

Things to know before buying a winter vacation home

By Daniel Goldstein, MarketWatch

If homeownership is the first cornerstone of the American Dream, then a quiet cabin by the lake (if not a beach house with a view of a breathtaking sunset) in the mountains as far away from a Wi-Fi hot spot as possible probably runs a close second.

Indeed, overly-wired and Internet-saturated Americans are looking to the peace and quiet of a cabin again. Zach Klein, the co-founder of Vimeo and the current chief executive at DIY.org, an online school for kids, recently wrote a best-selling book on the thousands of Americans who have gone to the backwoods to build their own.

Of course, you don't have to saw your own logs to get the log-cabin effect. Heather Barbosa, a 44-year-old architectural project manager in Fullerton bought a two-bedroom cabin in Big Bear near the popular ski resort in 2003 with some money her grandmother left her.

She uses it four times a year, but rents it out for eight to 10 weekends a year as well. "It's really a staple of our family now and a cheap vacation for us," she said. "Now that we've paid it off it becomes positive cash flow for us too."

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