

Trend Reports boot 2018

The dream of living on board

Houseboats are a trend, as are houseboat holidays

To set up your dwelling place on water rather than on land is currently a big dream for many. Whether in an urban or a more idyllic setting, right in the city centre or closer to nature on a river or remote lake. Whether permanently or just for a certain amount of time. Accordingly, it is also a big issue at boot Düsseldorf from January 20th to 28th, 2018. Discover various concepts and ideas about "living on board" at the world's leading boat show, be inspired!

„Something is tickling my nose. I wake up, still sleepy, I open my eyes. It is the sun that falls diagonally through the floor-to-ceiling window. Reflections from the water's surface outside are dancing on the bright ceiling directly above me. Happily I turn over again. A boat drives by, the waves gently clatter against the pontoon below the bedroom window. Gulls are screaming, but now I look out into the bright summer morning, onto the glittering blue of the Flensburg Fjord beyond the low stone pier. One, two sailors are already out there, taking advantage of a gentle morning breeze. I brew the first coffee of the day in the galley, with a full view of the harbour and the fjord. Later, we will have breakfast on the small wooden deck just above the waterline and we will consider what to do with this wonderful, new day on the sea.“

This is what the dream of living on the water sounds like. Or close to this. Here, in one of the floating holiday homes on the Flensburg Fjord we can enjoy living on a houseboat for an extended weekend. And test if you are made for it. Once you have experienced this, it is most likely you will want to get more of it - maybe even to live on board permanently. Life on the water is inspiring and soothing at the same time, it is actually very close to land and yet feels far away at the same time. No wonder more and more people start thinking about it.

Once it all started quite pragmatically, rather out of necessity: In the Netherlands of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, when space for housing on land was scarce and a large number of small cargo ships were discharged from



20.-28.1.2018
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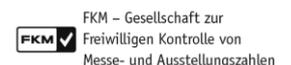
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service. In the early days, it was mostly old coastal cargo ships converted to residential vessels. Today, living on a houseboat is anything but easy or even cheap. The berths available in European cities are in great demand and expensive, and many residential ships are imaginative and technically complex refits that outshine many designer lofts.

Adding to this are a rising number of newly constructed houseboats, designed by architects, stylish and modern - to be seen in Amsterdam, Paris or London as well as in increasingly more ports along the coasts or inland waterways. In many cities of our neighbouring European countries houseboats and floating homes of all kinds have been a familiar sight in the cityscape for many decades, and almost always the surrounding parts of the city have grown more colourful, lively and attractive with the boats. We are not at that point in Germany yet. Yet, there are only a few houseboats in the big cities like Hamburg or Berlin, and it is apparently easier to find suitable berths in the smaller coastal towns; especially along the Baltic coast, there is a lot going on there.

From a technical point of view, the easier solution is to have a fixed berth for your houseboat and have it connected to the local supply and disposal networks. But politically it is rather more difficult. Simply because the demand for houseboat berths currently exceeds the supply by far. It is not always clear which local authority is responsible, and often areas directly adjacent to the water are designated as purely commercial areas in which residential homes are not permitted. Other hurdles are boat traffic, tidal range or nature conservation issues. On top of that, the licensing procedure for houseboat moorings is still new territory for the authorities, so the issue is often handled carefully and with great restraint.

It gets easier, if the houseboat is officially licensed as a recreational boat. In this case, for example, it can also be moored in marinas. However, this option also has its difficulties in terms of technical complexities: it is not always easy to connect to the supply and, above all, disposal lines. You may need either a wastewater tank on board that is emptied regularly or an on-board sewage treatment plant. And not every houseboat licensed officially as a "recreational boat" is actually suitable for navigation: a small outboard engine attached to a house on a rather large pontoon may just be



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enough to help manoeuvring if, for example, the berth has to be changed within a marina, but hardly for more navigation.

Whether it is to be a sports boat or a floating *real estate*, the question already decides about the "foundation" on which the floating home will be constructed. Options include floats made of seawater resistant aluminium or concrete. Both materials have their advantages, both are as good as maintenance free. For the sports boat option it would have to be aluminium, and a concrete float may be too heavy for some berths - after all, like so often, it is a question of the actual conditions and requirements. Solutions are as individual as the houseboats and their inhabitants.

Once again, everything changes when it comes to houseboats actually made for navigating on the water. These, obviously, have to be fully navigable and seaworthy ships, but equipped for permanent residence on board. Most popular in this category are converted inland cargo vessels, mainly from the Netherlands, but also from Belgium or France, which, at some 20 to 30 meters in length, eventually became too small to carry any freight profitably; but they are of ideal size to make a residence. They offer a lot of space on board and, with a little practice, they can even still be navigated. However, these ships may be 100 years or even older and not all of them are in perfect condition. Make absolutely sure to get an experts opinion before even thinking about signing a contract to buy such a boat. Several brokers, especially in the Netherlands, have specialized in the brokerage of such moving live-aboard vessels.

To try and test it, a good first step is to spend an extended holiday on a small, mobile holiday houseboat as offered for charter by many exhibitors in the Travel World in Hall 13 of boot Düsseldorf. Such a holiday houseboat is at about ten to 12 meters significantly smaller than real houseboats or floating homes for living aboard, but they also offer all the comfort that you can expect on boats of this size and for the purpose of a relaxing holiday cruise as a newcomer to houseboats.

Usually, houseboats offered for charter holidays feature a more or less standardised layout: At least two cabins with bunks, shower and toilet, a well-equipped kitchen or pantry, a cosy saloon as main living room, often with a good panoramic view of the outside. Most boats have a large outside



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deck area or terrace. Of course, there is electricity, hot and cold water as well as a heating system for cruises early or late in the season. Almost all boats feature a bathing platform or, at least, direct access to the water at the stern. Such boats are available for charter on many great European inland waterways like in Germany, the Netherlands, France, England, Poland or Ireland.



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About boot Düsseldorf:

boot Düsseldorf is the biggest boat and water sports trade fair in the world and is the place where all of the industry meets in January every year. Nearly 1,900 exhibitors, 50 per cent not from Germany, from more than 60 countries apart from Germany, will be presenting their interesting innovations, attractive developments and maritime equipment again from 20. to 28. January 2018. This means that the whole of the global market will be coming to Düsseldorf, to provide an exciting insight into the entire water sports world for the nine-day exhibition in 16 different halls. The trade fair is open from 10:00 to 18:00 every day. Admission tickets can be ordered online at www.boot.de and printed out conveniently at home. As an additional feature, they entitle ticket holders to use the Rhine-Ruhr public transport system free of charge up to price level D / South Region.



11. January 2018

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