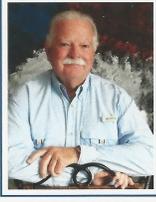




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## **Frequently Asked Questions on Life and Real Estate in Big Bear Valley**

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**What's the difference between Big Bear Lake and Big Bear City?** Generally, everything west of Division Street all the way to the dam is Big Bear Lake, and everything east of Division Street all the way to highway 38 is Big Bear City. BBL is incorporated and BBC is an unincorporated part of San Bernardino County. Tax rates are approximately the same for each community. And you'll find that different utility companies serve BBL vs BBC.

**When is the snowy season?** Generally, the snow starts falling around Thanksgiving Day and ends in late March. The ski slopes make snow as long as the climate will allow. However, it's not too unusual for snow to fall on Halloween or to have a snow shower on Mother's Day.

**Can I put my boat in the lake?** Boating is permitted on Big Bear Lake all year round. All types of boating activities are allowed including: water skiing, sailing, fishing, personal watercraft, float tubes, kayaking, canoeing and sailboarding. The maximum boat length (LOA) is 24', and all vessels must have a annual boat permit for Big Bear Lake. The Lake has several free public launch ramps on both the South shore and the North shore. All private boats must pass an inspection for Quagga mussels at the launch ramp.

**Is a fishing license required for the Lake?** Yes. You can buy the California fishing license at several places around town, including Kmart and several gas stations. Big Bear Lake is a trophy rainbow trout fishery and also boasts a large population of largemouth and smallmouth bass, catfish, crappie, bluegill, and pumpkinseed. The Lake is stocked regularly throughout the year by the California Department of Fish & Game. The Fishing Association of Big Bear Lake also stocks trout in conjunction with its annual May Trout Classic. MWD cooperates with the Association in sponsoring a fall plant of catfish and trout. There are one or two days per season that everyone can fish for free and without a license.

**What is the National Forest Adventure Pass?** Visitors using the recreational resources of the San Bernardino National Forest need to obtain a National Forest Adventure Pass to display on their vehicles. The pass is inexpensive (\$5 a day or about \$30 for an annual pass) and the proceeds from each Adventure Pass help to support the high quality of services provided by the Forest Service. An Adventure Pass is good for all four forests (San Bernardino, Angeles, Cleveland, and Los Padres National).

**Are there any land lots available on the Lake front?** Very few available lots are actually on the lake's edge. Those lots that do come on the market are sold pretty quickly since there's only a finite amount of "shore line" to build on. There are also several hundred vacant land lots available in other parts of Big Bear Valley.

**Are there any lots to build on?** *Parcels range from just large enough to hold a small home, to Ranch parcels of several acres. Some of the more remote parcels do not have public utilities or paved access roads.*

**How much does it cost to build a home in Big Bear.** *Contractors tell me that it costs about \$300/sq.ft to build a home (not including the land). So, a 2,000 sf home would cost about \$600k for the home not including the cost of the land to build it on. You can't spend much less than \$250/sf, but you can spend much more depending on your personal tastes.*

**How often are the roads cleared in the winter?** *There are three major roads into the Big Bear Valley: hwy 18 from Highland- the "front way", hwy 18 from Lucerne Valley-"high desert way", and hwy 38 from Redlands – "back way". All of these roads, including the major local streets, have snow-clearing equipment staged and ready even as the snow begins to fall. CalTrans pays very close attention to winter weather forecasts, and is poised for the white stuff to start falling.*

**What is there to do on a weekend in Big Bear?** *There are as many things to do in Big Bear as there are differences in people. For example, the Zoo, Discovery Center, Hiking trails, 4X4 trails, Boating, Fishing, Snow play, Mountain biking, scenic tram rides, Fire lookout towers, old Gold mines, Historical Museum, Pony rides, Antique shops, fine eateries, photo opportunities galore, and don't forget to simply watch the evening fire in the cabin's fireplace with good friends and family. A quick check with [www.BigBear.com](http://www.BigBear.com) will show you the current events.*

**What's the traffic like during the week?** *You can imagine that during the cold, snowy, winter weekends and holidays, we see the largest number of visitors. However, Monday through Thursday, the valley's population is about 15,000 permanent residents, so the traffic can be defined (in down-the-hill terms) as very good. However, on those busiest of weekends (Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Labor Day) the traffic can be defined as "very heavy"... and you should leave ample time to get here from down-the-hill or just to drive from one end of Big Bear to the other end. Traffic around the Village can be heavy on the holiday weekends, and weekend traffic on the roads leading to Snow Summit and/or Bear Mountain can be fairly terrible during the snow season.*

**Is there major shopping in Big Bear?** *Here in Big Bear we have 2 large grocery stores (Vons and Stater Bros), and equally as important- we have many small merchants who bring unique and timely merchandise to Locals and visitors alike. If you need a large variety of everything, then Redlands to the south or Apple Valley to the north are only an hour away "down the hill."*

**How about hospital and medical services?** *Bear Valley Community hospital is a wonderful rural medical facility. Doctors and staff are expertly qualified to handle almost any type of emergency. As you can guess, during the winter skiing season, the hospital ER is a very busy place with all sorts of ski-slope 'crash' victims. However, the hospital doesn't have Maternity or dialysis care. And some of the incoming patients are air lifted to hospitals down the hill.*

**How can I get an update on local road conditions?** *By calling 909-866-SNOW (7669), or by calling CalTrans at 800-427-7623, or clicking on <http://www.bigbear.com/travel-tools/local->*

conditions/ . Winter road conditions of interest are "R2" and "R3". R2 conditions mean that a 2 wheel-drive vehicle must have chains installed on the drive tires, and 4 wheel-drive vehicles must have snow tires installed and carry chains. R3 conditions mean that you must have 4-wheel (AWD) drive with chains mounted on all 4 corners. Most of the time R2 conditions can be driven with chains by going slow and watching out for others who aren't used to driving in the snow and ice. Avoid driving in R3 conditions unless the trip is absolutely necessary. R3 conditions only happen a few times per season, and R3 doesn't generally last more than a day. Be aware of Big Bear visitors who do NOT know how to drive in winter conditions... don't follow too close, go slow, and use the car's transmission to slow down (down-shift) instead of slamming on the brakes.

**How are the houses heated?** Most homes have gas wall heaters or forced air furnaces. Most homes also have fireplaces, but we find that most fireplaces are more for the esthetics and less for the efficient heating... but a fireplace will certainly heat the home. Fireplaces require firewood and a "cord" of wood (about 4ft x 4ft x 8ft) costs \$250 to \$350... and will last about half of the winter season. We don't use coal here in the San Bernardino Mountains.

**How are utilities handled like trash or water?** **Natural gas** is directly plumbed from the street, but some cabins have propane tanks in the back yard to supply the heater and stove. **Water and sewer** are plumbed from the street underground. In some remote areas, the water must come from a personal well, and the sewer is via a septic tank. **Electric and telephone** are supplied by local companies like Spectrum, Verizon, Bear Valley Electric, etc. **Trash** is handled in two different ways... if you are a permanent resident, you will put the trash cans out on the street on certain weekdays (in "bear-resistant" cans). If the cabin will be a second home for you, you'll most likely take the trash/garbage bags to one of several central disposal locations here in Big Bear.

**Are there issues with water quality?** All of our drinking water (potable water) comes from underground aquifers and is conditioned by our local water companies. Generally, the water is very good.

**Are there issues with electricity?** Nope... it is very reliable. Sometimes during the summer thunderstorms, the power will go out, but it happens much less now. And sometimes in the Winter, during or after a heavy snowfall, the power lines will come down due to heavy snow/ice on the wires... but power is usually restored within a couple of hours. In almost all cases, the electric/telephone/cable wires are suspended from telephone poles. The newest developments have underground utility wires etc.

**How do you get internet in the Big Bear area?** You can use either a personal hotspot from your current carrier, or both Spectrum and Verizon have cable access to almost all areas of the Valley. Cell phone reception can be spotty in some locations within the valley.

**Do you need AC in the summer?** Of the thousands of homes in BB, only a handful of homes are equipped with refrigerated AC. The temp rarely gets above 85 in the daytime, but it always cools down in the evening. Most folks are perfectly OK with opening the window/door and turning on the fan.

**Are there problems in the winter with roads not being cleared?** The main roads are cleared of snow even as the snow is falling. The road guys are poised to clear the main roads even before the snow storm hits. Naturally, the major roads up to BB are constantly cleared. First the major interior roads are worked on, then secondary roads. There are lots

*of people here in BB that will clear off your driveway with a plow on the front of their truck... some charge \$200/season or so. Here at 7,000ft elevation, all roads will be covered with snow at certain times in the Winter. And, it's actually California law that in the winter time while traveling on mountain roads, you must carry chains whether your vehicle is a 4x4 or not. Most of the time a 4-wheel drive vehicle will be the norm... 2-wheel drive vehicles are OK only after the snow and Ice have been cleared. Occasionally there are traffic stops at the bottom of the hill that will check to see if you have chains... and won't allow you to come up the mountain with a 2-wheel drive car if you don't have chains on... enterprising guys at the bottom of the hill will put your chains on your car for \$30. Check with <http://www.bigbear.com/travel-tools/local-conditions> for road conditions.*

**What is recommended as best solution for roofing in that area?** *All homes must meet Big Bear building codes, and that includes the right kind of roof. Licensed contractors will know how to design or replace a roof that meets our "snow load" requirements.*

**What is recommended for windows in Big Bear?** *Single pane windows can still be found on homes built before about 1980. But after about 1980, dual pane windows became the Code. Older cabins that have been upgraded will have dual pane windows. A local home inspector told me that unless you will be living in the home full time, you really don't need to upgrade single pane windows... it's just too costly for the lengthy ROI.*

**What are the usual recurring costs associated with home ownership in Big Bear, other than property taxes? HOA fees? Other local taxes?** *No HOA fees unless you buy a condo. You will find CC&Rs for most properties, but without fees. There are a very few actual "tracts" since most of the homes/cabins are custom... "custom" doesn't mean expensive, but it does mean that folks here in Big Bear just don't like tract homes. We have a wonderful eclectic mix of old and new, affordable and expensive, and everything else can be found on the same street. You can use 1.2% when figuring out the annual tax bill. For example, if the home sold for \$320k, then the taxes will be about \$3,800 per year.*