

POWELL HOUSEBOAT V

SEPTEMBER, 2017

The houseboat was reserved, names were drawn, an organizational meeting was held, some people's plans changed but others were added to the roster, and *Powell Houseboat 2017* was set to happen.

Captains Dave Hustvedt and Jud Hurd, and trip coordinator Sue Hughes would be joined by new members Annabel Saunders and her husband John Anderson, Ann Marie Odasz, Julie Pfannenstein, and Karen Amundson. Old-timers Marsha Dougherty, Brian Hunter, and George and Jen Ottenhoff would round out the dozen.

They met in Page, although Julie stayed home at the last minute because of hip problems and Brian returned to Denver after a fender-bender on the way out.

Karen and Marsha dropped Marsha's dog off at a kennel in Clifton and listened to a Hillerman novel set in Navajo country to get some local flavor. Sue rode with Jud; Dave drove all day from before daylight after a birthday party at home; Ann Marie came in from visiting friends; and Annabel and John left their horses and livestock in Westcliff in care of her father from England. George and Jen arrived happy to know they'd be staying at a motel in town because the weather in Page was blustery and much colder than expected.



The campers helped each other pitch their tents in the wind and Dave and Ann Marie decided to sleep in their cars. Then they all met at the bar in the marina for a get-acquainted dinner. The night was so cold and windy they wondered how the weather would be on the water.

They met at the dock the next morning an hour too early, because they were still on Utah time and the rental office was on Arizona time! But it was sunny and the wind had died down, so nobody seemed to mind.

New member Karen Amundson sent in the following account of her Lake Powell experience. She's canoed for years and been very active with Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, but this was her first time paddling on a kayak club houseboat trip.

RMSKC'S HOUSEBOAT TRIP ON LAKE POWELL OUT OF WAHWEAP

By Karen Amundson

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: We packed up our camping gear, had breakfast at the marina, and parked to unload. I paid an employee on an ATV with trailer bins to take stuff to M25, our 53-foot houseboat, while others used the hand carts that were available. Then we stacked our two kayaks on Marsha's wheels and hauled them down to the dock. All ten sea kayaks were hooked by carabiner to a rope and pulled to the top deck of the houseboat.

Jud and Dave, our boat captains, backed the boat out of its slip. We travelled upriver at 7mph to Marker 52 to get to Oak Canyon [A on the map on page 50]. This is farther than usual for an RMSKC's trip, but we had used Castle Rock Cut to skip eight miles and we were excited about seeing the nearby Rainbow Bridge [★ on the map].

Marsha and I were in charge of dinner for that night; we served hors d'oeuvres of tomatoes caprese and beets with blue cheese about 4:00. The captains checked three spots to land—one was too shallow, one too rocky, and one just right other than being weak in the tent site category—before pulling in at the last open place in that bay due to our late arrival.

About 6:00 we served a Greek halibut dinner with spaghetti squash and grilled veggies (all veggies from my garden). The four single ladies, Marsha, Sue, Ann Marie and I, set up tents just as it was turning dark, and all the others slept on the big boat. (In addition to the six aforementioned people, we had Annabel and John from Westcliffe as our youngest members, and enjoyed their accents and phrases because they were from England. George and Jen rounded out the crew with their pleasant personalities.)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: In the morning we got up and crowded the kitchen—oven, microwave, toaster, two refrigerators, and a giant cooler and grill on the front deck—to make our individual breakfasts.

We then packed our lunches and other goodies into the downloaded sea kayaks and took off for Rainbow Bridge. We paddled out of Oak Canyon, then west in the main lake channel, then south in Forbidding Canyon and finally southeast in Rainbow Bridge Canyon.



The kitchen at a quieter moment



The channel marker for Rainbow Bridge National Monument

We arrived at a major dock, but skirted it and went to the end of the water, where we had to bushwhack to get up to the tourist trail that went a fourth of a mile to the impressive Rainbow Bridge.



The trail to the arch

It is one of the biggest natural bridges in the world and incredibly gorgeous. Jen had wanted to see it since finding out about it in high school. The 14-mile paddle was a life record for her and lots more than she'd expected. Actually, it was a long first day's paddle for all of us.

You can access the Bridge via trails (avoiding the lake travel) from two different directions, but both of these are backpack trips of about 35 miles round trip. The lake is the most convenient method, and many tour boats come here from Wahweap. On our way out from the Bridge we were hit by lots of waves from various big boats and then hit by waves again as they reflected off of the narrow canyon walls. It was very challenging, and we discussed the situation after dinner and planned to paddle as a more compact group going forward.

On the way home Marsha and I also explored Secret Canyon, about half a mile of its 1.5 mile length. Dave cooked salmon, halibut, and venison shish kabobs for dinner, all of which he captured himself prior to the trip.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: We did Twilight Canyon after starting with a safety talk. This time Marsha was the lead and Dave was sweep.

We crossed the main lake channel in formation and entered the narrow canyon to explore. We got to a tight tributary canyon on the left and followed it until we were blocked by a 12' log and John hopped out to move it. The hike would have needed some technical moves, so we all backed out. A few of us had knocked down to half paddles due to the narrow passage.

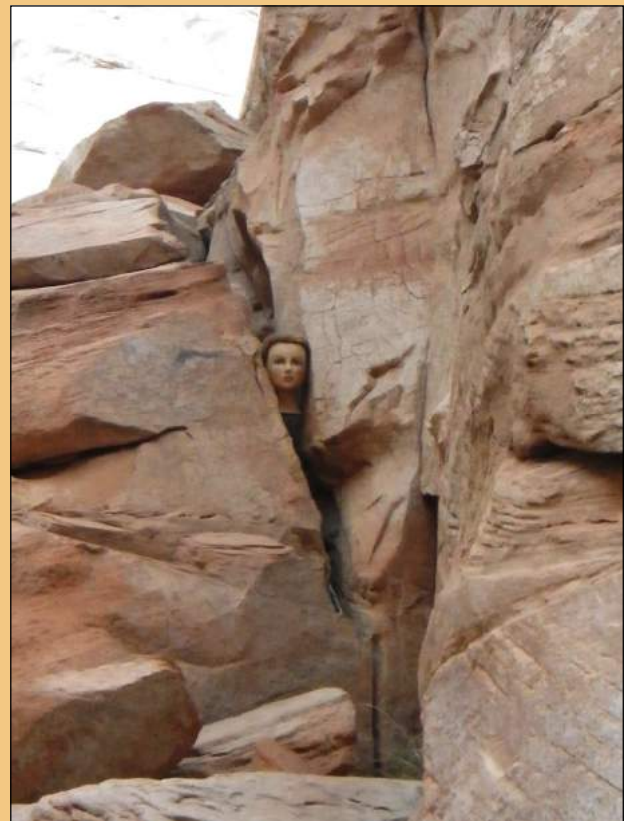


Crossing the channel in formation to make ourselves more visible to motor traffic



John moving the log out of our way

Then we went up the right arm and when the water ended we hiked to a sunny spot for lunch. It was a beautiful canyon. On the way out Dave showed us a mannequin head wedged 12' up on the wall, and that was kind of spooky.



We did eight miles of paddling, so then had a long afternoon at the houseboat. We watched helicopters scoop up water, probably for a small fire somewhere south of us. Sue served three kinds of tamales and a salad, with

Mexican rice that Jud made. Her rum cake was wonderful and we used it to help celebrate Marsha's big six-Ohhh birthday.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27: We got up to thunder and took down the tents just as it started to rain. We skipped the short kayak to a Moki steps hike that we'd planned, put the kayaks up top, pulled up sand anchors, and disembarked. Then we stopped at a nearby WC and pumped out the waste tank.

We motored back toward Wahweap in a drizzly/driving rain. We only saw a few boats moving, and had an engine losing power because of air in the fuel line. We stopped at the Dangling Rope Marina to get input on the issue, which Dave was able to work around, and bought paper towels, souvenirs, and junk food.



The Birthday Girl getting the weather report in Oak Canyon



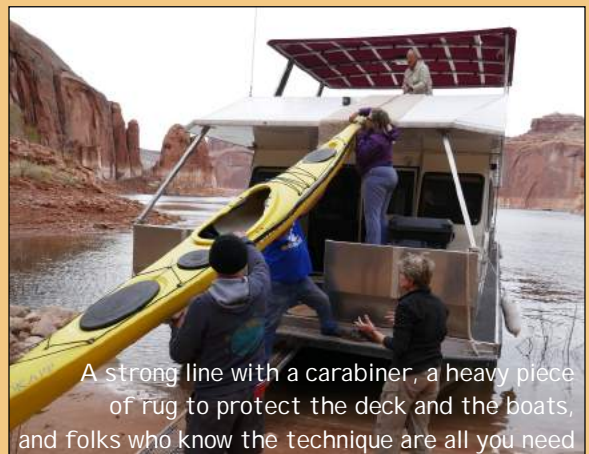
John and Dave fussing with the engine



A chilly day on the dock at Dangling Rope: Karen, George, Jen, Annabel and John, who is wearing his paddling raingear called a cagoule



Sue carrying the line along the catwalk to the back tie-off after the anchor was set



A strong line with a carabiner, a heavy piece of rug to protect the deck and the boats, and folks who know the technique are all you need

We pulled into shore behind Madonna Arch [B], partway up Dry Rock Creek Canyon, sank the four anchors, unloaded the boats, leveled some spots and set up a few tents. Then five of us paddled to the end of the Dry Rock Creek Canyon, 5.2 miles roundtrip. We spotted four arches and a cool balanced rock. Jen and George cooked up tasty tortellini with a broccoli salad and sautéed pears for dessert.



Marsha's paddle held aloft was the signal to group up before we moved out into the larger water of Rock Creek Bay; the arrow points to the tip of Madonna Arch, which looks more like its namesake from the other side

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28: The day was sunny and lots warmer than Wednesday. We split into two groups with George, Jen and Dave doing the nearby Dry Rock Creek Canyon and the rest of us going over to Middle Rock Creek Canyon, about a six mile paddle. Then three people continued to a short side canyon that we had missed the prior day, and the rest headed back to the houseboat for a leisurely lunch.

John jumped off the houseboat for a swim. The water was a reasonable temperature but the outside air was 8 to 10 degrees cooler than the norm for late September, so you never knew if you would warm up after getting wet.

That evening he and Annabel cooked a flavorful mushroom stroganoff, a pot of mixed vegetables and three kinds of cake for dessert.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29: Seven of us headed to Rock Creek Bay and up its largest arm while Jen, George, and Dave did the Middle Rock Creek where they saw three Desert Bighorn Sheep.

The larger group followed the shoreline and found a couple of cool, deep side canyons. Jud and Ann Marie headed back to the boat to cook but Marsha, Annabel, John, Sue and I went almost to the end of the wide canyon and then came down the other side to a wonderful lunch spot.

Several people had picked up trash on our travels, but Marsha collected a small sand anchor here as well as a foot-long fish cage two days before.



John and Ann Marie in the "car cave" on the wall across from our campsite that became a landmark for us

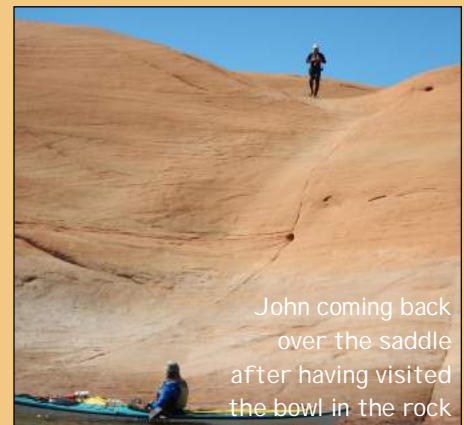
Leaving our lunch spot we came to a large bowl in a rock wall that Annabel wanted to explore.

John tried to climb into it from his kayak but the rock was too vertical and too smooth, so he got back into his boat and we went



John's first attempt getting out of his boat

around the bend. There we found a spot where he could get out on a flatter incline. Up and over the saddle he went to look into the depression. He said it had evidence of animal hangouts and a small tree.



John coming back over the saddle after having visited the bowl in the rock

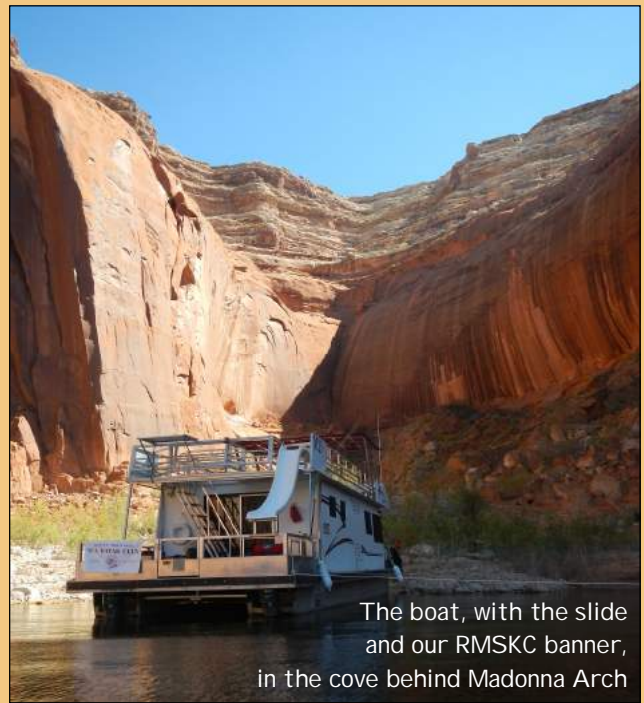
The five of us did 14.5 miles. I only had enough stamina for this because we kept a fairly slow, exploratory pace.

Back at the houseboat, it was the warmest day yet so I went for a swim and also went down the slide. I was pretty new to sea kayaking and had never done a Lake Powell trip, so I felt pretty flush with success.

Jud treated us to a great Brunswick Stew with jalapeño cornbread, and homemade lemon cake with lemon curd. We had our second campfire, with Dave adding dead tumbleweed-like bushes that burst into fireworks patterns.



Fire Marshal Dave monitoring our campfire



The boat, with the slide and our RMSKC banner, in the cove behind Madonna Arch

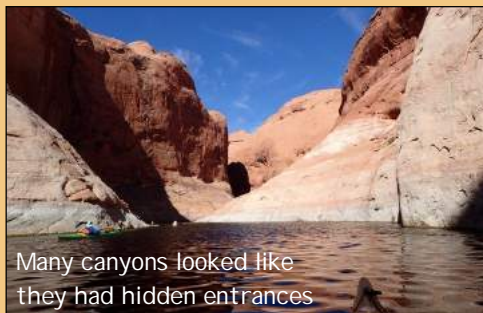
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: We reluctantly pointed the houseboat toward Wahweap Bay and headed to port with the heavier weekend traffic.

Our South Lake Powell maps had information on 96 side canyons, so it was sad that we had only been able to explore seven of them. I can see how sea kayaking

with a houseboat on Lake Powell could become an addiction, and I am hoping to do more of these supported trips with good food and canyon paddles. It costs more than a week of river paddling, but is a steal compared to similar commercial trips. [The total was about \$360 per person for the boat, gas, insurance and the shared dinners.]



Silhouetted paddlers



Many canyons looked like they had hidden entrances

PHOTO CREDITS: The dramatic image on the cover of this account was sent to Marsha by a fellow who recognized us at the Wahweap Marina as the subjects of a photo he'd taken from the drone he was operating around Madonna Arch. We think the four kayak dots were John, Marsha, Sue and Karen, on their way back to the houseboat after their paddle up Dry Rock Creek Canyon on the first afternoon we were docked there.

[NB: The NPS does not permit drones or Dave would have brought his. <https://www.dartdrones.com/blog/can-you-fly-drones-national-parks/>]

The other pictures were taken by the people on the trip; everyone sent in at least a handful of their favorites.