

Delta Houseboating

A Trip You Won't Forget!

By Linda Jensen Photos from <http://www.paradisemarina.com/>

Exploring a thousand-plus miles of inland waterways in a moveable house makes a houseboat vacation on the California Delta both an adventure and a destination vacation. In 1969, famous "Perry Mason" author and houseboating enthusiast, Erle Stanley Gardner wrote, "The moment you have left the dock, you have arrived at your destination." And the destination is still delightful.

The largest estuary on the West Coast, the California Delta is a combination of rivers, sloughs, canals and tributaries that

flower species abound as well as animal life including snow geese, beavers, and swans.

Anyone who can drive a car can operate a houseboat. The rental company provides instruction on all the systems and gives you quick course on how to handle the boat. That said, if you're a novice boater, you'll probably find the trip to be a learning experience. Unaware of the tides that affect Delta



take you around a series of islands, ideal for a slow-motion tour at a houseboat's top speed of 6-8 mph. Along the way there are deep waters for fishing, quiet areas for watching birds, beautiful scenery, quaint towns to explore, and places for dropping anchor to relax, read and enjoy the sun.

Local attractions include the town of Locke, along the east bank of the Sacramento River that features a place to dock for gas, ice, bathrooms and showers in addition to the opportunity to explore the historical and cultural exhibits in the town which was founded by Chinese Americans in 1915. Further south, Isleton and Rio Vista are delightful small towns with historical exhibits and terrific local restaurants and bars, sometimes all in the same place. Rio Vista's Foster's Big Horn is a café and bar founded in the early 1900's that showcases 250 of avid hunter (and bootlegger) Bill Foster's prized taxidermy collection, specimens of African and North American animals. No, you're not drunk, that really is an elephant looking down at you. Along the river to the north of Locke is Clarksburg, located in wine country with tasting rooms for more than a dozen wineries. Also north of Locke, the Meadows area is an ideal place to set anchor for a quiet day of watching beautiful flora and fauna. Aquatic

waters, many a "landlubber" finds themselves beached on a sandbar with their houseboat at a decided slant. Wind can also be a factor as the boat is like a giant sail. Sailing newbies become quite good at maneuvering their craft with a little practice, even with a decided breeze. With each mile traveled a lasting memory of the journey is built.

Prime season for houseboat vacations is spring-summer (May through October). The primary resource for houseboat rentals in the California Delta at this time is Seven Crowns Resorts at Paradise Point Marina in Stockton. They also rent other small craft and canoes that might enhance your trip.

Their website:

www.paradisemarina.com/houseboats has full information on boat sizes, floor plans and prices plus First Timer Tips on what to bring and how to prepare for a trip you won't forget.