FREE GUIDE

Selling a Second Home From Out of Town

Selling a cabin, second home or rental near Leavenworth when you live somewhere else: what to decide, what to handle locally, and how to get from listing to closing without flying back and forth.

Justin Horvath, Managing Broker, Real Broker, LLC. Leavenworth, WA. (509) 652-2023, hello@justinhorvath.com

Start here: you don't have to be here to sell here

Most of the second-home owners I work with live on the west side, out of state, or somewhere in between. Selling from a distance works fine. It just takes a few decisions made early, and someone local who can be your eyes, ears and keys.

The short version:

1. **Decide on timing and price** with real numbers, not a website estimate. 2. **Get the place ready** from afar: furniture, any rental bookings, small repairs, and your paperwork. 3. **Let local people handle the on-site work** while it's listed: showings, weather, vendors. 4. **Sign and close from home,** carefully, because remote sellers are who wire fraud targets.

Each step is below.

When to sell

There's no perfect week, but the seasons here do matter:

- **Late spring into summer** is when the most buyers are driving over to look. Roads are clear, the place shows at its best, and buyers are planning moves around the school year. It's also when the most competing listings come on.
- **Fall** brings a lot of visitors for Autumn Leaf and Oktoberfest, and some of them are quietly shopping. Color and crisp weather help a cabin show well.

- **Winter** has fewer buyers but fewer listings too, and the buyers who show up in the snow are usually serious. It's harder to show a place up a steep or unplowed road, so access matters more.

More important than the season: the market you're selling into. Right now the Leavenworth area has about 13 months of homes for sale at the current pace of sales, so buyers are comparing a lot of options. That makes the starting price and the presentation more important than the calendar. MARKET has the current numbers, and VALUE covers pricing.

If you can, give yourself a runway of a few months. It takes time to get a place ready from a distance, and it's easier to make good decisions when you're not up against a deadline.

Before you list: the decisions to make from afar

- **Furnished or not.** Many cabins here sell furnished, and some buyers want the turnkey version. But furniture rarely adds much to the price, and a tired or crowded room photographs badly. Decide early what stays, what goes, and what you want to keep, and put it in writing so it's clear in the offer.
- **Rental bookings.** If the place is a short-term rental, block your calendar as soon as you decide to sell. Any reservation after the sale closes will have to be canceled, because the new owner won't honor it, and canceled guests mean bad reviews and headaches. Stays before closing are fine as long as they don't collide with media day, showings or inspections.
- **Small repairs.** Leaky faucets, dead bulbs, sticky doors, a soft deck board: buyers notice everything, and their inspector writes it all down. Fixing the small stuff before listing usually costs less than negotiating it later. PREP has the full list.
- **Cleaning and a media day.** Even if you have good photos from your rental listing, plan on a fresh media day for the sale. Rental photos rarely show enough of the outside, the land and the setting, and I'll shoot video too. A deep clean before that day matters more than almost anything else for a home that buyers first see on a screen.
- **Your paperwork.** Gather what buyers and lenders will ask for: septic records and the most recent inspection, well records and any water tests, permits for additions or remodels, any road maintenance agreement, HOA documents, and utility and propane providers. In Washington you'll also fill out the seller disclosure statement, which asks about a lot of this.
- **Extra keys.** Have two extra sets made: one goes in a real estate lockbox for buyers' agents, and one is for vendors. Real estate lockboxes only open for agents, so if you want contractors to come and go on their own, add a separate code lockbox for them. Or I can meet them there; letting vendors in and out is part of what I do.

None of this needs you on site. A good local agent can walk the place, send you photos and a short list, and line up the cleaner, the handyman and the photographer.

While it's listed

- **Showings.** Buyers' agents book showings through a scheduling system, and you approve them from your phone. A lockbox means nobody has to drive out to open the door.
- **Winter care.** An empty cabin in winter needs attention: keep the heat on, know the plan for plowing the driveway, keep the walkway safe for showings, and have someone check after big storms. A frozen pipe or a roof that needed shoveling can derail a sale.
- **Insurance.** Some policies treat a home that's sitting empty differently. If the place won't be lived in or rented while it's listed, ask your insurer whether anything changes.
- **Staying in the loop.** You should never have to wonder what's happening. I send my sellers a weekly update: showings, online views, feedback from buyers' agents, new competing listings and recent sales, and what I'd recommend next. You'll also have a shared tracker of everything that's happened.
- **Vendors.** When something needs fixing mid-listing, someone local should be able to meet the plumber, let in the appraiser, or check on a delivery, without you booking a flight.

From offer to closing, from home

- **Offers.** We go through every offer on a call or video, line by line: price, terms, contingencies, and the closing date. Contracts are signed electronically.
- **Inspections.** The buyer's inspector comes out during their inspection period. You don't need to be there; someone just needs to make sure the place is open, the utilities are on and the access is clear. On a home with a septic system, the seller provides the septic inspection, and I handle it start to finish; PREP has the details.
- **Repair requests.** If the inspection turns up issues, we negotiate: fix it, credit it, or leave it as is. A local agent can get contractor bids quickly, which keeps the deal on schedule.
- **The appraisal.** If the buyer has a loan, the appraiser visits. Again, it just needs access, and your agent can share the recent sales that support the price.
- **Signing to close.** Closing documents can be signed with a mobile notary wherever you are, and Washington allows remote online notarization when the title company accepts it. Ask the title company early which they use.
- **Moving out from afar.** Plan who handles what's leaving the house, the final clean, and transferring or closing the utilities, propane and internet.

Wire fraud: read this twice. Remote sellers are a favorite target. Scammers send fake emails that look like they're from the title company, changing where your sale proceeds go. Before you give or confirm any bank details, call the title company at a number you looked up yourself, not one from the email. Real title companies don't change wiring instructions by email.

Taxes and the rental permit

- **Talk to your CPA before you list.** Selling a second home or a rental is taxed differently from selling the home you live in, and if you're thinking about rolling the money into another property, the timing rules start before the sale. I'm not a tax advisor, so this is the one call I'd tell you to make first.
- **Washington's real estate excise tax** is paid by the seller at closing, along with your share of escrow and title fees and the commissions. Before you list, I'll put together a free estimated net sheet so you can see roughly what you'll walk away with.
- **Your short-term rental permit doesn't go with the house.** County rental permits no longer transfer when a property sells. A buyer who wants to rent it has to apply on their own, so they won't pay extra for your permit or your booking history. Price the house as a house. STR has the details.
- **Wind down the rental cleanly.** Once the sale closes, close out your listing accounts and any lodging tax registration. The bookings themselves are covered under "Before you list" above.

How I help

I live here, and I manage short-term rentals here, so handling a property for an owner who isn't around is something I do every week: cleaners, contractors, snow, guests, keys. When I list a second home, that's the part I take off your plate.

- I walk the property, send you photos and a short prep list, and line up the cleaner, handyman and photographer.
- I handle access, showings and the on-site surprises while it's listed.
- You get a weekly update and a shared tracker, so you always know where things stand.
- We review offers together by phone or video, and I coordinate inspections, the appraisal and closing so you can sign from home.

The first step is a conversation and a number. Start with VALUE, which explains how I'd price your place, or fill out the short home valuation form on my site and I'll send you a range. If you're getting the property ready, PREP walks through it. Message me either word and I'll send it.

Text or call (509) 652-2023, or email hello@justinhorvath.com.

Sources: Northwest MLS (Leavenworth area months of supply, October 2025 through September 2026). Washington remote online notarization: RCW 42.45. Real estate excise tax: Washington Department of Revenue.

Justin Horvath, Managing Broker, Real Broker · Leavenworth, WA · (509) 652-2023 · hello@justinhorvath.com
General information, not legal or tax advice. Rules and counts change; confirm the details for a specific property before you rely on them.