

Welcome to...
Berger Houseboat Holidays!

Tweed Heads - Gold Coast

Australia



RW & SE Berger

Trading as "Berger Houseboat Holidays"

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OPPORTUNITY

The opportunity to own a life style and business combined is rare and to combine that with a "sea change" is even rarer. Houseboat operations of this quality don't come up for sale very often and Berger Houseboats operates from one of the most desirable regions in Australia. With great temperate weather, close proximity to airports, some of the worlds' best beaches and extremely flexible working hours, this certainly is a life style business.



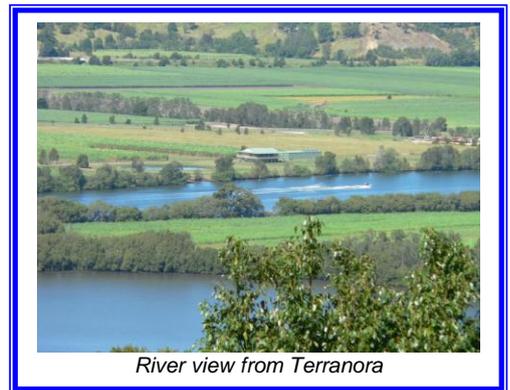
Pacific Blue beside Ukerebagh Island

Utilizing the benefits of modern technology such as mobile phones and tablets, your work areas are extremely flexible. This gives you the freedom to still run a business whilst away from the area; you can still answer emails and take bookings even when not in the office. We are proud that we have established procedures so the business is set up in such a way that the owners do not need to be onsite for the day to day operations if you choose.

Berger Houseboats has two service vessels permanently in the water at the marina and the principals can still run the business whilst soaking up the beautiful atmosphere. Imagine being able to just walk down the marina, jump in a boat and go fishing or cruising. Treat your friends to a day out on a houseboat, a spot of fishing or swimming. Be the envy of your friends. Your parties can take on a whole new flavour, with the unique environment of floating on the water

Berger Houseboats operates on the Tweed River in northern New South Wales, just south of the Queensland border and the bright lights and excitement of the Gold Coast. Experience the clean white beaches of Tweed Heads and the tranquil waters and bird life around the inlets, bays, broadwaters and islands of the Tweed River.

The customers of a houseboat holiday business are greatly different from those of most businesses. Remember, they are all going on a holiday and a houseboat holiday is one of the most relaxing holidays you can take, so our customers generally arrive and leave in a relaxed frame of mind. The beautiful Tweed is an uncluttered, peaceful river with an abundance of bird life, nature reserves and tranquil waterholes. There is an array of shops, galleries, museums, clubs and taverns dotted all along the riverbank, fully accessible by our tenders which are supplied with the hire of the houseboats.



River view from Terranora

Berger Houseboats is fully staffed, and a new owner would simply slot into the role of management without the requirement of any boating skills. What could be simpler? We have long-term casual staff and contractors including cleaners, handy men and three experienced boat drivers who pilot the houseboats to and from the marina. Our current staff are all eager to continue working for Berger Houseboats under new ownership.



Image Anne and Wanderer at Dodd's Island

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BACKGROUND

THE BUSINESS

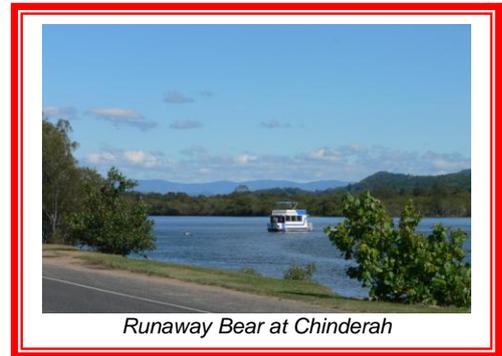
The business was established in 1994 with the construction of the 12-berth houseboat "Image Anne".



In 2000 the 4-berth houseboat "Runaway Bear" was offered to the business to be operated under management. Runaway Bear was subsequently purchased in 2001.

In 2002 the fleet was expanded to four with the addition of "Sundancer" and "Pluto", 12 and 6 berth respectively – both being operated under management. (See additional information on management of houseboats page #6.)

In 2003 the fleet was progressively expanded with a further four vessels to be operated under management.



The fleet has up-graded several times with retirement of older vessels and the addition of larger more modern houseboats. This assists in keeping the business fresh, with up-to-date vessels and giving new choices to customers. The business currently operates with a fleet of ten (10) houseboats – seven owned by the proprietors and three others under management for owners.

Owned by Vendors	Under Management
Pacific Blue – 12 berth Spa boat	JFS Rhyanna – 8 berth (surveyed for 12 – sleeping 8)
Kalinda – 12 berth	Misty Blue – 9 berth
Blue Bayou – 12 berth	Pluto – 6 berth
Gypsea Belle – 12 berth	
Image Anne – 12 berth	
Wanderer – 6 berth (surveyed for 12 – sleeping 10)	
Runaway Bear – 4 berth	

The business currently has the use of six berths on the Tweed Marina – 3 x 20m and 3 x 12m, allowing eight or nine of the vessels to be docked at the jetty at any one time. The business also owns two swing moorings, one large and one small. Negotiations are also underway for a new floating berth in the Southern Boatharbour to cater for an additional two vessels. We are also tendering to Council for another available 12m berth at the marina.



Licence at the marina permits operation of 1.5 houseboats per berth and as two of our 20m berths are counted as two, we technically have 8 berths which allows up to 12 houseboats in the fleet.

Securing the extra berth at the marina will allow expansion to 13 houseboats.



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Staffing

Staffing currently consists of:

- operations manager/captain – 1
- captain – 1
- maintenance officer/captain – 1
- captain/maintenance – 1
- administration – 1
- meet & greet – 1
- inside cleaners – 6
- outside cleaners – 5

Our operations manager and the maintenance officer are both full time, both of whom double-up as captains and briefing officers. The captain is on 30 hours per week working from Friday to Monday to cover any weekend boat movements and call outs. Additional maintenance/captain is on casual generally working three or four days per week – more or less as required.

Administration staff: 9am-3pm for Monday-Thursday for one staff member. With Sue Ellen also conducting a BAS services businesses, there are many hours spent working for her clients that would otherwise be applied to the houseboat business.

Our meet and greet team member works on the marina for our turn-around days (normally Mondays and Fridays). Dealing with our guests, checking presentation of the vessels and directing the cleaning staff ensuring that they are working efficiently. The following days (normally Tuesdays and Saturdays) this team member works back at the office organising the linen and other jobs.

Our cleaning staff are a mixture of contractors and casual staff. These workers are generally only required on turnaround days, ie Mondays and Fridays and occasionally when there is extra work either additional cleaning on the boats or hull cleaning when boats are up on the slip.

All the vessels have sewage retention tanks in compliance with Maritime requirements. All vessels are in full survey with in and out-of-water inspections carried out regularly.

Each houseboat has its' own tender and the business has another two vessels to use as service vessels.



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THE FLEET

See website <http://www.bergerhouseboats.com.au/> for further information and photographs of the fleet.



Pacific Blue – Spa boat



Gypsea Belle



Kalinda



Image Anne



Blue Bayou

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THE FLEET

See attached booklet for further information and photographs of the fleet.



JFS Rhyanna



Pluto



Misty Blue



Runaway Bear



Wanderer

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OPERATING STRUCTURE

The houseboat firm is owned and managed by the partnership of Robert William and Sue Ellen Berger.

Both partners come from multi-generational local families and have no intention of leaving this lovely area.

Robert comes from a small crop farming background with very little formal education beyond sixth class public schooling.

Sue Ellen comes from an office background with training in computer programming and several years of office work in accountancy and consultancy firms.

Management controls all facets of operations including marketing, vessel allocation, staff rostering and financial management.

Berger Houseboats employs an operations manager, boat drivers and maintenance persons and administration staff on a mixture of full-time, casual and part time basis. Cleaners are engaged on a combination of casual and contract basis.



MANAGEMENT OF HOUSEBOATS

Like most houseboat companies, Berger Houseboats does not own all of the houseboats in the fleet. The day to day operations and maintenance of these vessels is controlled by the business and the owners rarely have anything to do with the houseboats other than a little maintenance and occasional private use.

Management of vessels allows expansion of the fleet without capital outlay.

More details are available for genuinely interested buyers.

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THE COMPETITION

Including Berger Houseboats, there are two houseboat businesses operating on the Tweed River. The other business also operates from Tweed Heads with five houseboats.

The Tweed Heads based business is considerably smaller and has not expanded in many years, in fact, the fleet size has been reduced over the last couple of years. This business has similar operations to Berger Houseboats however their occupancy rate is considerably lower. Berger Houseboats consistently has a much higher percentage of vessels on hire.

Berger Houseboats also has the only 12-berth houseboat (Image Anne) on the Tweed River that is able to travel all the way to Murwillumbah.

Berger Houseboats also owns the only luxury 12 berth houseboat on the river with a large spa aboard.



Gypsea Belle and Kalinda beside Ukerabah Island

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MARKETING

The success of a houseboat business is heavily dependent on a comprehensive marketing strategy.

The main focus of marketing is towards the south-eastern Queensland market eg Toowoomba, Brisbane, Gold and Sunshine Coasts. There is a market in the local area which has not been tapped to interest new comers to the area in houseboating.

Essential elements of the marketing and promotion include:-

- (i) Website with great organic ranking with search engines. (domain name 19 years old)
- (ii) Social media: FaceBook (4748 followers), Google+, Instagram
- (iii) Various online directories for additional search rankings
- (iv) Email mailing list for direct contact with both previous customers, people who have enquired and others who have requested to join our mailing list
- (v) Extensive radio advertising campaigns
- (vi) Focus on customer service is a feature of all contact with guests
- (vii) Advertising in local magazines and papers, eg local tv guide, local gossip magazine, wedding planner and Brisbane and Northern NSW newspapers
- (v) Participation in Australia-wide promotions by the Tweed Tourism Body, Destination Tweed
- (vi) Brochure Distribution to Agents
- (vii) Brochure stands in local businesses
- (viii) Brochure boards
- (ix) Periodic promotional stands at trade shows and events, eg Toowoombah and Lismore Regional Agricultural Shows
- (x) Promotional mail outs to previous customers
- (xi) Extensive database from previous enquirers for promotional ventures



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EXPANSION PLANS

We believe after over 24 years with the same owners, new owners will bring fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm and this great business can be taken to the next level. There are considerable opportunities to expand the business well beyond its present level. The introduction of another up-to-date vessel or two in keeping with what has been happening at Berger Houseboats and the sky is the limit.

The Tweed Marina offers a degree of professionalism not previously available. With the facilities available and the new and future infrastructure planned for the Tweed River, there is an excellent opportunity to further upgrade the fleet and increase occupancy.

Tweed Shire Council, the local Government Authority for the Tweed, is working to identify current and future infrastructure requirements for recreational boating in the Tweed River with the aim of promoting the river as a desirable destination and marine service centre for recreational boating from outside the area.

The recent provision of a large floating jetty at Chinderah for instance, this will be a great boom to houseboat customers wishing to visit the village or pop ashore for a meal, adding to the experience of our customers.

The next logical step to take is to replace Sundancer, which has been retired from the fleet, with a more up-to-date vessel and replace one of the medium sized vessels with a vessel of a larger capacity. This increases the turnover of the business without increasing the fleet size and thus not incurring any additional berthing fees. With a fleet capacity of 12, there is immediate room for the addition of a new vessel.

The Tweed River is a beautiful river system and has much to offer both visitors and locals and what better way to see a river than by cruising its' waters on a houseboat!



Pacific Blue at Tumbulgum with Mount Warning in the back ground

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The business started with one vessel, the Image Anne, constructed here on the Tweed specifically for the business.

By 2004 the fleet had expanded to eight vessels (see Background) and turnover had increased sharply, not only because of the expansion of the fleet, but because Berger Houseboats was by now an established business, recognised as such in and beyond the South East Queensland area.

Currently the net operating profit provides a reasonable salary for the working proprietors and an attractive return on capital employed.

We guard our financial details closely, but recognise the need to make them available if we wish to dispose of the business.

Comprehensive financial information will be made available to a genuinely interest buyer.

We have enjoyed the spoils of owning a houseboat business; with the late starts or not even working on rainy days. Where can you find a job that for most of the week you set the start time and the knock off time, you can go home for morning tea and lunch, sit and talk to tourists at work and yes, get paid to chinwag. Rob has particularly like knowing that even when he is in town talking to people, the business is still working making money. Even when we personally are not productive, the business does not stop.



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TANGIBLE ASSETS

Houseboats: Pacific Blue, Kalinda, Blue Bayou, Gypsea Belle, Image Anne, Wanderer and Runaway Bear



“Thunderberg I” – 11ft flat bottom ’ tinny with 15hp outboard ideal work boat for around the marina precinct and works well with the smaller houseboats on turnaround days – commercially registered

“Migaloo” – 5 meter Boston whaler with a 115hp Yamaha 4 stroke outboard – commercially registered

Bushman 12’ tender x 9

Bushman 10’ tender x 1

FT60 Yamaha 4 stroke

FT60 extra long gearbox

F80 gearbox

6hp Mercury

5hp Yamaha 2015

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15hp Yamaha x 1

3hp outboard motors x 7

4 kayak's in great condition

2kva Honda generator 2015 model

Service trailer – 8x5 pantech, sign written trailer, custom designed including racks for outboard motors, oars, etc, containing service tools, cleaning equipment, ropes, hoses, pumps, filters, spare parts, etc

Kubota motor from Pacific Blue generator (damaged but good for parts)

Outdoor heater

Linen supply including spare blankets, doonas, mattress protectors, pillows, etc



Trolleys x 5 (great quality, custom designed for use at the marina for carting equipment, etc and for customers to cart luggage to vessels)

Miscellaneous houseboat equipment: eg spare parts, cleaning products, paints, oars, lifejackets, airless spray gun for antifoul, etc

Replacement items such as mugs, saucepans, acrylic glasses, mattresses, vario bed, life jackets

Extensive database – previous customers and enquirers

Massive photographic collection

Brochures & flyers

Website

Jerry cans \geq 30

Gas bottles (galvanised) x 10 spares

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROPRIETORS

Operating a houseboat business means working in an outgoing, friendly atmosphere. You meet many people, and you see them at their best... on holiday!

Some guests come back time and time again and you become friends with them, we joke around with them and really have a good time. The ideal candidates to purchase this business would be those that could maintain this friendly atmosphere. People are looking for a holiday, they want to enjoy themselves and deal with friendly people.

You don't need to have prior experience, our current staff know the routines and new owners could soon sort out where they would like to fit in. When we started, we hardly knew anything on how to run a houseboat business, nothing about management rights and nothing about boats. What we have learned in this business is astonishing and the whole process has been enjoyable.



We have had a lot of fun over the years and the decision to sell has not been taken lightly. This is a family business and has been part of our lives for many years however Rob's ill health has meant that we need to reassess our lives and we decided that we have done our part in establishing a successful business and being responsible for the provision of facilities on the river. We would be delighted to see someone step in and take over the business supporting its growth and expanding on its potential.



A picturesque river system