Make your first property visit count

Think about this scenario: You have just driven 3 hours from home to see two recreational properties that are at the top of your wish list. But after a long day of looking, you realize that neither property fits your needs at all.

Talk about frustration. You’ve just wasted a day, and now you have to start over. So how can property buyers avoid this from happening to them?

Quite simply, work with your real estate broker to do your homework before you visit. With that in mind, here are some tips to make the first property visit the most productive it can be.

1. **Work with a broker who has experience in recreational land sales.**

   This is critical to your success. The right broker will understand recreational land, will know what kinds of questions to ask that will help you narrow your search, and will know the geographic area you are interested in.

   Selling recreational property is very different from selling homes in a neighborhood, and you should have a specialist working on your behalf with local knowledge.

2. **Determine how you want to use the property.**

   Figuring this out will go a long way towards determining which properties make your wish list. Do you want to put a trailer on the property for weekends, or do you want to build a vacation home? Are you going to hunt on the property? Is it important to have acres upon acres of public lands nearby for recreation?

   And, will you be looking at the property as a timber investment? If so, the number, quality and age of the trees will be important.

3. **Decide a range for what you are willing to pay, and be realistic.**

   Pricing for recreational property in many parts of the country has bottomed out, and is actually increasing in some areas. Couple that with the fact that fewer owners are doing “distressed” sales, and we are finding that the spreads between listing prices and sales prices are often narrower now than they were several years ago.

   So having a realistic budget in mind will prevent you from wasting your time looking for properties that are beyond what you want to spend.

   But also know there are ways to think creatively that can help you get your dream property.

   “For example, if you can’t afford, say, an entire 600-acre property that fits your wish list, perhaps the seller would be willing to let you buy a piece of it,” says Rick Musick of United Country Musick & Sons Auction and Real Estate Services in Nampa, ID, part of the Potlatch Preferred Broker network.

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*Cover story continued on page 4*

*The best of the season. Happy New Year from from all of us at Potlatch*
Broker Spotlight:

NATALIE COWART UNITED COUNTRY BANNING JUNCTION REAL ESTATE

“Sharing information in real time with our clients makes our showings easier…”

For Natalie Cowart, selling recreational real estate runs in the family. She and her brother, Tom Jensen, bought their real estate business, United Country Banning Junction Real Estate, from their parents in 1999, 15 years after it was founded.

Growing up just miles from the office has helped their business, with roots in the community that they don’t take for granted. Natalie works alongside her brother, his wife Jamie, and several other agents who have been with their office for many years.

“Having many agents with us for so long, it really is a family business,” she says. Because of their longstanding reputation in the community, midway between the cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul and Duluth, their repeat and referral business is something they value.

“I think my passion for what I do shows through,” she says. “I have a hard time not showing that excitement. Our clients know they will always get that level of sincerity and service.”

Natalie’s business is affiliated with United Country Real Estate, a well-known national franchise system with exceptional rural properties for sale around the country. “Being a part of United Country Real Estate and utilizing the UC network has been such a blessing for our business,” she says. “People know the name and the reputation.”

And as the market has experienced a downturn over the past few years, she feels fortunate to have desirable Potlatch land to share with shoppers. From price to location, she feels the land is reachable geographically and attainable financially for many people.

Buyers today have done their homework, Cowart says. “They know what they want and what they can afford. And since we’re in a small town, we can send them to a local bank as a name, and not just a number.”

Cowart has fun not just selling land, but showing it as well. Her relationship with Potlatch has allowed her to indulge in her favorite pastime: putting on her boots and exploring the land.

“My passion for what I do shows through,” she says. “I have a hard time not showing that excitement. Our clients know they will always get that level of sincerity and service.”

“We share information in real time with our clients, which makes our showings easier…”

“Being in this business has been the best thing for myself and my family,” she says, which includes her husband of 25 years, two boys ages 21 and 16, and an extended family who all share a passion for the outdoors.

“Our family has 300 acres with a cabin, where we love to hunt, recreate and head out on the ATVs,” Cowart says. “We also have a couple of hunting parcels, rental properties and a vacation home in Florida, so we stay pretty busy. I truly believe we wouldn’t have any of these things if I weren’t in this business.”

For more information about United Country Banning Junction or its Potlatch land listings, contact the team at (320) 245-2502, or visit www.banningrealestate-mn.com.

Banning Junction Real Estate Team (from left to right): BACK ROW: Shirley Diterhaupt, Kari Matrichuski, Jamie Jensen, Kristin Lousek, Natalie Cowart, Tom Jensen. FRONT ROW: Kelly Frisch, Peg Nadeau.

Potlatch Broker/Agents from Minnesota, left to right Charlie Chernak and Kate Davies - Bear Island Land Co; Natalie Cowart - United Country Banning Junction; and Rod & Jody Osterloh - Close Converse/Land Radar.
Minnesota

Kate Davies

Minnesota offers a trial option for potential hunters normally required to have a Firearms Safety Certificate – they can try out hunting for up to two years, accompanied by a licensed adult hunter, with an Apprentice Hunter Validation. Before the commitment of a training program, apprentice hunters may hunt deer, wild turkey and small game.

“This apprenticeship is a great way for families to get children out with them and teach them about hunting,” Davies says, “before the time and expense of courses.”

Once they decide to move forward with certification, adult and youth hunters can attend firearms safety class either in person or online. More information about this program is available through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

Arkansas

Mark Knight

Those interested in hunting in Arkansas or learning more about regulations and season dates can easily access the most current information through the 2012 Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Hunting Guidebook. The publication, which can be requested in print or conveniently viewed online, is a summary of hunting protocols and rules all hunters need to know, including license and permit requirements and their costs, hunting regulations, season dates and wildlife management area rules.

“Those who are new to the state, just starting to hunt, or have been hunting for a lifetime, can use this comprehensive guide to learn all they need to know about the sport and its regulations,” says Mark Knight.

Copies of the official Guidebook are available online at www.agfc.com, or by calling 501-223-6351. Knight and his team are also ready to answer any questions regarding hunting, recreation and more in the Little Rock area and around the state.

Idaho

Rick Musick

For those who would like to explore Potlatch land around the state before committing to the perfect home base, Potlatch is currently accepting Recreational Use Permit applications for land in north Idaho. This permit is a great way to explore land around the state before you buy.

“With this permit, those looking to purchase land can explore and recreate on Potlatch properties in different areas of the state, and figure out which one would be perfect for their recreational needs,” says Rick Musick. Valid for one calendar year, permit costs range from $27.50 for an ATV, motorcycle or snowmobile, up to $110 for a motor home. Those who are interested can find general permit information at www.PotlatchCorp.com under Recreation/Idaho, or speak to a Potlatch Preferred Broker to find out which properties are available for sale.

Q&A

Bob Crawford

Crawford Olson Real Estate Services

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Are you seeing any new motivations in land buyers?

We’re seeing the Boise market improve, and the inventory has tightened. People seem to be buying now, when in the recent past, they would “look, like and leave.” They have been sitting on the fence, but now we’ve had a surge in activity.

There is a different tone, and there are fewer bargain hunters, with people buying land in multiple-offer situations on well-priced properties. The people that have had money all along are ready, and are getting what they want.

How has the market changed for your brokerage over the last few years?

In our area in general, we’re seeing the percentage of home sale transactions that are either short sales or foreclosures declining. It has probably dropped from 60 to 30 percent over the last two years.

Yes, these are housing listings versus land, but it is still a reflection of the way the market is. As we’ve seen the market broaden, it started with a concentration of transactions on the low end, and now people are expanding to slightly more expensive properties.

Sellers who have also been waiting to sell are now putting properties on the market, resulting in a nice selection of properties that people are really starting to snap up.
4. Use technology to electronically “see” the properties you are considering.

Using such tools as Google Earth and aerial photos, the broker can help you get a feel for such things as topography, road access and proximity to nearby amenities.

“Satellite functionality will help you see a property and its appeal,” says Rod Osterloh, with Close-Converse Properties in Brainerd, MN., and a Potlatch Preferred Broker. “And this functionality can offer the context of a property to the rest of the neighborhood. For example, it could have privately owned property all around it, or it could be in the middle of state or federal forests.”

Also, some brokers will use such services as Join.Me.com or GoToMeeting.com to conduct an online tour of properties without you having to leave your house.

5. Think about more than just the geographic features of a property. Think about how the property will fit into your lifestyle.

We are finding that many recreational land buyers are looking for a recreational property as a place where they want to live full-time someday, or even now.

If that’s the case, it’s important to answer such questions as: Is the property suitable for building a house? Could I find part-time work nearby? Is internet access or proximity to electricity and water an issue? How close are such retailers as grocery stores, home improvement stores and drug stores?

“There is more to think about than just your land,” says Natalie Cowart of United Country Banning Real Estate in Finlayson, MN., and a Potlatch Preferred Broker. “How far away is town? Will I have an easement road for access? We find that if we provide that information, it saves everyone time.”

### POTLATCH PREFERRED BROKER NETWORK

Let us show you why your Potlatch Preferred Broker is the only name you’ll need to know when it comes to buying property.

Please contact the broker nearest your area of interest or visit us at www.PotlatchLandSales.com.

We look forward to helping you with your property search!

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