JUSTIN HORVATH
REAL ESTATE

FREE GUIDE

What's My Cabin Worth?

What a cabin, second home or piece of mountain property near Leavenworth is actually worth, why the online estimates miss, and how pricing works when there are only a handful of sales to compare.

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

Start here: it's a fair question with a local answer

Most owners I talk to aren't in a hurry to sell. They just want to know what the place is worth: for a refinance, for estate planning, to decide whether to keep renting it, or because the family is starting to talk about it.

That's a fair question, and in a big city you could get a decent answer from a website. Here you usually can't. Cabins, acreage and second homes in the upper valley don't fit the formulas, and the difference between a good number and a bad one can be six figures.

This guide walks through why that is, what actually moves value here, and what a real valuation should include.

Why there's no easy online answer here

Online estimates work by finding recent sales of similar homes nearby and adjusting. That works in a subdivision where fifty similar houses sold last year. It breaks down here for a few reasons:

- **Not many sales.** The whole Leavenworth MLS area, which includes Plain, Lake Wenatchee and Peshastin, closes a couple of hundred homes a year. Split that by town, size, age and acreage, and there may be only one or two truly similar sales, or none.
- **No two properties are alike.** A cabin on two acres with river frontage and a 1970s cabin on a quarter acre up a private road can sit a mile apart and share a ZIP code. A formula sees two houses in the same place.
- **The things that matter most aren't in the data.** The view from the deck, how the road is plowed, whether the well produces, whether the add-on was permitted: none of that is in a database, and all of it shows up in the price.

- **Distance distorts it.** To find enough sales, the formula reaches further out and further back in time, into a different town or a different market.

So a website estimate is a starting point at best. I've seen them off by a lot in both directions, and owners plan around that number.

What pushes value up or down here

These are the things I weigh most when I value a mountain property, roughly in order:

- **Location within the area.** Walk-to-town in Leavenworth, river or lake frontage, and a real mountain view each carry a premium. The same house ten minutes out, or with the view blocked, is worth noticeably less.
- **Usable land.** Flat, usable acres add value. Steep or heavily treed ground adds privacy but less price per acre.
- **Year-round access.** A paved, plowed county road beats a private road with no maintenance agreement. A recorded road agreement helps a lot when you sell.
- **Water and septic, on paper.** A well with a good flow record and a septic system with clean paperwork are worth more than question marks. Buyers and lenders will ask, and gaps cost you at the negotiating table.
- **Permitted history.** Additions and conversions that were permitted are worth full value. Unpermitted work tends to get discounted, or becomes a problem late in the deal.
- **How it was built, and how it's held up.** A home built for year-round living, with updated systems, holds value better than a summer cabin that's been added onto over the years.
- **Insurability.** Wildfire risk means some homes are harder to insure than their neighbors. If a buyer can't get a reasonable quote, it shows up in the offers you get.

Some of these you can't change. Several you can: the paperwork, the permits, the condition and how the place shows. Those are worth working on before you list, and PREP covers them.

Why the first price matters more right now

The Leavenworth area has about 13 months of homes for sale at the current pace of sales, which is a buyer's market. Cashmere is tighter, at about 5.5 months. (The usual rule of thumb: under about 4 months favors sellers, over about 6 favors buyers.) MARKET has the current numbers by town.

In a market like this, buyers have time and choices, and they compare everything. That changes how pricing works:

- **The first two to three weeks matter most.** That's when every active buyer and agent looks at a new listing. Priced right, it gets showings and real offers. Priced high, it gets skipped, and those buyers don't come back to check.

- **Sitting costs money.** The longer a home is on the market, the more buyers wonder what's wrong with it. Homes that start too high and sit tend to sell for less than they would have at the right number on day one.
- **Price drops chase the market down.** Each reduction resets attention for a few days, then fades. A string of small drops usually lands below where a confident first price would have.
- **Right-priced homes still sell.** Even now, homes that are priced well and show well go under contract. The market isn't stuck; it's selective.

I'll be straight with you: in this market the most common mistake I see is starting too high and hoping. A valuation is only useful if it tells you what buyers will actually pay, not what you'd like them to.

How to read a valuation

Whether it comes from me or anyone else, a good valuation should show its work. Look for:

- **The sales it's based on,** with addresses, sale dates and prices, not just a number. Recent and nearby beats old and far, but here a good comparable might be a year old or across town, and the report should say why it was used.
- **What's different, and why it matters.** More acreage, a better view, an older roof, no garage: a good valuation points out how each comparable differs from your property and which way that pushes the price.
- **What's competing right now.** Active and pending listings show what a buyer will compare yours to this month, and homes that didn't sell show where the ceiling was.
- **A range, not a single number.** An honest valuation gives you a likely range and tells you where in it your home should start.
- **How long it should take, and how much interest to expect.** At the right price, how many days on market and roughly how many showings similar homes are getting, so you have targets to measure the listing against.

Be careful with any number that comes without its sales attached, or that's much higher than the others you've seen. A high number can feel good and still cost you months.

What my valuation includes

- The recent sales that actually compare, and how each one differs from yours
- What's for sale and pending now that a buyer would weigh against yours
- Homes that didn't sell, and what that tells us about the ceiling
- A recommended price range, a likely timeline, and targets for days on market and showings
- The top three things that would add value before you list, plus the common ones that usually aren't worth the money

It's free, there's no obligation to list, and I'm happy to do it whether you're selling next month or in three years.

How I help, and the next step

I live here, I sell here, and I manage short-term rentals here, so I see these properties from the owner's side as well as the buyer's. When I value your place, I look at it the way a buyer will, and I'll tell you what I'd want to know if I were buying it.

The easiest way to start: fill out the short home valuation form on my site with the address and a few details. I'll pull the sales that actually compare and send you a range within 48 hours. If you'd rather talk it through, text or call.

If you're further along, SELL walks through selling a second home when you don't live here, and PREP covers getting a mountain property ready for the market. Message me either word and I'll send it.

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

Sources: Northwest MLS closed sales and active listings, areas 972 (Leavenworth) and 963 (Cashmere), October 2025 through September 2026.

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.