



An aerial view, taken in 2007, shows the extent of the canal system.

Marina and community become one at Seabridge

Southern California is home to Disneyland and Sleeping Beauty's enchanted castle so it is appropriate that the sun-soaked state is also home to a thoroughly enchanting new marina community called Seabridge. Seabridge is in Channel Islands Harbor, a two-mile long stretch of protected harbour located 30 miles north of Malibu on California's scenic coastal Route 1. **Robert Wilkes reports**

Channel Islands Harbor is a newer and more affordable northern alternative to Southern California's celebrated boating mecca at Newport Beach and it is an excellent home port from which to access some of the best cruising the region has to offer. The harbour has seen its marinas and marine businesses expand steadily over the decades in rhythm with the phenomenal growth of Southern California since the end of WWII. Once a set of sleepy coastal agricultural communities, Port Hueneme, Ventura and Oxnard are now within the expanding sphere of metropolitan Los Angeles. Nearby Port Hueneme (pronounced Wy-nee-mee) is noteworthy as the home of the SeaBees of the US Navy.

Channel Islands Harbor has several established marinas and boatyards nearer to the harbour entrance in the southern end. The islands and canals of Seabridge, in the newer north section of the harbour, were carved out of 135 acres of raw land by DR Horton in 2006 and 2007 and its public marina facilities were completed and opened in July 2008. Market demand has been solid and slips were 50% leased in just a few months.

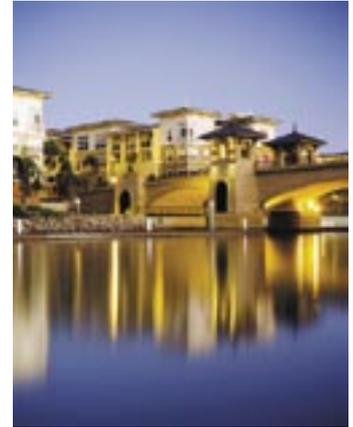
This part of California has unique boating attractions. The Channel Islands consist of eight islands along the coastline, five of

which are marine parks. The northern set of islands nearest the harbour feature popular and exciting ecology parks that can be reached in

about a half hour's cruise from the harbour. To the north is the city of Santa Barbara and its coastal and beach communities, which

The dock modules were assembled before the canal was flooded to help in forming the timber walers.





Left: residents can use dedicated public docks near the amphitheatre when using their runabouts. Above: architectural attention to detail is evident in classic forms, colours and lighting. Below: residents use electric boats in the same manner as golf carts to make their way around the complex.

are arrayed along an unspoiled mountainous stretch of California many consider the most beautiful part of the state. Turning south, one can cruise to Catalina Island, Marina Del Rey and, of course, the vibrant boating scene at Newport Beach.

DR Horton is the largest real estate developer in the USA and Seabridge is a bold, imaginative concept. The company has accomplished what many might consider impossible. It is not unusual to build stunning housing developments in California, but it is quite remarkable to build a completely new marina where nothing had been before. Refurbishing existing marinas goes on continuously but new marinas in new basins are extremely rare in this part of the world because almost all the natural marina basins in California have been developed. If you intend to create a new basin, overcoming permitting requirements and satisfying strict environmental concerns is a convoluted, time-consuming process; daunting indeed.

Other restraints to building new marinas include the economic realities that drive property owners to employ land for its 'highest and best use'. This often results in high-density, high-asset-value projects like hotels and condominiums rather than marinas. It clearly takes a major corporate developer with the resources and patience of DR Horton to see a project such as Seabridge to completion.

Following preliminary planning undertaken by Moffatt & Nichol, Bellingham Marine (BMI) was appointed as the design-build contractor for both the public and private moorage facilities of the development. A 250-slip marina serves the public and an additional 250 slips are spread out throughout the development. These are adjacent to residential homes built on two 'islands' surrounded by a system of canals spanned by two landmark bridges and a causeway. Moffatt & Nichol designed the waterways, along with the dredged channels, perimeter bulkheads and revetment.

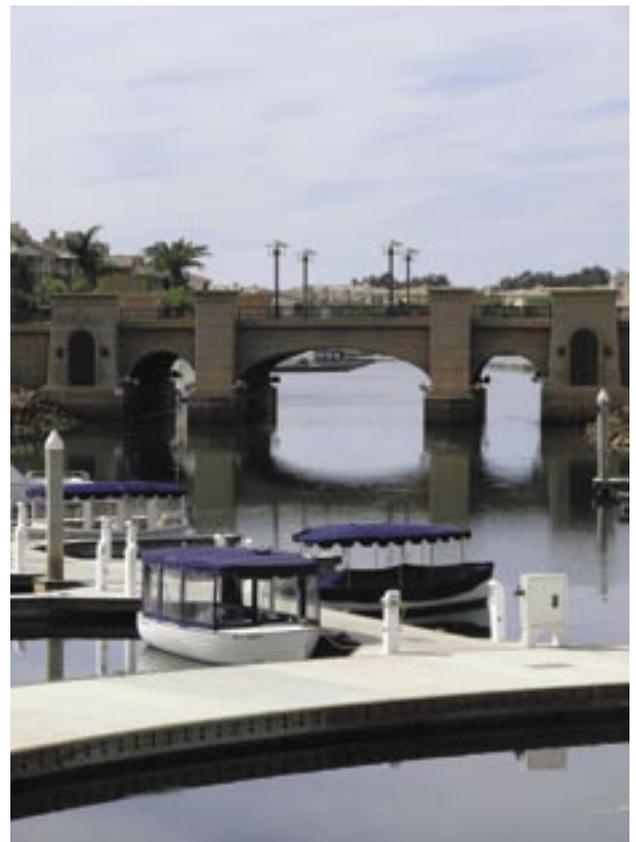
Buyers of waterfront homes may elect to have a designated nearby slip deeded to them in the purchase of a house or condominium and the private moorage options vary in design. Some slips have private gangways and others are reached by perimeter walkways from shared gangways. All docks are constructed of concrete flotation manufactured in Dixon, California by BMI. There is a combination of finger-slip berths and side tie moorage, and all slips are supplied with utilities such as water and power. Private slips accommodate boats from small electric runabouts to 60ft cruisers.

The public marina offers additional slips for residents and non-residents with moorage for boats from 16 to 60 feet in length. "We moor boats for tenants from all over the Pacific Coast as far away as Washington State," said Kevin Ketchum, principal and general manager for California Yacht Marina, the company that is responsible for operating the public marina. A dock owners' association coordinates the private slip owners' needs for maintenance and ongoing services. The marina has an extra measure of security and fire protection. "The city police and fire departments have slips in the marina for harbour patrol and fire protection, and we have a police substation in the shopping centre. The same goes for the County Harbor Patrol," said Ketchum. "We provide an office and slips for them as well."

Seabridge is a self-contained community with a variety of shops, restaurants,

health club facilities, a concert amphitheatre and a 6,000 square foot clubhouse for residents. The developers wanted to create a marina lifestyle without cars, and provided a number of docks and ties for residents to park small boats near commercial and recreational areas within the complex.

To illustrate, imagine you live at Seabridge and wake up one morning needing eggs and coffee. You simply cross your back yard and take the gangway to your dock. You toss your faithful terrier Lord Nelson into your electric launch, shove off and wend through interlaced canals to the shopping village. With Lord Nelson on the prow you tie to a public





dock near the shopping village and make your purchases. Shopping done, you stroll along shady parkways across Renaissance Europe style bridges in the warm California sun. Back in the launch, you slip quietly past the concert amphitheatre (it's an electric boat!) and head down the canal to your slip. You tie your launch aft of your motor yacht and...coffee's on.

It's easy to see the parallel between Seabridge and gated-community golf clubs. Private golf club residents can leave their car parked in the garage and use a golf cart for most purposes. At Seabridge, the electric golf cart is replaced by a jaunty electric runabout, a popular waterborne variation on the golf cart. Duffy Electric Boats has provided a local dealer for its distinctive whaler-style craft and they are also offered for hire by a concessionaire. Channel Islands Harbor, like Newport Beach to the south, is large enough to provide a fulfilling day of pleasant sightseeing without ever going out into the Pacific.

Seabridge is a remarkable integration of land and water, the result of a master plan so well thought out that the development won the national award for the Best Master Planned Community of the Year in 2007. The execution and architectural attention to detail of Seabridge is, in a word, charming. Two great bridges stand as iconic landmarks, inspired by famous bridges on the Seine, the Arno or in many enchanting European cities. The docks and slips are sited and designed with an architectural richness to complement the fashionable residential buildings, parks and common areas.

Fidelity to the architectural vision required a dock design that shared the elegance of the buildings and bridges. To this purpose, Bellingham developed a system for manufacturing and installing curved docks more perfectly round in appearance than any they have done before.

Seabridge (above) - and close up - offers 250 public slips and a further 250 private moorings.



"The individual modules are shorter on the inside and longer on the outside of the curvature," said BMI general manager, Jim Puder. "The dock gets its round, arched appearance from the use of curved concrete forms. We created the tooling and made it expressly for this project."

"The walers were then formed to the concrete floats utilising the structural rod construction. The walers and rods together act to hold the assembly in its curved configuration. Once in place, the wood takes the curved shape permanently, much like the case of a piano," he continued.

Because of scheduling constraints, the curved dock was constructed in situ, on the bottom of the canal, before the basin was flooded. The curved dock faces the amphitheatre complex located near the shops and other services. The float and its fingers provide extra slips for residents' runabouts when attending a concert or at other times for shopping.

"Bringing a community of such dramatic scope to fruition was a groundbreaking effort for the company and one that took years of thoughtful planning and innovation," said Chris Chambers, California regional president for DR Horton. "The concept of gracious, resort-like residential living in a marina environment has been proven in Florida and other places. We've shown it can work in California. The fact that we received such a prestigious award for Seabridge speaks volumes about this waterfront master plan."

Robert Wilkes writes about the marina industry from his home in Bellevue, Washington, USA.