

The Great American

...Walking into the kitchen, you fix yourself a fragrant cup of espresso and take another appreciative look around. It's really quite a find, you think, with all the amenities and then some. There's full open kitchen with a side-by-side fridge, sleeping accommodations



for twelve, a surround sound entertainment center, outdoor gas grill and a view of spectacular scenery. Make that a constantly changing view. If you don't care for this particular panorama of pristine pine covered foothills, wait five minutes and there'll be another.

You could watch the scenery roll by all day, but there's something else on your morning schedule. Finishing your coffee, you step out of your bathrobe and walk onto the deck in your swimming trunks. It's time for your pre-breakfast dip. In a credible version of a swan dive you plunge into the crystal clear waters of the surrounding lake. Surfacing, you turn to take another look at your floating vacation palace. It just doesn't get any better than this...

When it comes to vacation platforms, few options can compete with a houseboat for sheer recreational versatility. What else allows such a tremendous variety of experience, from a minimal "roughing it" style adventure to a fully loaded package that includes all the comforts of home? With a houseboat, you can get as far away from it all as you'd like, beached on the shore of a quiet, sheltered cove, or you can dock at a near-by town, enjoying a hearty breakfast at a local café, then wander through a street fair or a local festival.

There are few other vacation resources that provide so many choices of locales and activities, from jet skiing

and fishing to swimming, and yes, even golf and other land-based recreations, not to mention falling asleep accompanied by the gentle roll of a vast waterbed.

Floating Base Camps

Small wonder the adventure of houseboating has grown so dramatically. Thirty years ago, houseboating vacations, like a lot of the lakes on which they are based, were unheard of. In the mid-seventies, at destinations such as Lake Powell in Arizona, fewer than a dozen houseboats plied the waters, and those that did were primarily rustic bare bones facilities designed more for weekend poker and fishing parties than extended family vacations.

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By the late nineties, with vast improvements in marina facilities and the construction quality and amenities offered by the best houseboat manufacturers, Lake Powell had become a top houseboating destination, with resident floating domiciles numbering more than four hundred.

Mike Han, the General Manager of Lake Shasta Resort LP, recounts the development of houseboat recreation on the largest lake in California. "About fifteen years ago we decided to take the best existing model for houseboats and see what we could do to make them more attractive. Back then if you had air conditioning it was considered a miracle. So we brought in some new vessels at our Jones Valley Resort and added innovations like a water slide, TV and VCR, full AC, and some of the other comforts of home to see if we could attract new clientele. Well, that worked like a charm, and today we have 91 boats

Houseboat Adventure



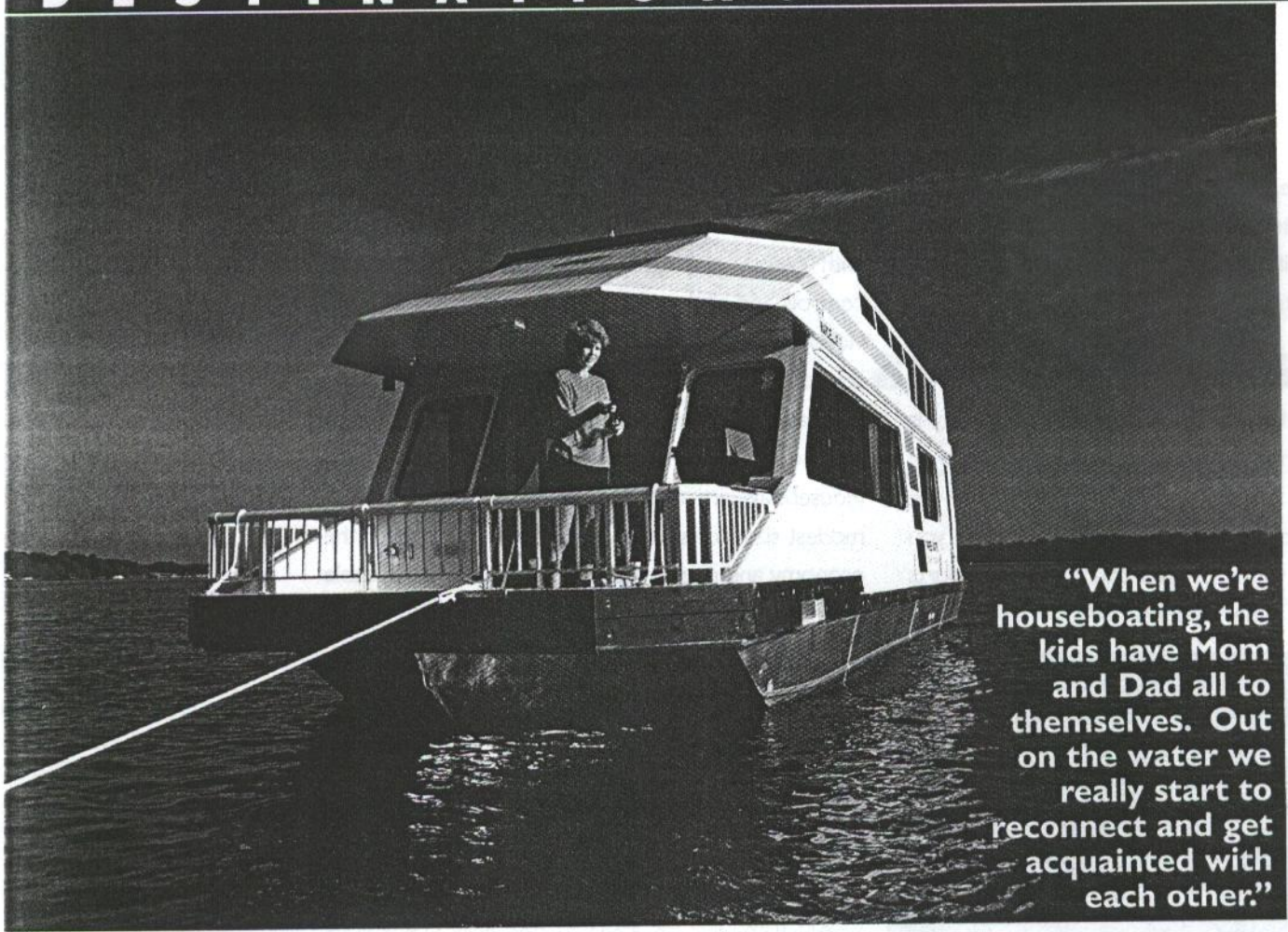
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on the lake with all the latest in creature comforts, including satellite TV, hot tubs, and gourmet galleys. These boats are really on the level of luxury yachts, but with a much more versatile platform. They're much like floating base camps with all the amenities.

“As a result of these innovations, Lake Shasta has gained a reputation as being the world capitol of houseboating, and we've seen a shift in the perception of houseboating from being a blue collar recreation to one that provides comforts for the most demanding

upscale user. We see people who come in now taking 2 to 3 short houseboat vacations a year, and they'll come up with theme nights, a lot like cruise ships. People will bring in steak and lobster and their best wines and really make a time of it. And now that we've added gourmet galleys the boats are a big favorite with the wives who enjoy cooking a great meal. The beauty of Lake Shasta is also that the water here is almost 100% rainwater, and it maintains a temperature of about 80 degrees year round. With the wonderful surroundings you can see eagles, bears,

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deer, and a range of wildlife, which combined with the large expanse of water, make it a scenic favorite for the entire family. And, if you’re a fisherman, we have some great fishing right on the lake and some of the best fly fishing waters in the West – the Pit River, Fall River, and Hat Creek – about an hour and a half away. When you’re headquartered at Lake Shasta there really is something for everybody.”

Family Fun

With modern, well-designed houseboats, an entire family -- or families -- can get away from it all with having to get too far away. From toddlers to the elderly, anyone can participate in a houseboat vacation,

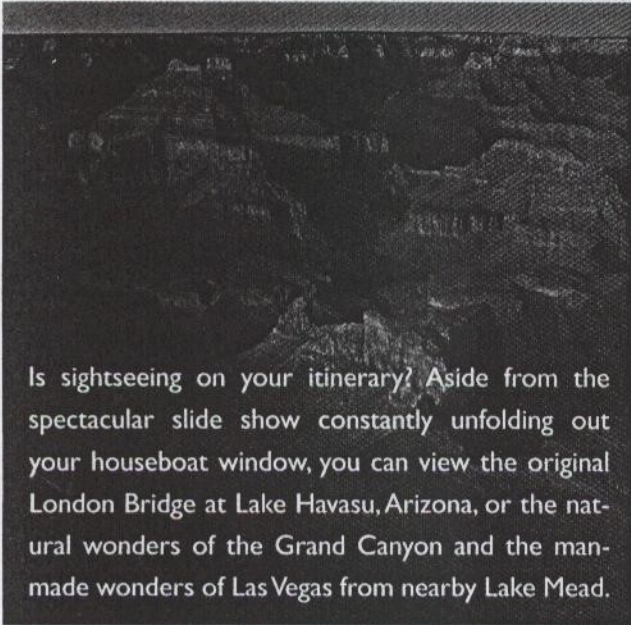
and there are plenty of activities to keep everybody happy. For Tom Vegh, an avid houseboater, it’s the great family values that make this type of vacation such a good investment of quality time. “When we’re houseboating, the kids have Mom and Dad all to themselves. Out on the water we really start to reconnect and get acquainted with each other. Then there’s the ongoing sense of adventure. It’s a little like an aquatic camping trip, and we all have to make sure that we get properly staked when beaching, things like that. We also love the sense of exploration, with plenty of isolated locations and beaches for the kids to make like pirates. Just having acres of good clean water for the kids to play is a tremendous resource, and when we’re all done playing we head back to the 65 foot boat complete with wet bar, water slide, Jacuzzi and a multimedia A/V system to relax and play games or talk. And, from a fiscal point of view, a large

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houseboat can easily accommodate two families, who then share whatever costs are involved. We find it to be an ideal family vacation for us, and it is by far our children's favorite.”

Range of Choices

With houseboating, the main attraction, obviously, is the close proximity to the water, affording plenty of opportunity to fish, scuba, kayak or just relax in the sun. By simply pulling into a convenient marina you can also access top-notch golf courses, tennis courts and a myriad of other options.



Is sightseeing on your itinerary? Aside from the spectacular slide show constantly unfolding out your houseboat window, you can view the original London Bridge at Lake Havasu, Arizona, or the natural wonders of the Grand Canyon and the man-made wonders of Las Vegas from nearby Lake Mead.

In northern California, Lake Shasta, one of the recreational crown jewels of the state, has become the de facto capital of western houseboating. There are no less than 11 marinas and resorts that ring the huge lake, sitting in the towering shadow of the volcanic Mt. Shasta.

Getting started on a houseboating adventure is about as simple as renting a car. First you'll need to determine what sort of craft best suit your needs, selecting from a wide range of choices. At the top end of the

fleet is a 65 foot Admiral Class boat that features 5 double beds, 3 private heads, central air, a top deck with canopy and lighting, upper deck flying bridge controls, and all the requisite frills, including a CD and video entertainment center with a multi-speaker sound system. Just add food and refreshments and you have your own floating hotel that can accommodate several families or a small sized business group. Houseboats are also available in a range of more modest sizes for smaller groups who may prefer the economy and maneuverability of a more manageable base of operations.

Once you've decided which boat to rent you won't have to worry about any previous lack of watercraft experience. Any rental company will gladly spend a few minutes with you making sure you know all the ropes: estimates are that 60% of renters on the major houseboating lakes are first time users. The rest is up to you, traversing the shore at your leisure, exploring some the country's great natural waterways. The beauty of the Great American Houseboat Adventure combines a range recreational opportunities with a pace that will allow you, your family and friends, to fully enjoy them all.



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