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Dave Windsor's 'Alaska Real Estate'

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Winter Home Shopping Has Its Benefits

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So the days are getting longer and, as long as you bundle up, Alaska is never short of outdoor activities. If, by chance, you have talked at home about purchasing a new place soon, I want to suggest that there are several benefits of winter shopping for real estate.

By far the biggest benefit is the money you will save by shopping in January or February. Anyone who has a property for sale at this time of year has likely had it on the market since before Christmas. Most people know that the market does not accelerate until March or April when lots of homesellers finally get around to listing their property for sale.

You can definitely negotiate aggressively in December through February. This can produce a savings (or immediate equity) of \$20,000 to \$30,000 over shopping for the same home in Spring. If the property is vacant you have even more leverage

because an empty home is costing the seller money for utilities and for the existing mortgage.

The early bird catches the worm. In fact, the only bird that doesn't catch a worm is the bird that does not bother to look for one. Winter is an excellent time to obtain a great bargain. I would say that you should be able to save up to 5% on the price of your home.

There are other benefits of shopping for a home in January. The bottom line here is that Alaskan houses are under the greatest stress at this time of year and will reveal their weaknesses which may not be discoverable in the summer. Alaska's harsh 7 month winters place demands of roofs, attics, crawl spaces, walls, insulation and heating systems.

Apart from inside elements, snow-covered surfaces, such as the driveway, decks and roof shingles are not visible in winter but, between the

Property Disclosure and a good Home Inspector, you should be able to assess these surfaces.

When you are doing your winter shopping, always perform a careful review of the Seller's Property Disclosure. Statutes now prosecute deliberate untruths with Triple Damages, so known functional problems must be disclosed. Any frozen pipes or any roof, foundation or heating deficiencies should be listed in the Seller's Property Disclosure.

Cardiologists like to give you a stress test on the treadmill to put your heart through its paces, and the best time to look at the quality of a home is in winter. In my view, the winter buying benefits of shopping for your new home far exceed the hazards. So bundle up and get on with it!

Dave

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