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Above: Explore Penn Cove on the Suva, a restored schooner that sailed the same waters a century ago. Right: Sail Bainbridge offers several different excursions.

# SUMMER OF AQUATIC BLISS

DIVE INTO DIVERSE DELIGHTS

BY GREG FREITAS & NATALIE COMPAGNO

*On board, I'm the captain  
So climb aboard  
We'll search for tomorrow  
On every shore  
—Styx, "Come Sail Away"*

**A** defining feature of our Pacific Northwest experience is access to endless water. Islands and lakes along with rivers and waterfalls dot the expanse surrounded by the vast Salish Sea and Pacific Ocean. As summer warms the coastal waters, visions of tycoons on sleek yachts, or James Bond, speeding away on a Cigarette 35 Café Racer, fill our heads. But to paraphrase Ice-T, "Yachtin' ain't easy."

To celebrate this summer of aquatic bliss, we rounded up providers that deliver all the nautical thrills at a fraction of the overhead. Along the way you can also encounter indigenous lands, marine mammals, and distant islands.

## SAIL AWAY

*Let me sail, let me sail  
Let the Orinoco flow  
Let me reach, let me beach  
On the shores of Tripoli  
—Enya, "Orinoco Flow"*

Capt. Ben Doerr has more than 5,000 miles of sailing experience, from Seattle to San Diego, and from Key West to Bermuda to the North Sea. This summer marks his ninth season running **Sail Bainbridge** on **Bainbridge Island**. "We live in this magical place where being on the water offers a lot that people aren't always aware of," Doerr says. "We're here to share all of that."

Sail Bainbridge's ship, True, is an impressive 44-foot Pearson Countess

Ketch, designed by renowned naval architect John Alden, who is famous for working on the classic schooners of the 1930s and 1940s. The rugged vessel navigates seas adroitly, ensuring safety and smooth sailing for all on board. Below decks, True is equipped with a dining salon, galley, hot water shower, and a private cabin.

Itineraries run the gamut, from a two-hour, half-day, or sunset sail, to a blissful overnight at anchor bookended by two full days at sea. Ambitious would-be sailors can book a custom adventure through the glorious **San Juan Islands** for a minimum four-night adventure of a lifetime. Capt. Ben has garnered uniformly excellent reviews, so be sure to book well ahead. "What we've worked hard to craft over the last near-decade is an experience where our guests can fully connect with Puget Sound," Doerr says. "It's about the sailing, sure, but it's also about the abundance of wildlife, from arctic terns to orcas."

## CLOSE TO HOME

*As the son of a son of a sailor  
I went out on the sea for adventure  
Expanding the view of the captain and crew  
Like a man just released from indenture  
—Jimmy Buffett, "Son of a Son of a Sailor"*

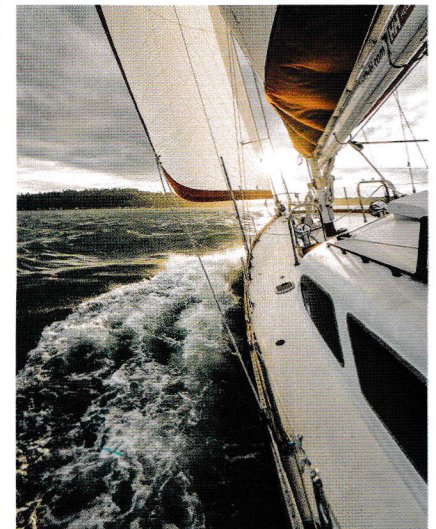
To call **Boatsetter** the Airbnb of boats undersells the service — no condo or house can travel the nautical miles that Boatsetter's fleet of yachts and boats covers. Primarily, it is a platform that brings owners, operators, guests, and captains together. The listings are all vetted, and guests can find the right boat for any occasion, from zodiacs to yachts, with a USCG-certified captain or expert guides.

The platform attracts a wide range of participants, from avid fishermen to those just looking to share maritime frolics with family and friends. CEO Michael Farb also feels passionate about the water, listing Lake Tahoe and the sandbars off Miami Beach as two of his favorites. "For Seattle specifically, being on and near the water is a way of life," Farb says. "Getting on a boat offers both locals and tourists a new perspective to explore the city and the Pacific Northwest."

The best thing about Boatsetter is that it allows guests to curate their own unique experience on the water. Whether it's exploring **Puget Sound**, indulging in salmon fishing, taking a leisurely cruise around **Lake Union** with views of the **Space Needle**, going sailing for the first time, or enjoying watersports on **Lake Washington**, guests can find a boat for any on-the-water experience.

Other boat clubs in the region include **Carefree Boat Club**, **Freedom Boat Club**, and **FunShare Boat Club**, with locations on Lake Washington and Lake Union.

If you're a seasoned Seattleite, you've most likely enjoyed a Duffy boat on the water. **Duffy Electric Boats** rent quiet, peaceful, easy to operate vessels for groups of up to 12. Shove off directly on Lake Union, or on Lake Washington from **Kirkland**, **Renton**, or with a new service launching this summer from **Bellevue**, on picturesque **Meydenbauer Bay**.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF SUVA, COURTESY OF SAIL BAINBRIDGE

Discover the majestic islands and waters of British Columbia with Pacific Yellowfin Charters.



For a massive summer blowout party, a personal milestone, or a birthday ending in zero, Capt. Kevin welcomes you aboard the private luxury yacht *Chillin'* through the **Four Seasons Hotel Seattle**. The customizable adventure aboard the magnificent 85-foot motor yacht accommodates up to 12 guests. Seasonal excursions to the San Juans provide opportunities for whale watching, beachcombing, and unforgettable marine moments. The talented chefs at the Four Seasons effortlessly bring their culinary prowess, ensuring dining memories that last.

### WHIDBEY ISLAND

*Flocking to the sea  
Crowds of people wait for me  
Seagulls scavenge steal ice cream  
Worries vanish  
Within my dream*  
—Morcheeba, “The Sea”

Travelers love **Whidbey Island** for its old-timey nautical ambiance, and the tradition continues in **Coupeville**, aboard the historic **Schooner Suva**. Explore picturesque **Penn Cove** and neighboring waterways aboard the meticulously restored vessel, originally constructed in 1925. After years of absence, Suva has returned to her home waters, poised to offer sailings departing from the historic **Coupeville Wharf**.

### NORTH OF THE BORDER

In Canada, the waterway in between **Vancouver Island** and the mainland, the **Strait of Georgia**, served as the local waters for the First Nations people for millennia. Embark on a journey north to **Campbell River** to delve into the rich indigenous heritage of the region, and engage with the **Homalco First Nation** community. Despite being displaced from their ancestral lands in the late 20th century, the Homalco people are actively shaping a new narrative for their future.

Arrange a reservation for the **People Water Land** excursion offered by **Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours** in Campbell River, an immersive five-hour voyage by boat. Accompanied by knowledgeable guides, your expedition will make a stop at **Church House** on the mainland, where the remnants of the ancient village stand as poignant reminders of the past.

Trek through the area to envisage this bygone era before embarking on an exhilarating boat ride back, accompanied by seals, whales, and soaring eagles. With no extra fanfare, the guides let the simple purity of the experience underscore the historical and natural significance of the voyage.

**Pacific Yellowfin Charters** from **Vancouver, B.C.**, presents a unique opportunity to embark on luxury expeditions with Capt. Colin, through some of the most jaw-dropping scenery in British Columbia. Restored with care and attention to detail, the lovingly refurbished 1943 yacht **Pacific Yellowfin** transports travelers. Put on your hiking shoes to explore **Cortes Island**, then walk in the footsteps of the ancient First Nations tribes by going clam digging in **Mansons Landing Lagoon**, which is renowned for its abundant clams. Other possible expedition highlights include kayaking in **Squirrel Cove**, wildlife sightings of bears and wolves, or taking a refreshing dip in the freshwater lake at **Cassel Falls**.

### INLAND NORTHWEST

Pacific Northwest landlubbers are never far from the legendary **Columbia River** or its many tributaries. Pinkies up for a wine tasting adventure on the water, with **Water2Wine Cruises** aboard the opulent 74-foot yacht **M/V West Star**, cruising the Columbia in the **Tri-Cities** wine region. Guests may choose between a leisurely 90-minute daytime excursion or an extended two-and-a-half-hour sunset cruise, with options for meals and occasional live music. ■