

Torsten Krone



Houseboat Small Talk

Chat about houseboat travel in Germany



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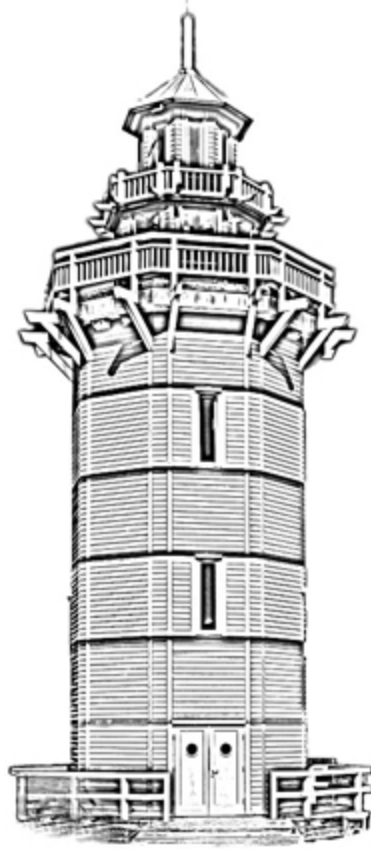
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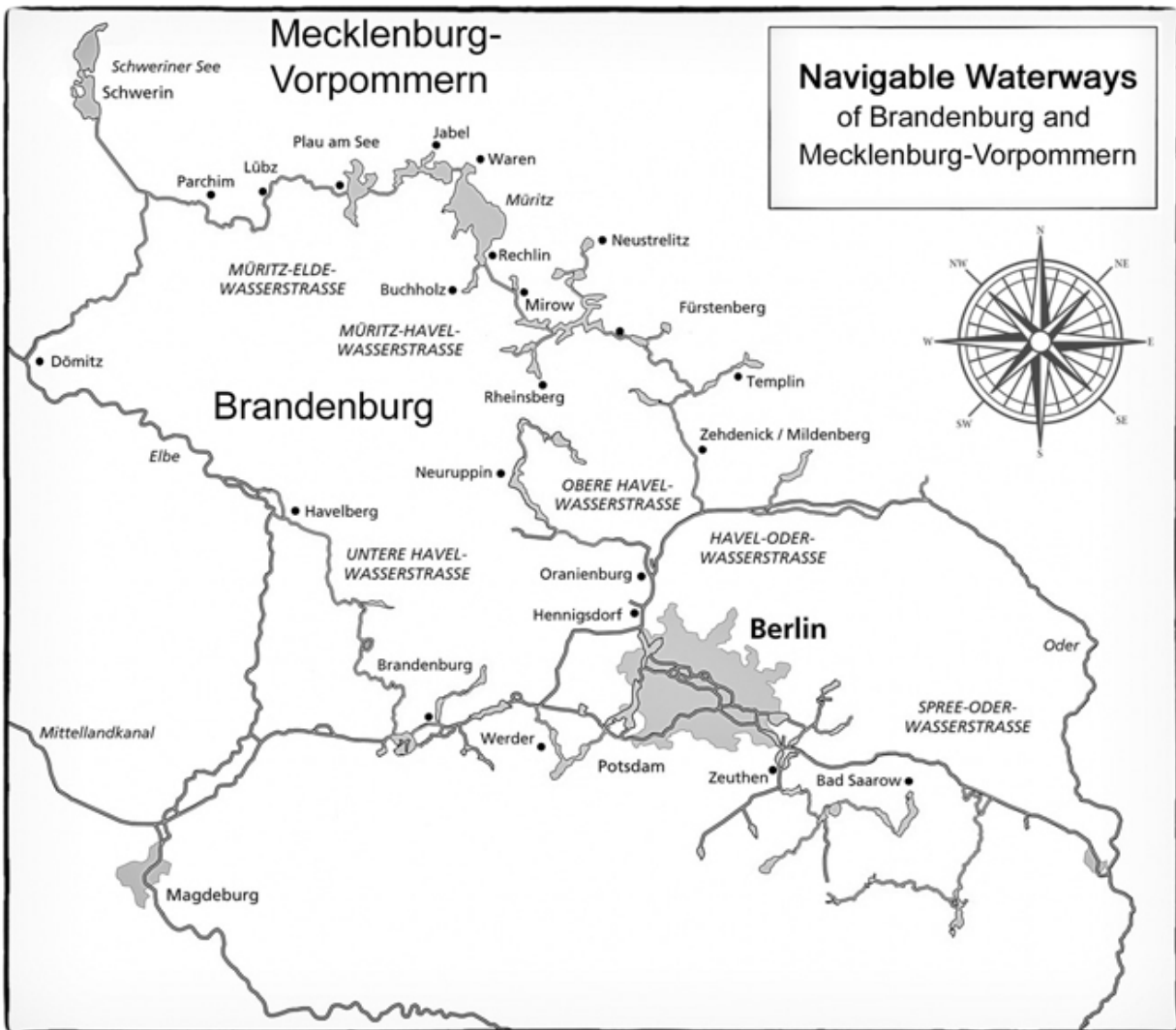
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Preface for the English edition 2021

The book “Hausboot Smalltalk” is on the German market since 2015 and has been released completely revised and updated in 2020. Meanwhile it is a basic book for all topics around waterways, canals and house boating. This was reason enough to publish the most important parts of house boating in Germany also in the English language. Perhaps you would like to step in the shoes of English houseboat pioneers Henry Montagu Doughty or Cecil Scott Forester, who, back then, explored the unknown German waterways in northeast Germany about 100 years ago. The book intends to provide you with guidance and knowledge for a house boating holiday in Germany to make sure you are safe on your next house boating holiday in one of the most beautiful water areas Europe's. There is also a tradition with this book to pass on historical knowledge concerning waterways in Germany and Europe.

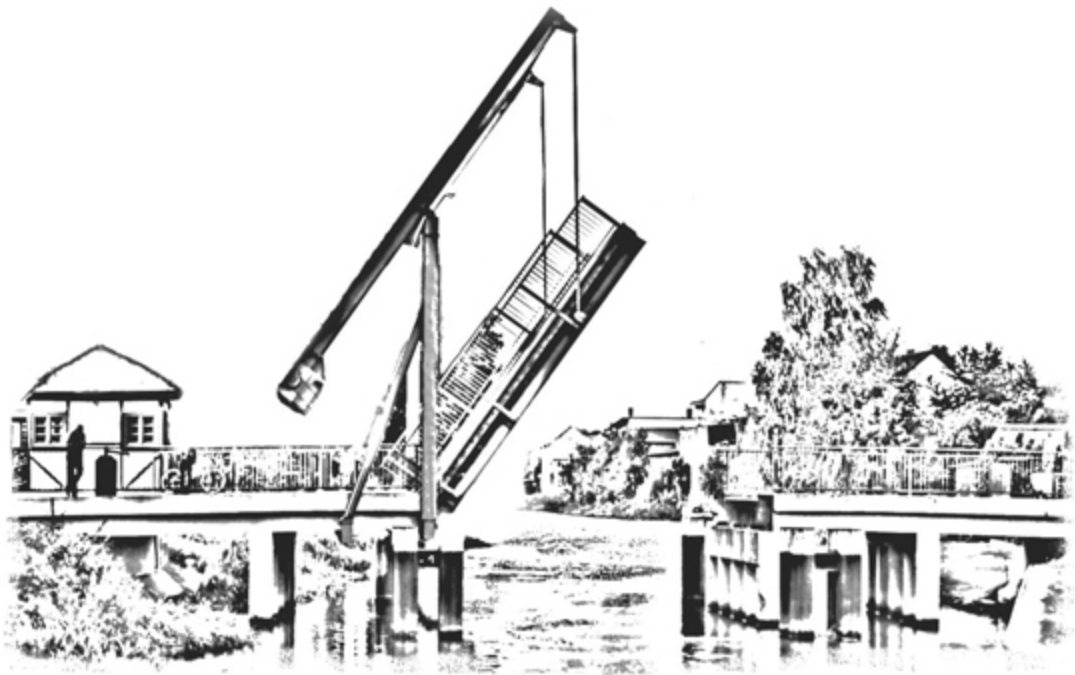
With “small talk” about the historical background and the development of shipping and waterways, food for thought is given to highlight the often tedious ways men had to go to achieve the maritime masterstrokes we know today. Whilst main waterways increasingly are used for bigger ships and tonnages, freight traffic is reduced on smaller waterways, which in turn gives rivers, lakes and canals new purposes to be developed for tourism.

Leisure boating is ideal in northeast Germany. You will find unique boating grounds with excellent water quality and extensive infrastructure, from the romantic jetty surrounded by intact nature to the harbour of a fishing village with hotel

and tourism. Around one hundred charter companies offer modern boats in various sizes and designs, from rustic rafts up to five star yachts, a diversity one can only find in Germany.

Become an explorer and master the small challenges of everyday life on a houseboat. Moreover: Enjoy your time on the water, away from everyday stress and hectic. To prepare you for a house boating holiday in Germany, this book will help to avoid problems or unpleasant surprises. Basic knowledge is obviously also useful in other countries, however, some special features and descriptions of areas are specific for Germany.

A special gratitude goes to Kerstin Voigt for the translation of the book into English, and the not always easy adaptation of nautical terms and phrasing to the English language.



Introduction

To step from the pontoon into your own or rented boat, you cross a border between two worlds. From that moment you belong to the water, you watch an altered landscape, you feel the motion of the ground below, listen to unfamiliar sounds, and breathe different air. Most people will gain more distance from everyday life with this small step, than after a far away flight to a sunny island in the vast ocean. It doesn't matter, whether it's your very first houseboat trip or you are an experienced skipper: Ahead of you new adventures and unknown experiences are waiting, which are exciting and will make you curious, leaving everyday life on land.

At the start there will be many questions. What kind of holiday is this? Is it difficult to navigate such a boat? How much is it? Do you need a "driving licence"? How do you live on a boat, and how do you find the right way on the water? When chartering a houseboat, basic information will be provided, which will enable you to find your nerve to go onto the water and experience it for yourself. It will make a difference, however, to be familiar with the most important things in theory already.

I would like to invite you into this world and hope you enjoy the reading. Take your time, as with travelling on a houseboat you will travel at the speed of past centuries and can notice details to the left and right along the way. Let your mind wander. Archimedes (about 200 B.C.) already explained scientifically, why a boat can stay afloat: It's called the Archimedes principle and states, that the upward buoyant force exerted on a body immersed in a fluid is equal to the weight of the fluid, that the body displaces.

How lucky is that! Otherwise, the exciting adventures on the water wouldn't be possible.

Apart from the physical facts, house boating is also an emotional experience, an alternation between suspense and adventure, ambitious boat manoeuvres and soothing relaxation. Imagine a summer day on a lake. There is hardly a breeze. It's almost sad to disturb the reflection of clouds on the water with your boat, but the clouds seem to follow you on the water, the picture stays intact. You are at the helm and in charge of the course, nobody tells you otherwise. Your crew relaxes on the foredeck. The best place is at the tip of the bow behind the railing. The boat feeling is especially intense here. The engine noise is subdued, a breeze gently combs your hair, and the forested shore passes by slowly, whilst the bow ploughs through the water with a small wave. Then you will be one with the boat and the landscape. Even when pictures of your houseboat trip will fade and all will be forgotten, it will be moments like this, that stay to the very last. I'm sure you too will find your perfect "moment".

As nice as it is on the water, at some point you want to be back on land again. The definition for landing is easy: Turn the boat in an acute angle towards the pontoon, stop, but short before switch the rudder to face away from the pontoon, this will bring the stern alongside. That's done and the crew can now fasten the boat. That sounds simple and is true for weather as described above. On a lake, there is no noticeable current, in the example there was no wind either. Both elements are the worst enemy of house boating.

Now, one only needs the right technique to deal with the lines, so the boat stays where you landed it. In most cases two lines are enough, at an angle to the front and another to the rear. It is best to put the line around the bollard or cleat on land and then put it back to the boat, in order to secure it there. That way, you can manage your departure from the boat, rather than going back to land for it. A bollard is a

short, mushroom like metal body, a cleat is a kind of hook with two ends, both are fixed deeply on the pontoon. Both lines need to be put underneath the railing, instead on top.

To get you in the mood, here are a few pictures from the areas in Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which should convey some of the diversity of the area.



Close to nature: On the Peene towards the Baltic Sea



Busy: A harbor village near Rheinsberg



Vast: On the lake Mueritz



Narrow: On the canal near Neuruppin



Romantic: On the Rhin towards Lindow



Navigated on: Cargo ships on the Oder-Havel-Kanal



Rich in culture: Rheinsberg Castle



Historic: The Finowkanal



Stately: Schwerin Castle



Waiting: Diemitz lock



UNESCO World Heritage Site: Potsdam world of castles



Powerful: Lift bridge on the Peene river

Difficult or not difficult

Is house boating difficult? This is probably the most asked question of interested people, who didn't dare going on the adventure yet. Unfortunately, the answer is not a clear Yes or No. I have read stories about inland sailors, whose children, at 14 years old, used to navigate 67 m long freighter across the Rhine. So, it is not a question of age, but experience and practice. Comparing steering a houseboat with driving a car could entice one to think, the one who can drive a car, can also navigate a boat. Unfortunately, this is a mistake. You have to rethink completely.

I you want to make a practical and free of charge comparison between driving a car and navigating a