



# Mare Island Heritage Trust

Photo: John Klycinski

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## MISSION

The mission of the Mare Island Heritage Trust is to protect, preserve, restore, manage, interpret, promote as a destination and provide for an engaging visitor experience of the open space, historic, cultural and natural resources of Mare Island and its vicinity. Along with public and private sector partners the Mare Island Heritage Trust ensures adequate funding, maintenance and public support of its purposes. The Mare Island Heritage Trust engages in comprehensive planning and the implementation of initiatives and educational and recreational programming for the public experience and enjoyment of an array of unique natural and built areas of Mare Island and its vicinity.

## EVENT ADVISORY

April 20, 2010

For immediate release

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## Bombs, Birds, Lighthouses, Ships, Wetlands and Wine

### Explore the Historic Napa River – Mare Island to Napa

[NAPA], CA – April 28 Dolphin Charters will host a cruise aboard its 38 passenger vessel the Delphinus along the Napa River departing the Vallejo Marina “K” dock 42 Harbor Way at 9am and returning to the dock at 3pm. The cost is \$60 per person. It is recommended that passengers bring their own lunch, drinks and snacks, dress in layers and bring cameras and binoculars. Reservations: 510-527-9622 or 800-472-9942.

Napa resident Lance Burris plans to be aboard the river trip. He reminisces about Mare Island's history and future potential: "I remember dining on beans and franks in the galley of a damaged warship in the early 1940s and, much later, visiting the USS Mariano G. Vallejo during its construction. Then there was my father's wartime accident, when his gantry crane toppled seventy feet to the pavement, and he escaped with only a cut on his little finger, which he got while climbing through the broken window of the operator's cab. It is really a tragedy to see Mare Island's industrial resources so underutilized. The shipyard once provided more than 40,000 middle-income jobs that were filled by the residents of Vallejo and surrounding communities, including Napa. It has become my mission to do something about this situation, now that the environmental clean-up is nearing completion. I look forward to seeing the island from a water perspective and imagining what can and must be done."

When the Delphinus and her captain, Ronn Patterson are not in Alaska or Baja or operating whale-watching expeditions along the Pacific coast, they offer Bay Delta cruises and more than a dozen historic and bird-watching trips along the Petaluma River. Captain Patterson notes, "It's a little surprising to me that cruises on the Napa River, which I consider particularly interesting, haven't caught on yet. The Napa was once the third busiest commercial river in California and a cruise along the Napa River is like a voyage into the past. This trip begins at the historic Vallejo and Mare Island Naval Shipyard waterfront and continues into a different world, one of vineyards, backwater homes, and some of the largest contiguous marshes in the Bay Area."

A seasoned naturalist and a marine biologist, Captain Patterson, based in El Cerrito, has guided boat tours to Alaska, Baja, whale-watching on the Pacific Coast and birdwatching in the Bay Delta since 1981. He is joined aboard the Delphinus, a converted fishing trawler, by Myrna Hayes and Brian Collett of the Mare Island Heritage Trust.

The six-hour journey takes passengers first up the scenic Napa River, where they may catch a glimpse of a pair of peregrine falcons perched or in flight near their nest as the boat passes under the Highway 37 bridge. Just up-river the boat passes by White Slough designated as a Globally Important Bird Area, and alongside the Sonoma/Napa marshes, one of the largest inter-tidal marsh restoration projects in the United States. The entire river is being restored to a Living River as part of a flood control project for the city of Napa. Large mud flats have been constructed along the river edge, creating abundant feeding and excellent viewing opportunities of a host of waterbirds. A variety of hawk species are common and occasionally both golden and bald eagles have been seen. Bull and Edgerly Islands and other spots upriver are reminders of the era of duck hunting clubs, orchards, cattle ranches, boatworks and industrial operations that depended on the Napa River. The hills of the Carneros and Napa Valley winegrape growing regions come into focus as the trip nears Napa's downtown waterfront.

On the return trip the vessel will cruise in close to Mare Island for a rare visit from the water as the cruise makes its way along the historic shipyard's shore to the mouth of the Napa River to a new regional park, the Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve. Located on the West's oldest Naval Ammunition Depot founded in 1857, where the oldest Naval Cemetery in the Pacific was established a year later and together with the former ordnance workers housing, this property makes up the Naval Ammunition Depot National Register Historic District.

Passengers will view osprey and herons nesting on abandoned light poles and high points on shipyard cranes and buildways at the peak of the nesting season. They will learn about the Mare Island Navy Yard's long maritime and naval history dating back to 1854 when Commander David G. Farragut, later first Admiral of the U.S. Navy founded the first U.S. Naval installation in the Pacific on the island, which would later also include its first hospital and first Marine Corps training camp west of the Mississippi, founded in 1862. Passengers will also see the Navy's early air station site and the berth where WWII's famous submarine the USS Wahoo was launched and the submarine base where boats that served in the Pacific in WWII were repaired and retrofitted.

For Reservations: Call: 510-527-9622 or 800-472-9942 or visit: [Dolphincharters.com](http://Dolphincharters.com)

Please note: Tours of the Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve and Mare Island are available to any reporter or photographer covering this event. While space is limited a reporter and photographer may arrange to accompany the cruise. Call Myrna Hayes, 707-557-9816 or 707-249-9633 (cell) to schedule. [Click here](#) for a link to our photo page. High resolution photos may be requested.

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