

DRIFT AWAY

Houseboating is one of the best ways to spend your summer holidays on any budget – here's how

words **kate bowden**

The River Murray offers one of the most amazing holiday experiences in the world. Don't think so? You clearly haven't enjoyed a day swimming in its mineral-rich waters (leaving a film of Murray mud to rejuvenate your skin) and then spent a balmy summer evening lounging on the back deck of a houseboat, sipping a dry white. It's a divine experience.

And the best news is: river water levels are perfect right now. In the past decade, there was a prolonged drought and then, over the past two years, flooding – but now it's just right for doing exactly what you want to be doing: lazing about on deck, lolling about in the water and doing not much at all. Which is why I'm declaring 2012 the perfect time for all South Australians to pack their kit and skip aboard a houseboat – especially if you're unfamiliar with this liquid pursuit.

So grab your family and friends, choose the launch suitable for your crew number and the price you want to pay, load your supplies; it's time to meander down (or up!) the Murray at a pace Huck Finn would appreciate.

Peruse the following pages for a look at houseboating for all budgets. From the luxury splurge of the Paul Pruszinski-designed *Boatel*, or the all-conveniences-laid-on-with-hot-tub happiness of Brendan Taylor's *Flat White*, to the quick-escape-won't-break-the-bank Renmark-moored *Moving Waters*, there's a houseboat for everyone.

But the common thread linking all three options is the fail-safe slowing of the clock – just call it 'River Time'. You have nowhere to be but in the right now, on the river, so kick back and smell the... well, whatever you want to smell actually.

Find more houseboat info, visit southaustralia.com



BIG SPLENDOUR There's no skimping on the finer things on *Boatel*, with spacious bathrooms boasting glass-enclosed shower cubicles and a full-sized bath and king-sized bedrooms with panoramic windows to greet the river views



THE DREAM MACHINE FROM \$1285* PER NIGHT

Arriving at Mannum's *Boatel* by car feels like wearing thongs to a gala ball.

Designed by Adelaide architect Paul Pruszinski (best known for his Conservatory on Hindmarsh and Allegra Rendezvous projects in the CBD), this floating five-star hotel is the rock star of houseboating holidays.

The special treatment starts from the moment you step aboard and a very knowledgeable host, Jodie Shinnick, shows you through the myriad treats this boat has to offer luxury travellers.

There are upstairs and downstairs lounging areas, five king-sized bedrooms with ensuites, a drop-down cinema screen, a centrally controlled music system that filters through each and every room, state-of-the-art kitchen facilities, and even measured-out ingredients for a chocolate mud cake that can be popped into the outdoor barbecue for baking. Don't fancy cooking at all? Jodie will arrange a chef to send delicious prepared meals with you.

A built-in coffee machine awaits your interaction with it come morning, when the

water is still and calm and the sun has decided to say a shimmering hello. And what better way to reply than relaxing on the outdoor loungers with an espresso and a bite of toast preceding the obligatory cheese platter come late morning.

And then maybe think about launching your single or tandem canoe and taking a paddle to explore the area, checking out the banks and nosying around other people's holiday homes.

Suffice to say, this dream machine has more features than you can poke a stick at (should you be the type to poke sticks at shiny things). It even boasts a recording of Paul's voice to help you guide the boat into shore when you discover your perfect resting spot for the night.

It's this attention to detail that makes *Boatel* more than worth its asking price. It is the perfect splurge for a special occasion – or just because you can. Just remember to pack tissues for the tears when you vacate at the end of your stay.

dreamboatel.com.au, 8223 3030 *Price based on three-day weekend, maximum 10 guests



GO WITH THE FLOW There are plenty of entertainment options should the allure of a river view become tiresome (shame on you!) Plush sofas come in handy for an afternoon nap when the wine, cheese and sun take their toll