



## Southern & Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association

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### HOUSEBOATS OFFER LUXURY VACATIONS ON THE WATER

Imagine. Waking at dawn to glimpse the first rays of daybreak lighting a clear sky. Seeing a deer pause for a drink at the water's edge. Hearing a songbird somewhere on the nearby shore. Watching an eagle soar overhead, delighting in its freedom and quest for breakfast. Catching sight of a glistening fish darting from the calm lake, then slipping easily back into its watery home. Feeling the soft rockabye of the current, washing away the cares and stress of everyday life. Knowing that you are the captain of your soul, that today is yours to spend as you will.

Houseboats have a way of transporting people to a luxurious world where life is easy, dreams become reality and wishes are fulfilled. Want to escape the noise and hectic traffic of bumper-to-bumper vehicles? Climb aboard a houseboat and travel to a secluded cove where no other human being can be sighted. Tired of lugging and unpacking suitcases as you move from one motel room to another? Rent a houseboat where you have all the comforts of home in one of the most spectacular settings you can imagine.

Want all the convenience of a resort without the high price tag? Check out the reasonable rates for renting houseboats, whether it's for a couple or a large family or an even larger gathering of friends. Seeking a way to spend quality time together as a family? Try a houseboat where there's plenty of room to spread out, yet not so much that families get lost going their separate ways.

The Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky offers a huge roster of rental houseboats to choose from and a wealth of picture-perfect lakes and rivers on which to enjoy them. In fact, many folks are surprised to learn that Kentucky is the houseboat capital of the world. There are more houseboats built in Kentucky than anywhere else. At last count, there were 23 houseboat manufacturers in Kentucky. About 80 percent of all houseboats made in America are made in south central Kentucky, most within a few miles of Lake Cumberland's shores.

Though it's located far from the ocean, Kentucky has one of the best-established maritime traditions anywhere in the United States. And if you look at the physical

geography of the Bluegrass State, you'll quickly see why – Kentucky has more miles of navigable waterways than anywhere else in America, except Alaska.

Large portions of the state historically have been tied to their waterside locations. Many cities owe their existence to river-born commerce. The Tennessee Valley Authority impoundments of smaller waterways in Kentucky in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century created huge lakes that have made Southern and Eastern Kentucky a recreation paradise. When Lake Cumberland was created in 1951 by the construction of Wolf Creek Dam, the lake spawned a growing industry of houseboat builders. Kentucky houseboats are cutting a new wake in the recreation industry and, today, the area is proudly the "Detroit of Houseboats."

One of the early pioneers of Kentucky's houseboat industry was James E. Sharpe, who founded Somerset, one of the first and largest custom manufacturers in the business. Located in Somerset, the company is now owned by Thomas Neckel, with his wife, Carol Neckel, as the company president. Just a short drive from Somerset's operations is Sharpe Houseboats, where Sharpe's son Joe is president. Nearby Monticello has four other manufacturers – Horizon, Lakeview, Stardust and Fantasy Yachts.

For a true treat, stop by Somerset or Sharpe or one of the other top-notch companies and see what has so many people turning into dedicated houseboaters. Houseboat popularity and production has tripled since 1990. Built from scratch, the boats are customized. Almost anything you can think of – and your wallet can afford – can be put into a houseboat. The new boats are bigger and more comfortable with amenities such as roomier bedrooms, hot tubs and entertainment systems.

Flames flicker from a holographic fireplace in the master bedroom, a satellite dish pulls in the latest movies on a big-screen TV in the family room, a Jacuzzi bubbles upstairs and lighted star ceilings twinkle in a luxurious bedroom. Trash compactors and dishwashers are standard in the top-of-the-line boats that often are more than 100 feet long. A water slide leads from the upper deck, cedar closets provide storage, a built-in gas grill makes cooking fun, a full-size pool table waits on the party deck, a child's bedroom cuddy has the latest electronic gizmos, and a sophisticated home office keeps houseboat residents in touch with the world.

Nothing seems too far out. One unusual customer order requested that a fishing hole be installed in the floor of the living room in a particularly large houseboat. The owner wanted to fish all year round from the comfort of his reclining chair. Instead of the "Build it and they will come" philosophy, these houseboat manufacturers have adopted a creed of "Dream it and we'll build it."

The versatility of a houseboat seems to reel in more and more devotees. No wonder. On the water, it's a boat. Parked at a dock, it's a condo. Anchored in a secluded cove, it's a private cabin.

On a houseboat, you can also rent and take along with you a motorboat for water skiing and tubing.

Renting one of these floating houses can make you feel like a million, without breaking the family budget. Add up the price of motel rooms and dining out and then compare it to the cost of enjoying a houseboat. Most rental houseboats come equipped with dishes, silverware, cooking utensils, kitchen appliances like toasters and coffee makers, carpet indoors and out, and full showers. You'll be surprised at the reasonable price for a houseboat vacation.

But what if you don't have any experience piloting a houseboat? Not to worry. Renters go through a quick but thorough training program before heading out on the water on their own. As far as the controls go, it is very simple. You steer the wheel like a car right and left, forward and reverse. It is not complicated at all and there are plenty of experienced personnel ready to make sure all your questions are answered and that you are comfortable at the wheel of a houseboat.

Most marinas have an accompanying restaurant where you can find three delicious meals a day if you don't feel like cooking on the houseboat. Or you can order a picnic lunch to go and dine on the water. If fishing is your forte, a fresh entrée can be pulled from the lake or river where a large variety of fish is waiting. There's something magical about reeling in a mess of bass or crappie, grilling them on the houseboat and enjoying a leisurely meal while watching the sunset over the lake.

If you're hooked on the lure of houseboating, it's simple to start off on your fun adventure. Scout around, check out the houseboats for rent, choose one that fits your needs perfectly and decide what magnificent body of water you want to be on. The main course of this grand buffet of outdoor recreation involves five major lakes – Lake Cumberland, Dale Hollow Lake, Laurel River Lake, Paintsville Lake and Green River Lake.

With 63,000 acres of water and more than 1,260 miles of shoreline, Lake Cumberland is an aqueous gem cradled in the Cumberland Mountain range. The lake forms a few miles north of Cumberland Falls and meanders north for a short distance and then bends sharply west and continues about six miles to the confluence of the Cumberland and Rockcastle forks. Depths at some locations of the lake are over 200 feet. A prime fishing lake, Cumberland's waters are teeming with largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, Kentucky and white bass, crappie and huge trophy striped bass.

Dale Hollow Lake is one of the most beautiful, clear highland lakes in the country, with 620 miles of shoreline and 48 square miles of surface water straddling the Kentucky and Tennessee border. The Flood Control Act led to the construction of Dale Hollow Dam on the Obey River in the early 1940s. The water is deep and so clear that Dale Hollow Lake is one of the top spots for scuba diving. Dale Hollow is a major draw for migratory waterfowl and bald eagles. Dale Hollow also is a high quality fishery where records are made. Probably no lake in the country can claim better smallmouth fishing than Dale Hollow. Dale Hollow has held the world record for smallmouth bass for decades and, if that record is ever broken, it will probably be by another Dale Hollow angler. The stunning beauty of the deep blue water and the rugged mountains is a captivating setting for a houseboat vacation.

Hidden in the Daniel Boone National Forest, crystal clear Laurel River Lake is an uncrowded paradise. Surrounded by natural wonders, Laurel River Lake has over 200 miles of shoreline. With depths up to 360 feet, the water is pristine and the fishing is great. Bass, walleye and crappie are plentiful. The Dam spillway offers sunbathers a public beach and the forest area provides various levels of hiking. The lake is completely undeveloped except for two commercial facilities – Holly Bay Marina and Grove Marina. Laurel River Lake is the most unusual of Kentucky's major lakes, more akin to alpine lakes than southern reservoirs. The quiet bays and backwaters of the lake offer glimpses of wildlife, including a resident population of giant Canada geese and wintering bald eagles.

The 8,200-acre Green River Lake offers 33 miles of picture perfect water lying between 250 miles of shoreline. With an average depth of 50 feet and at its widest point, 1 mile across, Green River Lake is perfect for fishing, skiing and boating. If fishing is your passion, Green River Lake has spotted, white largemouth and smallmouth bass, as well as crappie, bluegill, catfish and fresh water drum. The lake is one of the premiere muskie fisheries in Kentucky.

With its steep cliffs and wooded coves, Paintsville Lake provides 1,140 acres of fun and relaxation. Located 4 miles west of Paintsville, Paintsville Lake runs along 19 miles of shoreline with beautiful scenery and breathtaking hills. The lake winds its way through the steep hills and narrow gorges of Johnson and Morgan counties. When the lake is at "summer recreational pool," or 709 feet above sea level, it's about 100 feet deep at the site of the dam. Its deep pure water of many tributaries provides excellent opportunities to catch a variety of fish from walleye and trout to redbreast sunfish and bass. The natural cliffs, trees and flowers give refuge to deer, wild turkey, birds, ducks and many other wildlife.

Cave Run Lake is in the heart of the northernmost part of the Daniel Boone National Forest. The forest surrounds the lake, which is 48 miles long and covers 8720 acres. Formed by a dam across the Licking River completed in 1973, the lake is about 6 miles west of Morehead and touches portions of Bath, Menifee, Morgan, and Rowan counties. It is the most popular muskie fishing destination in Kentucky, known as the Muskie Capital of the South. Bass, walleye, and crappie are also plentiful. In addition to fishing, the lake is popular with boaters. It is the only lake in eastern Kentucky suitable for sailboating. The shoreline is almost completely undeveloped, except for primitive campground areas and two marinas—Longbow Marina on Beaver Creek, 5 miles from Frenchburg, and Scott Creek Marina on KY 801 just above the dam. Scott Creek rents houseboats.

Imagine. That's where it all starts. Picture yourself on a houseboat. Allow your imagination to dream up the ideal houseboat vacation. Then head to the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky and chart your course to the ultimate escape. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to turn those houseboat dreams into glorious reality.

*Marinas with houseboat rentals include:*

Holmes Bend Resort - Green River Lake, Columbia  
Green River Marina - Green River Lake, Campbellsville  
Hendricks Creek Resort - Dale Hollow Lake, Burkesville  
Sulphur Creek Resort – Dale Hollow Lake, Kettle  
Wisdom Dock - Dale Hollow Lake, Albany  
Wolf River Resort - Dale Hollow Lake, Albany  
Conley Bottom Resort – Lake Cumberland, Monticello  
Buck Creek Boat Dock – Lake Cumberland, Somerset  
Beaver Creek Marina – Lake Cumberland, Monticello  
Grider Hill Dock - Lake Cumberland, Albany  
State Dock – Lake Cumberland, Jamestown  
Jamestown Resort Marina – Lake Cumberland, Jamestown

Indian Hills Resort – Lake Cumberland, Russell Springs  
Burnside Marina - Lake Cumberland, Burnside  
Grove Marina – Laurel River Lake, Corbin  
Holly Bay Marina – Laurel River Lake, London  
Paintsville Lake State Park – Paintsville Lake, Paintsville  
Scott Creek Marina – Cave Run Lake, Morehead

*Houseboat manufacturers and builders include:*

Stardust Cruiser – Monticello  
Fantasy Custom Crafts – Monticello  
Horizon Yachts – Monticello  
Jamestown Inc. – Russell Springs  
Sharpe Houseboats Inc. – Somerset  
Fun Time Houseboats Inc. – Russell Springs  
Navigator Houseboats – Russell Springs  
Somerset Houseboats Inc. – Somerset  
Sunstar Houseboats Inc. – Monticello  
Thoroughbred Cruisers – Albany  
Admiral Houseboats – Russell Springs  
Lakeview Yachts – Monticello  
London Yachts – Hazard  
Majestic Yachts Inc. – Columbia  
Paradise Custom Yachts Inc. – London  
River Rat Boatworks – Irvine  
Sharpe Houseboats Inc. – Somerset

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