest waterfalls in the country — 640-foot Feather Falls — drops right into an arm of the lake.

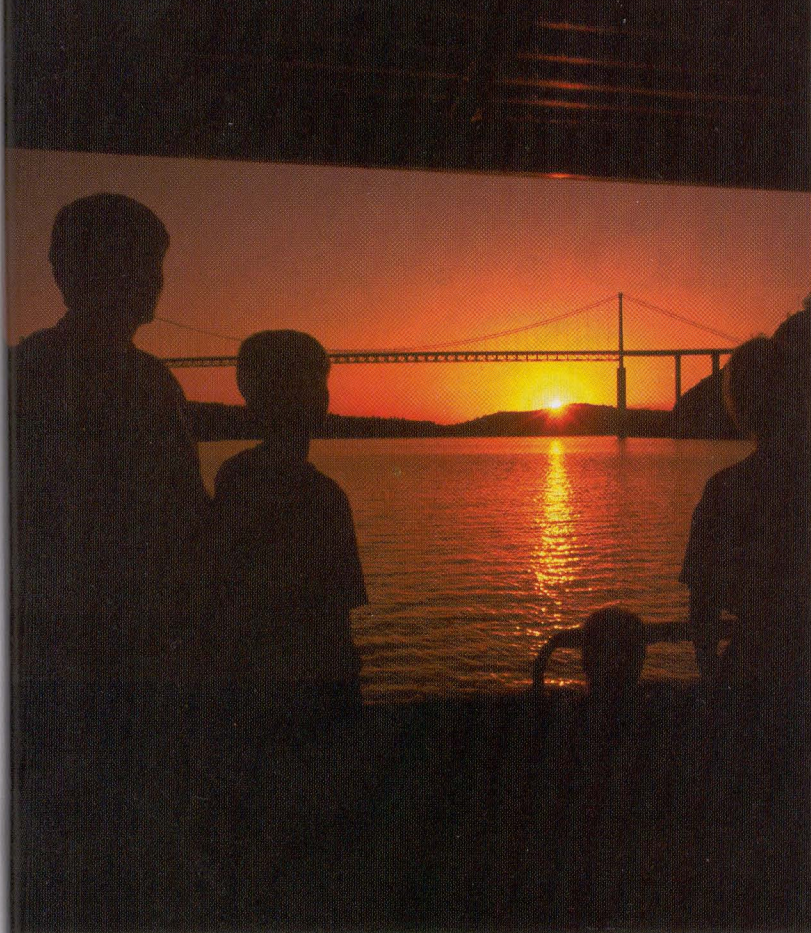
In addition to the inviting waters, the 167 miles of shoreline frame what many consider the best bass lake in California; there are at least five varieties. The waters also teem with catfish, salmon, sturgeon, crappie, blue gill and mackinaw. The hills surrounding the lake are laced with hiking, biking and equestrian trails and you're likely to see great blue herons, osprey, eagles, deer and maybe a coyote.

If you can bear to put down your fishing rod, take a dip. The warm waters — 72 degrees to 78 degrees in the summer — make Oroville ideal for swimming, jet skiing and water skiing. Plus, all that shoreline is jam-packed with secluded coves and beaches that you can call your own for a few hours or a few days.

Lake Shasta

Arguably Northern California's ultimate houseboating destination, Lake Shasta's 370 miles of shoreline competes with the Delta's expanse and Oroville's warmth. Another attraction is the 14,162-foot, snowcapped volcano looming above you. Lake Shasta even has its own celebrity: keep your eyes peeled for country singer Merle Haggard, a longtime Shasta houseboat owner.

The many bays and inlets that dot the shore are prime for tying up; from these serene areas you can plunge ashore to



luring one of the Shasta's 22 fish species onto your hook. Though hugely popular, a Forest Service quota system ensures that even on the busiest weekend you can have one of those inlets all to yourself.

Shasta has the best bass-catch rate of any lake in the state and while that breeds obsession, the

swimming is good, too. Snowmelt from Mt. Shasta fills the lake with incredibly clear water, but it does warm up, sometimes hitting 80 degrees in the summer.

With 10 marinas around the lake, it's easy to hop on and off at will to explore nearby hiking trails; keep an eye out for black-

tailed deer, Rocky-Mountain elk and the occasional black bear. Kids in particular love exploring the stalagmites and stalactites of Shasta Cavern on the east side of the lake.

Regardless of where you float your next houseboat adventure, you can't help but have a good time. The sheer diversity of diversions make houseboating one vacation that everyone can participate in equally. **TVM**



HAPPY HOUSEBOATING

California Delta
General Info
www.californiadelta.org

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Walnut Grove 95690-9765
www.grandislandmansion.com

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www.houseboats.com

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