

Lake Washington Cruising

By David C. Dykstra



With all the wonderful salt water destinations in the Pacific Northwest, both locals and visitors often overlook Lake Washington for a week-end getaway or close-to-home cruise. You can tour the lake and its “Map of the Stars” in your boat, your friends’ boats or we will arrange a [special charter cruise](#) for your group. We work with a variety of Lake Washington charter yacht/cruise companies on “Map of the Stars” cruises. Compared to any other LW cruises, these cruises feature more of the spectacular mansions and information about the owners, their activities, business and communities.

Lake Washington is the most beautiful large lake in the center of a major US metropolitan area. The Seattle metro area has approximately three million people and the population center is in Lake Washington. The navigable fresh waters from the locks through Lake Washington offer wonderful natural views of the mountains and shorelines. In addition there are wonderful views of city skylines and spectacular mansions.



In addition to Mt. Rainier, Puget Sound and the Space Needle, a dramatic uniqueness of the Seattle area is its Billionaire Row. The row covers 12 miles of LW’s eastside waterfront with Microsoft billionaires at each end and in the middle. Paul Allen lives at the south end on Mercer Island, Steve Ballmer lives at the northeast end in Hunts Point and Bill Gates lives in the middle in Medina. Based on *Forbes’* 2009 list of “The 400 Richest Americans,” all of Washington state’s richest of the rich live here. A cruise-tour of the row makes this a unique and memorable boating destination.



Dykstra Family Cruise

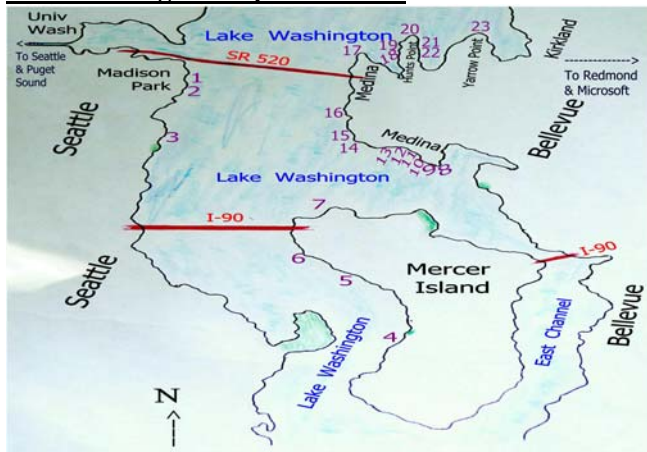
Lake Washington (LW) is twenty-two miles long with over 70 miles of waterfront property on its shores and Mercer Island. The Lake has more than 10,000 waterfront homes. The San Francisco Bay Area has its Silicon Valley and Southern California has its “homes of the stars.” Both have mansions and estates on hundreds of miles of roads where tourists will mostly see protective gates, trees and shrubs. The Seattle/Lake-Washington area has its Gemstone Waterfront Valley of mansions and estates on thirty miles of beautiful lakefront where boaters can view the prime side of the homes, grounds and waterfront.

Boaters who have boats moored or frequently launched in LW love to cruise and explore the lake. Out-of-town visitors love the opportunity to enjoy one or more of these cruises. These visitors are often surprised at the size, beauty and variety of the lake. Lake Washington is probably the best kept secret of the Seattle area. Most out-of-towners know Seattle has salt water to the west but are not aware of large, scenic lake to the east of downtown and in the center of the metropolitan region. Puget Sound boaters should have Seattle’s fresh water canals, bays and lakes as one of their itineraries. (Some of the following is written primarily as a guide for private boats but it follows the itineraries of our charter cruises.)

Puget Sound to Lake Washington

You enter Lake Washington from Puget Sound through the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, commonly called the Ballard Locks. There are two locks and pleasure boats can use both. There are numerous stories and rumors about problems and difficulty with the locks but these stories are overrated. I have been through many times with both novice and experienced (with the locks) captains and never encountered a problem. A larger boat requires two people that are alert and have basic common sense to handle the lines and engine. One person can handle a small boat that usually ties to the side of a larger boat inside the locks. I have been through the locks alone on my ten foot WaveRunner.

Lake Washington Map of the Stars



Map not to scale.

Present and Past Residents/Owners:

1 – **Howard Schultz**, Starbucks Founder; **2** – **Colin Moseley**, Simpson Chairman; **Gary Reed**, Former Simpson Chairman; **3** – Former Home of **Keith McCaw**, Cellular Phone Pioneer; **Rob Glaser**, RealNetworks Founder; **Peter Rose**, Expeditors CEO; **4** – **Paul Allen**, Microsoft Co-Founder; **5** – Mercer Island’s newest \$28 Million Mansion For Sale; **6** – Lake Washington 2009 Sale, \$15.7 Million; **7** – \$22 Million For Sale; **8** – \$22 Million For Sale, Groat Point; **9** – **Charles Piggott**, Former PACCAR CEO; **10** – **Charles Simonyi**, The “Windows 2000 House”; **11** – **Nathan Myhrvold**, The “T-Rex House”; **12** – **Jeffrey Brotman**, Costco Co-Founder; **13** – Mansion sold in 2009 for \$22 Million by **William “Gary” Reed, Jr.**, Former Simpson Chairman; **14** – **Jeff Bezos**, Amazon Founder; Former Home of **Peter La Haye** (1940-1999), Cataract Lenses Pioneer, For Sale in 1999 For \$45 Million; **15** – **Mark Piggott**, PACCAR CEO; **16** – **Bill Gates**, Microsoft Co-Founder; **17** – Evergreen Point; **18** – **John N. Nordstrom**, Former Nordstrom Director; **19** – **James Sinegal**, Costco Co-Founder; **20** – Former Home of **Stan Sayres** (1897-1956), “The Legend of Lake Washington,” Hunts Point, \$20 Million Lot For Sale; **21** – **Craig McCaw**, Cellular Phone Pioneer and Former Home of **Kenny G**, Saxophonist; **22** – **Steve Ballmer**, Microsoft CEO; **23** – Former Home of **Leigh Hunt** (1855-1933), *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* Founder and Publisher, Yarrow Point, \$20 Million For Sale.

After passing through the locks you travel through the Lake Washington Ship Canal to Lake Union. The canal takes you past much of the area’s historical and modern boating and boat building industry. You may see some of the boats used in TV’s popular “Deadliest Catch.”

On the northwest corner of Lake Union you pass the famous “Sleepless in Seattle” floating home. Lake Union offers fabulous views of the Seattle skyline and the Space Needle. At the south end of Lake Union are numerous excellent waterfront restaurants with guest docking. After Lake Union you pass under the I-5 Bridge past Dale Chihuly’s studio into Portage Bay. This is the home of the Seattle Yacht Club and Queen City Yacht Club. Next is the Montlake Cut. The University of Washington borders the north shore of the cut.

The cut was completed in 1917 and had the most expensive construction cost of the canals that connect Lake Washington to the Sound. The opening of the cut lowered Lake Washington nine feet. Prior to the cut, LW water exited at the south end of the lake where the Cedar River now flows into the lake.

You enter Lake Washington into the largest open section of the lake with the State Route 520 floating bridge to the immediate south. The vertical clearance for boats is 45 feet at the west end and 75 feet at the east end of the bridge. The bridge crosses the lake near the north-south center. The north end of the lake is less populated. The west end of the bridge is in Madison Park, a Seattle neighborhood, and the east end is in Medina, the heart of Billionaire Row.

Lake Washington’s Mansions

The Lake Washington waterfront boasts mansions of the top executives of the Seattle and Eastside based largest companies. The largest area company is Costco. Both its co-founders, Jeff Brotman and James Sinegal, along with several other executives live on this waterfront.

In addition to its three billionaires, thirty plus present and past Microsoft executives have LW waterfront mansions. The rapid success of Microsoft created more millionaires and billionaires than any company before or after.

Jeff Bezos, the founder and CEO of Amazon, and *Forbes*-list billionaire, lives on the Medina waterfront on a five plus acre multi-mansion estate. Howard Schultz, the founder and CEO of Starbucks, drives through two gates to get to his Madison park waterfront palace. He is a former *Forbes*-list billionaire but dropped off the list following the drop in Starbucks’ stock price.

Starbucks Founder Howard Schultz’s Palace



The Seattle area’s wealthiest family dynasties, all worth billions, are the Nordstroms, Piggotts, and Reeds. They have fourth generation family management of major corporations. John W. Nordstrom started with a shoe store in 1901 that grew to become Nordstrom Inc. J. W.’s great-grandsons, three Nordstrom brothers and their Nordstrom cousin, are now running the company. The Eastside and Mercer Island waterfronts boast many past and present Nordstrom family homes.

In 1905 William Piggott Sr. started what was to become PACCAR, the truck manufacturing world leader with the Kenworth, Peterbilt and DAF nameplates. The company has been continuously run by family members and the founder’s great-grandson, Mark Piggott, is now in charge. He and his father, Charles, the previous Chairman, both live in Medina waterfront mansions.

Privately held Simpson Investment is one of the Pacific Northwest's largest landowners rivaling publicly-traded Weyerhaeuser. Simpson started in the 1800s in logging and has expanded into multiple manufacturing industries. The Reed dynasty started when Mark Edward Reed took over leadership of the company when the Simpson, for whom the company is named, died in 1906. The Reeds later bought out the Simpson family interests and the private company has since been owned and run by the Reeds and their relatives. Colin Moseley, the great-grandson of Mark Edward Reed is now in charge. The Reed and Moseley families have some of the prime waterfront estates.

William Garrard Reed's early 1900s waterfront estate in Seattle's Madison Park was that era's version on the current Gates and Allen estates. This Reed was the son of the 1st Reed, Mark Edward, to run Simpson Investment. In the 1940s there was a fire in the main house and two of William's children died of smoke inhalation. Other than smoke, the house was not damaged but the Reeds did not want to live in it. The house was cut into three pieces and barged to Mercer Island's east shore where it can be viewed as you cruise by it. The eight acre estate was subdivided in the mid 1940s and only two homes of that era remain.

The multibillion dollar McCaw family may become a new dynasty. The four McCaw brothers, Bruce (1946-), Craig (1949-), John (1951-) and Keith (1953-2002) pioneered the cellular phone industry. Their father was a radio station and cable television mogul and introduced his sons to entrepreneurship and the communications industry. All four brothers live or have lived on LW waterfront. *Forbes*-list billionaire, Craig McCaw, lives in a Gold Coast castle in Hunts Point that is the former home of saxophonist/composer Kenny G.

The Mansions Tour

Billionaire Row is eight miles of Hunts Point and Medina from Ballmer to the southeast end of Medina at the entrance to Bellevue's Meydenbauer Bay. All the state's billionaires except for Allen live here. Local Realtors call this the "Gold Coast." The western shoreline of Lake Washington in Madison Park across from the Gold Coast is the two mile Emerald Coast of the Emerald City, Seattle. We will start this article's mansion tour here, but you may start anywhere and do it in segments.

Seattle – Madison Park

The 23 story Washington Park Tower south of the 520 Bridge on the west side (Seattle's Madison Park neighborhood) is the landmark for the start of our tour. The building has 53 condominiums and was built in 1969. This is the highest residential building on Lake Washington. It is very unlikely any more lake-front buildings close to this height will be built in the future because of zoning regulations. The residents enjoy incredible views. The three upper floors have two 2,200 sq ft, two bedroom units on each floor. The estimated value of each of these units is \$2.2 million.

The five waterfront homes south of here are in the exclusive gated community of nine homes on the former Reed Estate. Howard Schultz's 1999 mansion is now the most prominent house on the estate. William "Gary" Reed Jr. sold a five plus acre waterfront estate in Medina for \$22 million in 2009 and moved into a new mansion on waterfront just south of the Reed Estate.

The prestigious Seattle Tennis Club is just south of the Reed Estate homes. Further south, Kurt Cobain, a famous Seattle musician, rented a house a short distance up the hill in the 1990s. He committed suicide in the house's greenhouse April 5, 1994 and afterwards the greenhouse was torn down. A bench in Viretta Park just south of here is host to a makeshift shrine to Kurt. Thousands of fans of the music of Cobain's band, Nirvana, have come here to pay tribute and guidebooks list the park as the "Kurt Cobain Park."

Further south in the Harrison/Denny-Blaine neighborhood are the homes of: Barry Ackerley, a former co-owner with Howard Schultz, of the Seattle SuperSonics; a large new mansion on the site of the former Canadian Consulate; the Mediterranean Villas of Expeditors CEO Peter Rose and the deceased Keith McCaw; and the two side-by-side mansions owned by RealNetworks founder, Rob Glaser, where President Obama attended a fund raising lunch in August 2010.

Expeditors CEO Peter Rose's Mediterranean Villa



The next Seattle waterfront neighborhoods are Madrona and Leschi. Leschi has a nice marina with guest docking for two excellent waterfront restaurants, BluWater Bistro and Daniel's Broiler. The BluWater is one of Bill Gates' favorites. Further south are the two spans of the I-90 floating bridges. The vertical clearance for boats under the bridges is only about 30 feet. Taller ships can navigate under the East Channel I-90 Bridge, with about 70 feet vertical clearance, that connects Mercer Island to Bellevue.

Mercer Island

Mercer Island (MI) is the largest and only residential island in Lake Washington. It is six miles long and averages about one mile wide for 6.4 square miles of land with about fifteen miles of waterfront. It has approximately 22,000 residents. It is the U.S.'s most populated island in a lake.

The Island's most renowned estate belongs to Microsoft co-founder and owner of the Seattle Seahawks, Paul Allen. His campus is about 4 miles south of the I-90 bridges on the west side of MI. It is valued at about \$150 million (about the same as Bill Gates'), covers ten acres and has twelve building with over 80,000 sq ft under roof.

Microsoft Co-Founder Paul Allen’s Campus



- A** – 4 buildings ~200 ft from water: 10,680 sq ft main building with gym and 2 indoor tennis courts; 5,220, 4,210, and 2,050 sq ft guest houses; and 12+ car garages for an antique and race car museum and guest parking.
- B** – Mother’s house, ~50 feet from water, 11,300 sq ft plus 7 car garage.
- C** – Catamaran, *Dragonfly*, to drag-and-fly helicopters.
- D** – Main house with attached indoor pool and lakefront building to the north, 9,890 sq ft.
- E**– Concert hall and theater, guest facilities, and wood garden/lakefront house to the north 11,560 sq ft.
- F** – 1,750 sq ft house with 100 ft waterfront acquired in 2006 for \$5.2 million.

The estate is noted for the large catamaran that Paul uses as a floating helipad and for the waterfront concert hall.

Allen’s estate is across a narrow part of the Lake from Seattle’s Seward Park. From many lake locations the park appears to be an island but it is connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. The park is 300 acres of old growth forest with eagles’ nests, a 2.4 mile biking and walking trail circumventing the park, interior trails, numerous picnicking and play areas, an amphitheater, a native plant garden and an art studio. Andrews Bay is north of the isthmus and well protected. The floating bridges block the waves from the summer’s prevailing winds which are light and from the north. The park’s peninsula protects the bay during the days and nights when the weather is less than perfect and the winds and waves come from the southwest. It is a popular spot for anchoring, having boat parties and spending the night on summer weekends. It reminds me of my sailing days in Southern California and mooring in Catalina’s harbors and bays.

Mercer Island (MI) has several waterfront homes for sale or recently purchased in the \$15 to \$25 million range. Notable sports stars that formerly owned spectacular MI waterfront homes include Jim Zorn, Mike Holmgren, Rashard Lewis, Michael Chang, and Kazuhiro Sasaki. Top executives of Amazon, Costco, Microsoft, Nordstrom and Boeing have waterfront homes on the island.

Meydenbauer Bay and Bellevue

Bellevue and its Meydenbauer Bay are north of MI. From MI and into the Bay you will enjoy wonderful views of Bellevue’s modern skyline. It is most spectacular in the afternoon when the many glass high-rise office buildings and condos reflect the western sun. The Bay is also a popular spot to anchor. SuperSonics stars Detlef Schrempf and Jack Sikma used to reside next to each other on the Bay’s waterfront.

The west entrance to Meydenbauer Bay is Groat Point in Medina. This has been the site of many famous mansions. The first house was built in the 1800s. In 1928 Miller Freeman purchased and moved into a 14 room mansion on this site. Miller was the owner of a Seattle publishing house and several journals. He was instrumental in getting the Lake Washington Ship Canal built in 1916. He is the father of Kemper Freeman and grandfather of Kemper Freeman, Jr. The Kempers have been responsible for major development of Bellevue. Kemper Jr. founded Kemper Development Company which is the major developer of downtown Bellevue. The side-by-side mansions of Bruce McCaw and Lennox Scott (real estate) now occupy Groat Point.

After Gates’ estate the most popular LW mansion viewing site is the cove northwest of Groat Point. This is the location of the “Windows 2000 House,” “T-Rex House” and “Their Art House.” Former Microsoft executive, Charles Simonyi, owns the first mansion which has more windows than any other home on this lake. The house picked up its name when Microsoft introduced Windows 2000.

Charles Simonyi’s Windows 2000 House



Another former Microsoft executive, Nathan Myhrvold, owns the T-Rex House. Nathan used some of his Microsoft multimillions to fund a dinosaur bone digging foundation. Inside the big rounded windows of his living room you can see one of the t-rex skeletons he helped dig up.

Nathan Myhrvold’s T-Rex House



Costco co-founder and Chairman, Jeff Brotman owns the mansion known as “Their Art House” that includes monumental art pieces. The house was designed by renowned architects who are known for designing art-galleries-cum-residences. The louvers on the front (water side) and roof of the house adjust to provide the optimum natural light on the extensive art collection.

The point to the west is Dabney Point and home to Medina’s beach park, city hall and police department. Around the point and to the north, on the western shore of Medina, are the side-by-side expansive Peter La Haye (deceased and inventor and developer of cataract implant lenses) and Jeff Bezos (Amazon founder and CEO) multi-mansioned estates.

Microsoft Co-Founder Bill Gate’s Convention Center



- A** – Grand Staircase – 92 feet long, descending 84 steps with roof 63 feet above the stairway. The Grand Entrance is at the top with a 6,300 sq ft garage for guest limos. The gate for the road to the estate is in the upper right. The driveway continues past the Grand Entrance through a second gate to the family four car garage above the inner sanctum (D).
- B** – Library (behind trees), 2,100 sq ft and home to Leonardo da Vinci’s Codex Leicester.
- C** – Guest and convention wing with reception hall, guest rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, meeting rooms, theaters, etc.
- D** – Family 11,500 sq ft “inner sanctum” with 4 bedrooms. 60 x 17 foot indoor/outdoor pool is below and the lakefront building is the boat house.
- E** – Executive offices and main reception hall.
- F** – Security offices, activity center and exercise room.

Further north is the must see, Bill Gates compound. Since 1997 Microsoft and Bill Gates have been holding an annual very exclusive “CEO Summit.” The inaugural 1997 conference introduced his 50,000 sq ft, \$150 million, LW estate that was near completion. Usually about 100 top-level people from around the world attend. Sessions and meetings are held at the Microsoft campus and Bill’s estate, aka his personal Convention Center.

Further north you cross under the east side of the SR-520 Bridge. The next point is Evergreen Point, still Medina, with Fairweather Bay on the other side. Hunts Point is on the east side of the bay where Nordstrom family members, Scott Oki (former Microsoft executive and now the area’s golf mogul) and James Sinegal (Costco co-founder and CEO) have spectacular mansions with beautiful landscaping.

Hunts Point is the wealthiest community in the state. Eighty percent of the community’s homes are on the two sides of the point with one acre plus lots extending from the water to the one road in the center of the point. The lots are low bank and noted for fabulous landscaping.

The tip of the point is a vacant lot that is for sale for \$20 million. This site of Stan Sayres home. Sayres is deceased and was a famous hydroplane developer, builder and racer known as “The Legend of Lake Washington” and “The Fastest Man Afloat.”

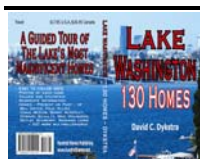
On the east side of the tip is Cozy Cove with Yarrow Point on the east shore of the cove. The most notable side-by-side waterfront estates on the Hunts Point side belong to Craig McCaw and Microsoft CEO, Steve Ballmer. McCaw purchased his castle from Kenny G.

Craig McCaw’s Castle (Formerly Kenny G’s)



The tip of Yarrow Point marks the end of our mansions tour. The waterfront mansion at the tip is one of the oldest on Lake Washington. It was built around 1900 and was the home of Leigh Hunt, who founded and owned the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. The estate is currently for sale for \$20 million.

North of here is Kirkland with a public marina and a wonderful waterfront town. The north end of the lake is fun for relaxing and exploring. At the very north end of the lake there is Kenmore and a marina. From there small craft can navigate about four miles up the Sammamish River.



David C. Dykstra is the author of [Lake Washington 130 Homes](#) published by [Hundred Homes Publishing](#). The book is available at booksellers everywhere in the PNW and online at [Amazon.Com](#) and [BN.com](#).

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