

Living the High Life in Southern California

Who says it doesn't pay to carpool? When the Company's Rideshare Program rewards us for what we would be doing anyway, the benefits definitely outweigh the alternative! We're talking dinner cruise here. After accumulating rideshare points for several months, we were ready to cash some in and do something extravagant. Well, at least something more extravagant than just a picnic in the park or a walk through the shopping mall. Taking advantage of the offer made by the Rideshare Program,

we made reservations to have a sunset dinner on the Hornblower Dining Yacht out of Newport Bay.



To really get the most out of this event and maximize the amount of time we had to spend in Orange County, we decided to get a room for the night in Costa Mesa. We headed south for the weekend anticipating the excitement that had been on our minds for a long time. We even checked out the Fedco Department Store in Costa Mesa for any special sales not found at the L.A. County stores. At a leisurely pace we discovered treasure upon treasure and went wild with our Visa Cards. That day, Fedco was giving a two dollar discount on every purchase made with the Visa card so we decided to split up our Visa purchases into lots of little ones and get many two dollar discounts. I wonder if anyone else has thought of that? The noon hour approached. Not wanting to ruin our appetites for our dinner cruise, lunch time found us at the Sizzler Buffet Bar. (It might have been a light lunch but who can resist that frozen yogurt?)



After checking into our Costa Mesa motel and relaxing for a while, it was time to make our way down to West Coast Highway and out to Newport Harbor. Dressed for dinner, we made a photo stop to take some pictures of one another just outside the motel room door where I found some nice even lighting. Photographers notice these things even when faced with the impending excitement that dining on a luxury yacht can generate. Very soon we were down in the world's largest pleasure boat

harbor housing over ten thousand boats, many belonging to local celebrities. The only boat that I was concerned with at that moment was the one we would be boarding. The largest one in view and the most elegant was the Entertainer. We knew this had to be the one. The one hundred forty five foot

Entertainer is the largest of the Southern California Fleet of Hornblower dining yachts. Its home port is Newport Beach. Is that fascinating, or what?

We waited in line to board ship and felt appropriately dressed even though some of the guests were wearing formal dinner attire. In a Southern California beach town, how can you show off a golden tan in a black tie and dinner jacket? There was time to enjoy the warm sea breezes as we took some pictures from the upper deck, posed for pictures of one another and snickered at some of the overdressed passengers. We talked to a couple from the South. They were reminiscing about being on the General Jackson paddle wheeler and we all compared notes.

Once inside the Entertainer, we began to notice some of the other couples who, in my estimation, may have actually paid full price for their dining experience. They ran the gamut from the young impressionable to the older blasé types (I would probably fall into the latter category.) A pre-departure announcement that in the unlikely event of fire or other emergency, the life preservers are located overhead on the port side of the ship was later corrected to say they are to be found on the starboard side. This made for an uneasy feeling, but when the announcement that the men's restroom is at the stern and the women's is at the bow was corrected, we knew we were in trouble! If the waiters and the musician who had been providing the entertainment knew of this imminent danger they weren't letting on, so we just went with the flow and marveled at the menu.

]	Tossed greens with sundried apricots, jicama, tomato, and balsamic vinaigrette
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	A duet of filet mignon with cognac sauce and salmon with tomato basil sauce, confetti rice and seasoned vegetables
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	Chocolate cake and berry puree, served with a white chocolate dipped strawberry

The menu had the promise of an out of this world taste treat but not everything on the table was this heavenly. The water on the ship had a heavy chlorine taint as did the coffee so once again, we asked to see the wine list. Suddenly, the idea of a chardonnay to accompany the salmon seemed the natural choice. Soon the silver wine bucket was also a part of the decor at our table. Reflected in the wine bucket was the glow of the lights from the boats that were passing in the channel as we cruised through Lower Newport Bay. That's how we knew we were moving!

Suddenly, our attention was drawn to the flashing lights of two rescue vessels that were on either side of a boat in distress. It was taking on water and leaning heavily on one of the harbor patrol boats there to keep it from capsizing and sinking. Other patrons in the elegant floating dining room noticed

the drama as well, but once the scene passed, the music, food and wine once again was all absorbing.

During the dinner hour, the musician (who was really a one man band capable of sounding like Billy Joel and his entire entourage) was keeping the tempo at a subdued pace. After one impatient music lover yelled "Let's rock the boat!" for the last time, the crew came up from below the deck and promptly threw him overboard. Just kidding! The beat finally did pick up, however, and the dancing became a little wilder and reminded me of the seventies disco scene with many of the Bee Gees and K.C. & the



Sunshine Band songs in the musician's repertoire. We tried out the tiny dance floor for a bit and then strolled out to the deck at the rear (stern) of the ship. We were feeling pretty good at that point and I thought that a little singing was in order, though a few of the romantic couples out on the deck probably didn't agree. It was then that the boat was starting to make its return past Balboa Island and Lido Isle. We looked across the bay to see the 1905 Balboa Pavilion, its lights reflecting in the water in an unforgettable way.

On the day after, before making the return trip home, we stopped to have breakfast at the local IHOP and talk about our Newport Dinner Cruise experience and formulate our collective opinions. There we made a discovery that I will impart at this time. For something unique and special to remember for a long time, find an IHOP restaurant and get a single order of corn beef hash and eggs, substitute the wheat harvest pancakes for the regular and split the order. It's more than enough for two and really delicious.

