

Recreation Guide

Mt. Shasta, Lassen Peak and every adventure in between

Houseboats offer fun water vacation

By Thom Gabrukiewicz

Record Searchlight

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.

"This is our fourth annual trip up here," the San Francisco resident said. "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-Carleton-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.

Everyone who has been on it has been blown away, Shasta Lake Resorts general manager Michael Hahn said.

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, no

telephone, we can offer that," said Steve Barry, president of Holiday Harbor Resort. "What experience do you want to have? We'll accommodate."

For as little as \$1,500 a week during the height of summer, or as much as \$6,000, houseboat vacations make a lot of sense — especially in a time of increased security concerns, according to Karen Whitaker, tourism development manager for the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association. While it's part of her job to persuade people to vacation in the north state, Whitaker and her family also are avid houseboat enthusiasts.

"People are finding houseboating as a great way to relax. I know I do," she said.

Lake Shasta is a premier location for houseboating, with 11 marinas offering a variety of options for vacationers. People can rent a basic houseboat, luxury cruiser or something in between. Houseboat styles vary, but can accommodate between six and 18 people comfortably, depending on

the model.

And the more people you get on board that can deal with each other, the less expensive it is, said vacationer Grant Watkins of Larkspur.

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 to 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 a private oasis in the hundreds of nook-and-cranny inlets that make up the lake.

See *Houseboats*, Page 27