

Aboard a Floating Cottage

A houseboat lets you combine relaxation and exploration

By Rob and Wendy Lindsay

Splish! The sound of something hitting the water startled me from reading in the pre-breakfast sunshine on our houseboat's top deck. Was it one of our crew going for a dip or something falling overboard? No. Rising from the water, a dripping fish in its talons, was an osprey. The aerial fisherman sailed away on its broad brown wings,

white head visible against the blue sky. Silence returned to the cove as rings of ripples spread across the water's mirrored surface.

The previous day, our two friends and fellow boaters, "Swimmer J" and "Bob the Swab," had helped my husband, "Captain Rob," and I load what seemed like a month's supply of groceries,

bedding, and overnight bags aboard a 40-foot Seahawk houseboat at Egan Houseboat Rentals in Omeme, ON, near the southern end of Pigeon Lake in the heart of the Kawartha Lakes region, about a two-hour drive northeast of Toronto.

Ontario's Trent-Severn Waterway offers 386 kilometres (240 miles) of lakes, rivers, and canals to explore.

Along the waterway, which stretches from Lake Ontario north through the Kawartha Lakes and Lake Simcoe to Georgian Bay, are 45 locks that raise and lower boats from one water level to another, bypassing rapids and waterfalls. Our modest plan was a four-day houseboat cruise from Pigeon Lake through three sets of locks to Burleigh Falls on Stony Lake and back again—under 60 kilometres (40 miles) but a longer voyage on the water using nautical charts.

A houseboat looks like a small house trailer on pontoons, propelled by a 115-horsepower inboard/outboard engine at the stern. It is not fast-moving. As in a trailer, every-

thing is compact, with stowage space in every conceivable corner.

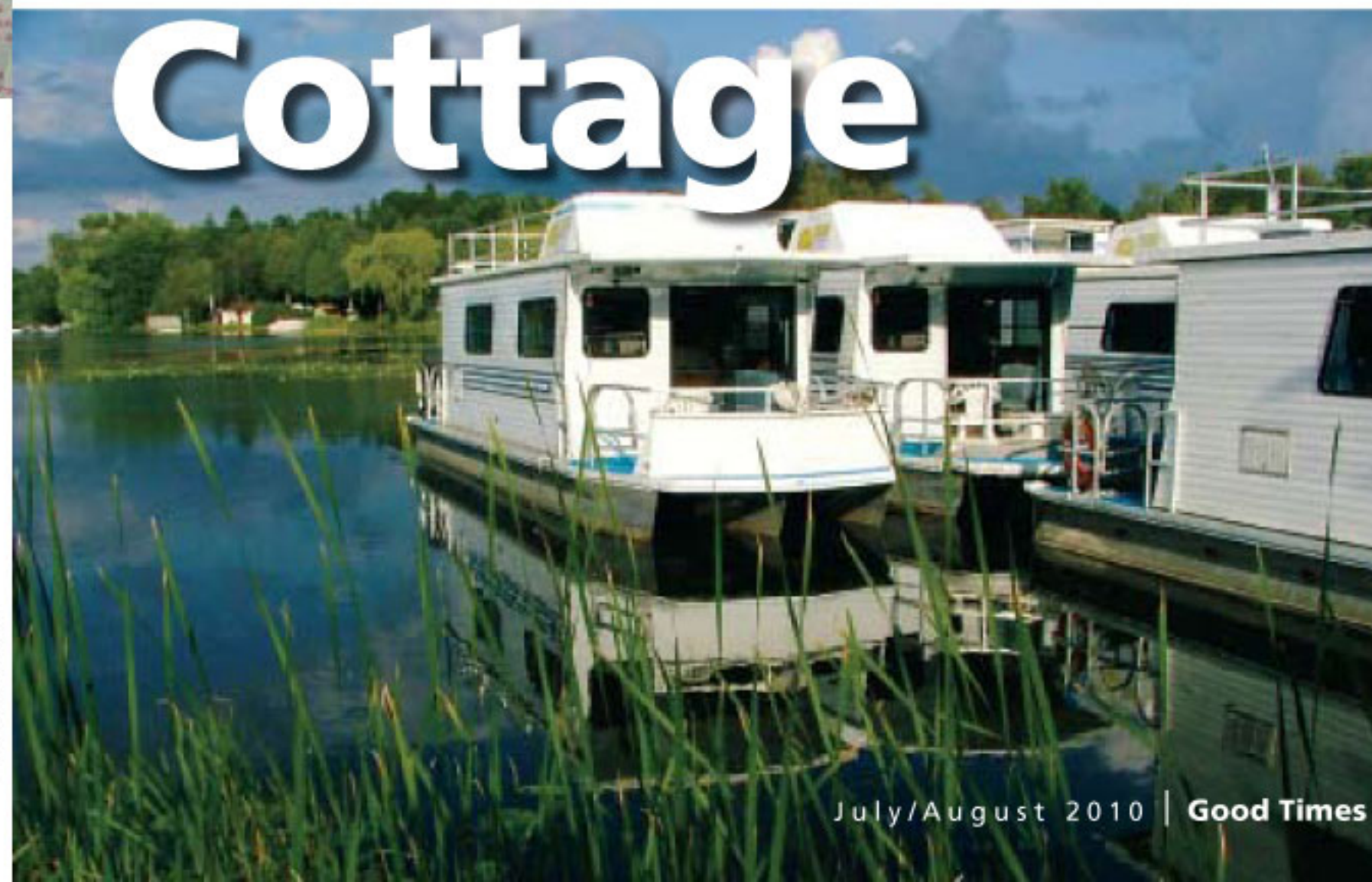
Our mid-sized, sleeps-four houseboat had a galley (kitchen) complete with propane fridge and stove, a dinette that converted into a bunk bed, a head (toilet), and a front lounge area that also converted into a bedroom at night. It was literally a self-contained floating cottage.

Given that this was the last week of July, the marina was bustling, with 18 boats scheduled to depart that day. However, with more than three decades of experience renting houseboats, the Egan family had it all running smoothly. After the orientation/training course, which replaced

the need for a boat operator's licence, the crowd of boaters headed for the dock and our days afloat began.

After a quiet night on Pigeon Lake, we had breakfast and then Captain Rob and Bob the Swab got us underway. We scanned the east shore for Gannon Narrows, through which we would pass to Buckhorn Lake. Notes written on the chart by other boaters indicated that birds would be plentiful here, and sure enough we spied seagulls and white rocks. Passing the Narrows, we left behind the shallow, reed-filled expanse of Pigeon Lake and began cruising through the pine and rock expanse of the Canadian

Summer Cottage



Photos: Lindsay Editorial