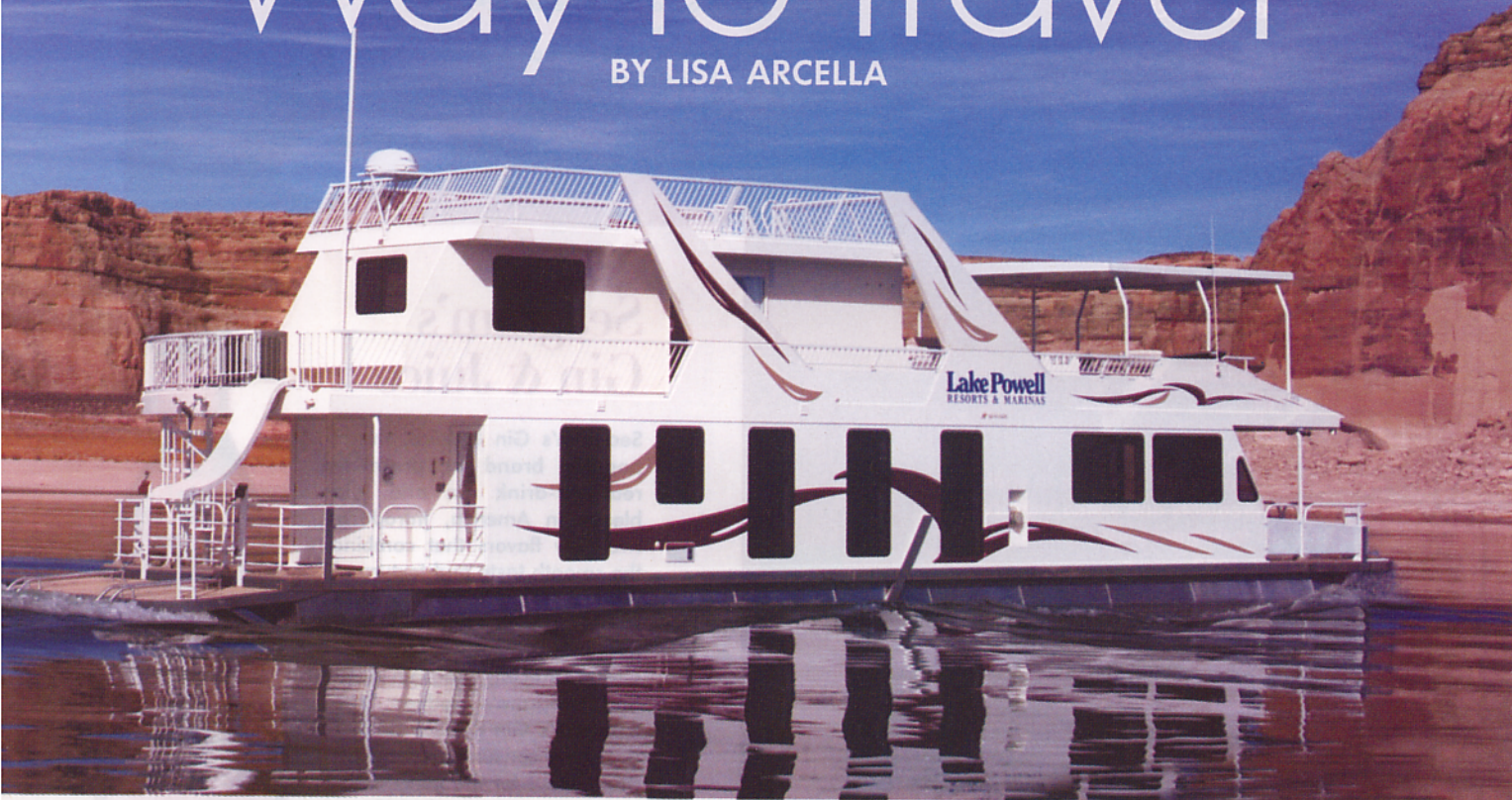


HOUSEBOATS: The New Chic Way To Travel

BY LISA ARCELLA



Imagine going on vacation and never having to actually leave the house. It's actually possible on a Lake Powell houseboat.

Just on the Arizona/Utah border runs a 1900-mile lake of spectacular beauty that rivals the nearby Grand Canyon, and is surrounded by canyons of its own. Formed over thirty years ago by the construction of the Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River, this lake is so big it starts in one state and ends in another.

It's the perfect spot to spend a relaxing, yet fun and adventurous vacation aboard your very own houseboat. Couples, families and even honeymooners come here, rent houseboats of all sizes and sail off onto the lake to explore, or find a secluded cove to park near a sandy shore.

Start by arriving at the Wahweap Lodge and Marina (also called the Lake Powell Resort and Marina), where you will hardly believe the gorgeous panoramic views of the clear blue lake and terra cotta red rocks.

Some may be intimidated by maneuvering a giant houseboat, but a guide will easily show you the ropes and even take you out to a place you can park for the night if you prefer. Although water levels have dropped over the years, the calm water is still over 400 feet deep and fantastic for swimming, kayaking, water skiing and fishing.

A fifty-nine foot houseboat can sleep about ten people comfortably and usually includes a water slide, sun deck, several bathrooms, fully equipped kitchen and living room, stereo, television and DVD—all the comforts of home. If you want complete and utter luxury, you can rent one of two fully maxed out seventy-five foot houseboats that have six bedrooms, an on-board barbecue, hot tub, fireplace, state-of-the art kitchen (complete with a center island for entertaining), sundeck, slide and a complete entertainment center and flat screen TV.

A great spot to settle in for the night is Last Chance Bay. It's secluded and surrounded by huge red, brown, pink and white rock canyons that seem to change color with the passing light of the day.



For short excursions, many houseboat renters will also option a Wave Runner or motorboat to speed you through the many tight nooks and crannies of the lake that might be too cumbersome to move a houseboat through.

Since most of the boats anchor near a stretch of sandy shoreline, it's easy to jump ship and make a romantic campfire or barbecue to enjoy under spectacular star-filled nights. The marina can provide you with wood, but of course you will have to dig your own fire pit and make sure you remove any trash—this is still camping after all!

This is definitely a get-back-to-nature vacation, so while there's no glitz (Vegas isn't far away if you want to split your week up), there's plenty of hiking and exploring to do.

You absolutely cannot miss the Natural Bridge. Take your motorboat and park it at the cove that leads to the 290 feet high natural rock formation—the biggest natural bridge in the world. The Navajo called it “Nannezoshi” meaning a rainbow turned to stone. Native Americans believe that this is a spiritual place and once you are there, you will feel the same. There are organized tours from the lodge if you don't want to try to find it on your own.

Bake your houseboat, slip a big inner tube on to the lake and float your cares away.



IF YOU GO

GETTING THERE: It's about a four-hour drive from Las Vegas to the Wahweap lodge and marina. Or you can fly to Phoenix and take a puddle jumper flight on America West or Lake Powell Air to Page, Arizona.

WHERE TO EAT: There are a number of good restaurants in Page, but we'd recommend the Rainbow Room restaurant in the Lodge, where locally grown organic vegetables and meat are a taster's treat. If you don't want to rent a houseboat, you can stay at the lodge or one of the many camping facilities at the park.

SIDE TRIPS: You can easily visit the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon National Park or Zion National Park from here. Or, take a white water trip along the Colorado River into the heart of the canyon. Wilderness River Adventures in Page also offers great raft rides through the still waters of the canyon, for the faint of heart who don't want a roller coaster ride through white water. There are also various Native American festivals and events that take place year round.

COST: Most houseboats run from thirty-six feet to fifty-nine feet. A fifty-nine foot boat rents for about \$3,700 (including gas) for four days during the summer. Prices drop during the fall and spring, and you can get a deal for trips longer than five days as well.

There are also smaller and larger boats. You can bring your own groceries aboard, or arrange to have them already delivered on board for your arrival. **BE**

For more information, visit www.lakepowell.com, or call 1-888-486-4665. Contact Lisa Arcella at lisaarcella@aol.com