

Latitude 38

DELTA CRUISING

— ROLLING ON THE RIVERS

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DELTA CRUISING:

The Delta is a big place. With its 1,000 miles or so of sun-soaked navigable waterways, it's ripe for exploration and discovery. Sadly, most Bay sailors never take the time to poke around the tules.

Late last year we had a crazy idea: why not create a rally to encourage Bay sailors to discover everything the Delta has to offer? Support for the concept was overwhelming and the Delta Doo Dah was born. We suspected the response from readers wanting to get in on the fun would be positive but it exceeded all our expectations when, within 48 hours of posting an invitation to join on *'Lectronic Latitude*, all 30 available spots were spoken for.

Why did we cap the event at 30 boats? Although we knew some folks would be disappointed at not being able to participate, we felt it was important to keep the inaugural fleet small so that we could get a feel for what the event might become and how to accommodate all those who'd like to tag along. Next year we hope to increase the number of available spots.

Our ultimate goal for the Doo Dah is to expose folks to all the local cruising possibilities available to them. Instead of flying the family to Disneyland . . . again . . . why not explore your own backyard — and save some money while you're at it? This writer and her husband cruised the Delta for a week last year and spent under \$100 (not including provisions).

Even if you spent every night in a marina, frequently ate at the Delta's fantastic restaurants, and generally lived

SURF THE DELTA

Delta Doo Dah
www.deltadoodah.com
Delta Chamber of Commerce
www.CaliforniaDelta.org
Discover the Delta Foundation
www.discoverthedelta.com
California Dept. of Fish & Game
www.dfg.ca.gov



quickly, load up your boat with some food, sunscreen and bug spray, and get your butt up-Delta!

ents, so don't assume a lot of accuracy, but most main channels are regularly dredged to certain depths.

- *Franko's Map of the California Delta* and/or *Hal Schell's Delta Map and Guide* — both are widely available 'up-Delta'. Have a local circle their favorite anchorages and fishing holes on it.

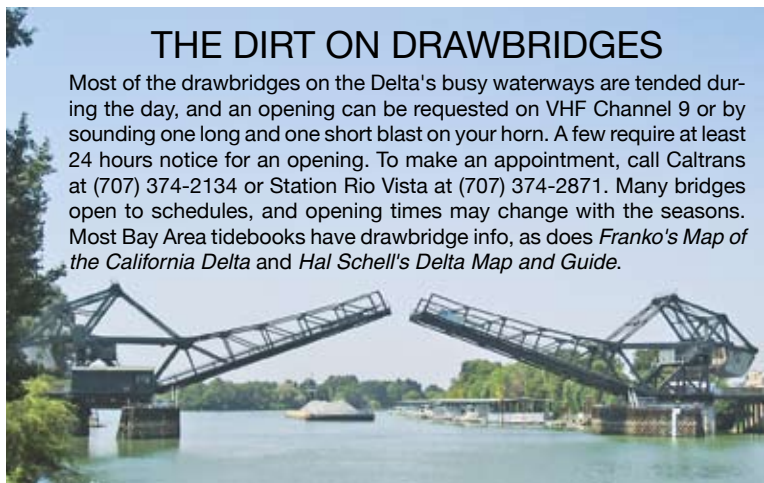
- Lots of reading material. If you can, try to find copies of the long-out-of-print *Dawdling on the Delta* by the late Hal Schell, Robert Walters' *Cruising California's Delta*, or Erle Stanley Gardner's *Gypsy Days on the Delta*. And be sure to pick up Carol Jensen's new book, *The California Delta*, for an historical view of the area.

- A good tide book. Not only will it help you know when to travel — always move on a rising tide . . . *always* — but it also gives you contact info for bridges.

- A working depth sounder and a little patience — most keel boats touch ground at least once on any Delta trip, so don't be embarrassed. If you traveled on a rising tide, you'll be off soon enough. If you

THE DIRT ON DRAWBRIDGES

Most of the drawbridges on the Delta's busy waterways are tended during the day, and an opening can be requested on VHF Channel 9 or by sounding one long and one short blast on your horn. A few require at least 24 hours notice for an opening. To make an appointment, call Caltrans at (707) 374-2134 or Station Rio Vista at (707) 374-2871. Many bridges open to schedules, and opening times may change with the seasons. Most Bay Area tidebooks have drawbridge info, as does *Franko's Map of the California Delta* and *Hal Schell's Delta Map and Guide*.



the 'high life', you'd still come out richer — both financially and psychologically — than with most family vacations.

So instead of sitting in your slip this summer, dwelling on the fact that the entry list for the Doo Dah filled so

but are intimidated by the unknown, we've compiled a list of "must haves" for any Delta cruise:

- A current Bay and Delta chartbook. Many of the depths listed on the less-traveled sloughs are older than your par-

ROLLIN' ON THE RIVERS



Not much beats dawdling on the Delta. A good book, some sunscreen and a little shade is all you need for a great vacation.

pact 'panels' available for iPods, PDAs and cell phones.

- Sunscreen, the higher the SPF the better — and don't forget a couple tubes of 15+ SPF lip balm (they're easy to lose). The Delta sun can be brutal, and high summer temps will keep you out in the sun most of the day.

- Bug spray, netting and swatters. Mosquitoes are voracious feeders and you don't want to be the main course. Some Bay Area sailors question this commandment, but just trust us on this one, okay?

- Lots of hot weather clothes — shorts, bathing suits, tank tops — but don't forget a light jacket and a pair of pants for the odd cool evening.

- Wide-brim hats, and lots of 'em.

- Good quality but reasonably priced sunglasses. Why? Because, with all the time you'll spend in the water, you won't be too bummed out when you sacrifice your shades to the river gods.

- Windscoops. Need we say more?

- Boat shade. Anything from the ubiquitous blue tarp to a custom-made deck

awning. You'll live under it.

- Water toys, inner tubes, air mattresses, inflatable kayaks, water cannons, windsurfers and/or sailing dinghies are nice. Bring one of each!

- A hammock, comfy boat cushions and a stack of beach towels.

- A digital camera. If you don't have one already, suck it up. You can pick up a really decent pocket digital for \$100. Just be sure to set the photo quality and size to their highest settings for the best results.

- Fishing license and gear. Nothing tops off a great day better than dinner you caught yourself. Striped bass, sturgeon, catfish, crawdads, steelhead and, our personal favorite, crappie (yes, we're *that* juvenile) can be snagged upriver. Whatever you do, don't take your chances poaching. A license is just \$41 (plus \$6 for the Bay/Delta stamp) while the fine for getting caught poaching is \$760. That could ruin anyone's vacation.

- Ice, ice, baby! Hot summer days just aren't the same without ice-cold beverages. If you don't have refrigeration, there are plenty of spots to pick up ice along the way.

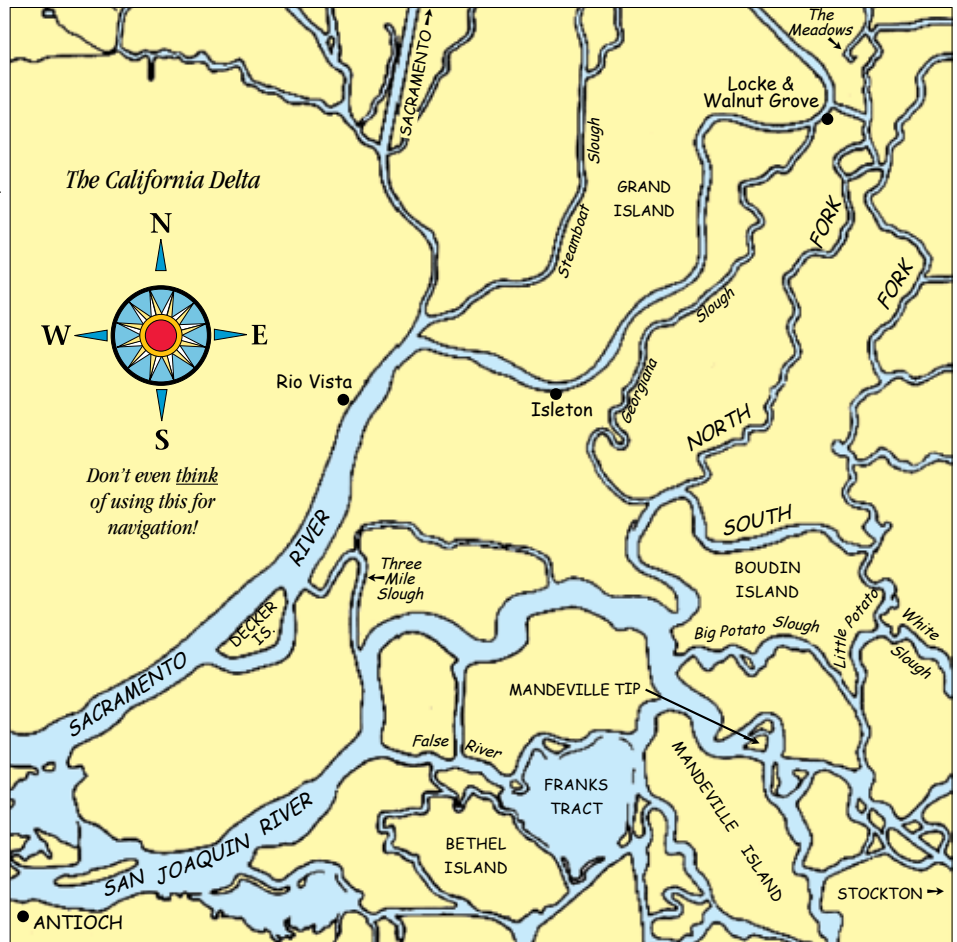
LATITUDE / JOHN A

don't have a depth sounder, you can get by with a lead line, which certainly fits with the ambience of the region.

- A good stern anchor with plenty of rode. Most rivers and sloughs are too narrow to swing on a bow anchor, so you'll need to polish your Delta anchoring technique. Here's the skinny: Find a tree, piling or big stump on shore. Motor slowly toward your *objet du désir* while dropping the stern anchor and paying out the rode. Depending on your draft, you may have to hop in the dinghy to take the bow line to shore. Most folks pull the boat close-in for easy access during the day, then pull back out when the bugs show up for dinner.

- Inflatable dinghy with a good-size outboard for side trips up the more shallow sloughs. This isn't a must, but it can make the trip really special.

- Solar panels. You likely won't be running your engine a lot, so you'll want to make sure your house batteries stay topped off. A small panel will do the trick for the house bank, and there are com-



MAP COURTESY OF DEPT. OF WATER RESOURCES

DELTA CRUISING

WHAT'S DOIN' IN THE DELTA

Check out www.californiadelta.org for more on Delta events throughout the year.

Fourth of July Fireworks and Doin's

- Antioch — The Fireworks Spectacular barge moves down the San Joaquin River from downtown Antioch to the Antioch Marina. Don't miss the hometown parade, classic car show, and other entertainment. Info, (925) 757-1800.

- Benicia — Picnic in the Park with food and live music, 12-7 p.m., ending with a fireworks display. Info, (707) 745-9791.

- Lodi — Start the day with a pancake breakfast, move on to an Americana festival, and end the day with a fireworks spectacular at Lodi Lake. Info, www.visitlodi.com.

- Mandeville Tip — The massive Hilton Fireworks Extravaganza is now staged in honor of Barron Hilton, who passed away in 2004. This popular show attracts over 5,000 boats and is the largest boat-in event in the Delta.

- Pittsburg — Fireworks are usually shot from either an offshore barge near the waterfront, or from shoreside. Info, (925) 432-7301.

- Suisun City — A signature family event

with great food, rock climbing, pony rides, arts & crafts, free live music, and 'Sky Concert' fireworks over the harbor, 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m.. Info, www.suisun.com.

Other Doin's to Mark On Your Calendar

- June 6 — Al the Wop's Annual Chili Cook-Off in Locke. Chili and beer seem strangely at home in this tiny historic Chinese town. Starts at 11 a.m. Info, www.locketown.com.

- June 19-21 — Whether you call 'em crawdads, crawfish or crayfish, these little bugs sure are tasty! Eat your fill at the wildly popular Isleton Crawdad Festival, www.crawdadjournal.org.

- July 12-Aug. 27 — Suisun City's Sunday Waterfront Jazz Series. Concerts from 3-6 p.m. every Sunday on the Harbor Plaza. Info, (707) 421-7309 or www.suisun.com.

- July 11 — Taste of the Delta. Wine and food from Delta restaurants and wineries, live and silent auctions, and live music. Held at KOA's Tower Park Resort in Lodi, 1-4 p.m. Info, www.tasteofthedelta.com.

- July 25-26 — On your way up to or back from the Delta, stop by the Benicia Fine Art, Wine and Jazz Festival. Info, (707) 745-9791.

- July 26 — Courtland Pear Fair. If you like pears, you'll love all the pear-oriented food & drink. Info, www.pearfair.com.

- Aug. 11 — Petaluma Waterfront Jazz Festival. Spend the day enjoying jazz and fine wine. Info, www.petalumachamber.com.

- Sept. 12-13 — Pittsburg Seafood Festival at Pittsburg Marina. Sample tasty treats from over 40 vendors while listening to live music. Info, www.pittsburgseafoodfestival.com.

- Sept. 17-20 — Lodi Grape Festival & Harvest Fair. Celebrate everything grape as they've done since 1907. Info, www.grapefestival.com.

- Sept. 19 — Delta Blues Festival, 12-7:30 p.m. on the Antioch waterfront, free. Great boat-in venue! Info, www.deltabluesfestival.net.

- October 3 — Suisun City Waterfront Festival at Harbor Plaza, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Info, www.suisun.com.

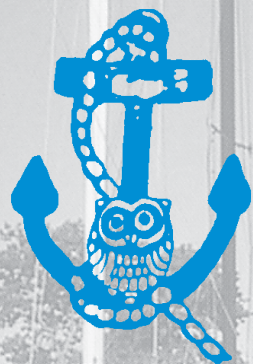
But the most important item to pack is your sense of adventure.

There are more ways to enjoy

the Delta than there are pages in this magazine. You just have to get up there to discover them. And if you see a big

raft-up of sailboats flying bright yellow burgees, c'mon over and say 'hi'. Who knows — next year you might be flying your own yellow burgee.

— **latitude**/ladonna



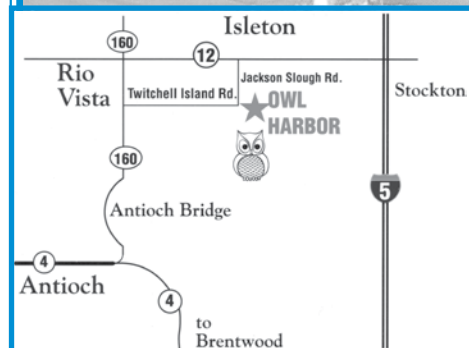
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