

Instant Summer Fun: One Sailboat, Just Add Water

DO go near the water. That's the advice of the growing number of sailing enthusiasts in Observerland -- where it's not uncommon to see a small sailboat parked in your next door neighbor's yard.

The days of wooden ships and iron men are past.

Today, two things -- plastic and wheels -- have brought the ancient art of sailing to the suburbs.

Drive down any street in Observerland and it is not unusual to see a sailboat on a trailer parked next to that split-level, miles away, but only minutes in time, from the nearest navigable water.

And it probably won't be made of wood. Modern materials, mainly fiber class, aluminum and stainless steel have nearly eliminated more traditional wooden boats.

The joys of sailing are apparent to anyone who has watched a fleet of boats from shore on a Sunday afternoon on any one of the nearby lakes.

It can be exciting, relaxing, athletic or self-indulgent depending on what kind of boat and how hard the wind is blowing.

It is quiet, and there is nothing quite like it to give you a feeling of being in close harmony with the wind, the water and nature.

Sailing used to mean a lot of

maintenance, as wooden boats sprung leaks, needed scraping and painting, and cotton sails needed careful attention lest they mildew

And even though it looks like you're only a half an inch away from the Great Lakes on a map, it's a good two-hour drive if you live in Observerland.

Permanent docks are expensive, and storing boats in boatyards is even more so. The answer is a trailer.

Today boats from 10 feet up to 26 feet can be pulled behind the average car. The smallest can even be loaded onto a car top.

The largest "trailerables" are built with four or five bunks, a galley, and accommodations for extended cruising. Drag them up to Lake Superior behind your car and eliminate a two-week cruise up Lake Huron.

The most popular lakes for sailing within easy reach of Observerland are Kensington, Orchard Lake and Cass Lake.

Actually, if you have a small sailboat on a trailer, almost any lake will welcome you. Restrictions against motorboats often don't apply, and the cottagers will think you are kind of pretty sailing around, instead of resenting the



