

Bonnie Heatzig tours her clients of luxury properties in Boca Raton on a boat



BY AMBER RANDALL, SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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On a recent Saturday afternoon, real estate agent **Bonnie Heatzig** was escorting her clients, visiting from Washington, D.C., on a tour of luxury properties in Boca Raton. But instead of stepping into her car for the start of the tour, they hopped into her family's boat for a sunny two hour jaunt around Boca's waterways and exclusive waterfront

mansions. Her clients were all smiles as they chatted about which homes provided the best views and had the most potential to live in.

Heatzig is selling the South Florida lifestyle — water, sun, fun — and what better way to do that than from a boat? **The executive**

director of luxury sales at Douglas Elliman in Boca Raton,

Heatzig came up with the idea to do boat tours during the pandemic — the market was taking off, yet some home showings were being cancelled, and there were safety concerns. So she pivoted to the outdoors, and the water, with the hopes of giving her clients a better idea of how the property looked, and a deeper perspective of what life could be like in South Florida. \$2 for 2 months Subscribe for unlimited access to our website, app, eEdition and more CLAIM OFFER “You get a whole new vantage point from the water, and you can see firsthand the home’s proximity to the intracoastal, the inlet and what the views look like,” said **Heatzig**. With a housing market that is showing almost no signs of slowing down, **Heatzig** said she is doing tours of waterfront homes by boat almost weekly. Touring waterfront homes by boat isn’t new, but it’s a way for **Heatzig** to really sell the romance of a waterfront property — stepping onto your future dock can be more sexy than stepping onto your future driveway. And in a market flooded by out-of-state clients who might be put in a buying mood by the sight of palm trees and yachts, these tours are a crucial way for buyers to not only understand the properties they are looking at, but to also get a grasp of the lifestyle they will be buying into. “It’s an experience just to be on the water like that,” **Heatzig** said. “It puts everything into perspective.” JR Schuble, and his two

sons, Justin and Jordan, were on the tour with **Heatzig** Saturday, as the brothers are in the beginning stages of looking for a property on the water, preferably in the Boca Raton area. Today's top headlines

Sign up for the Afternoon Update and get the day's biggest stories in your inbox. **SIGN UP** This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply. "It's very South Florida," the brothers said of living by the water. The family also has a home in Washington D.C., though they aren't strangers to the area. They've been visiting South Florida for years, as their grandmother had a home in the area. Their parents own property in Boca as well, and they stayed with them during the pandemic. "Our friends come down to visit and they don't want to leave," Justin added of the lure of South Florida. **Heatzig's** tours usually involve either giving prospective buyers a general tour of the waterways so they can get a feel of how they might be able to navigate a boat in certain areas or what sort of backyard views they can expect. Other times, depending on what the client is looking for, they will tour the waters and dock the boats at various properties they want to see and tour the interiors. She starts her tours by educating buyers on the different aspects of living on the water, the neighborhoods, the price points and general sizes of the home, whether there are fixed bridges or drawbridges etc. And the Boca Raton luxury real estate market has been doing well. According to data from Douglas Elliman, the median sale price of a luxury home in Boca Raton was \$2,952,500 in the third quarter of 2021. While a search for a home via land usually involves the best school zones and safety, for prospective waterfront buyers, concerns include the

condition of the sea wall, the water frontage and if there are any fixed bridges, noted Josh Dotoli, founder and principal of the Dotoli Group in Fort Lauderdale. Touring the waterways allows potential buyers to get an idea of the backyard views of the home, how much natural light the home can get and how and where they can dock their boats. For boaters, seeing how much frontage there is, and how much dock space they have, allows them to visualize how big a boat can dock there and whether there is enough space to navigate in the water. “You are demonstrating the lifestyle. You are buying the backyard, the pool and the view,” added Dotoli. It also helps with allowing buyers to make quick decisions in a scenario where properties are coming off the market in days, said Kevin Spina of the Keyes’ Company Spina Group. With how limited the inventory is, it’s a good tool to help buyers understand quickly what the property looks like, because there is an urgency to get a property under contract. Seeing the home by the water can make the difference in what a client buys, Spina added. As for **Heatzig’s** clients, the brothers haven’t settled on a property yet. Though at the end of the tour, **Heatzig** popped champagne. “Once you are on the water, it’s hard to come back,” Jordan said. “You’re paying for a permanent vacation.”