Small Town Or Isolated Retreat? Where Should You Prep?

Every prepper must plan for a survival retreat or a bug out location since this is the most logical and safest way to go in case you are forced to evacuate.

Regardless of how you feel about interacting with other fellow humans, you must keep in mind that your main choices for bug-out locations are a small town or an isolated retreat.

Choosing a bug out location in a small town will make you dependent on some form of local infrastructure while picking an isolated retreat will require for you to be completely self-sufficient and self-contained.

Most preppers I know are trying to become self-sufficient, and, in general, there is an extensive debate when it comes to selecting a bug
out location. You can imagine that most of them prefer the isolated retreat,
but the reality is that not every prepper out there is suited to tackle the
chores required to aim that self-sufficiency level we all dream of.

Before you pick out the ideal bug-out locations, there are

things you should consider, such as:

- Advanced age
- Chronic health conditions
- Physical handicaps
- Lack of trustworthy friends or even family members

All of the above makes total self-sufficiency impossible and they are the main reason that most preppers will pick an inconspicuous in-town
retreat rather than an off-grid bunker.

If you decide to buy a home in a small town and make it your permanent location in case SHTF, here are some suggestions from people who
already made this move.

Pick the town by numbers

Most people will look for towns with a small population, somewhere between 1,000 and 4,000 people. Towns with a population of more than 1,000 people may present some additional sanitation problems, while towns with a population of over 4,000 souls lack a cohesive sense of community.

I would recommend picking a town that has between 200 and 1,000 people since, from my point of view, this is the most

accurate number of
people you an deal with and bring together in case the brown stuff hits the
fan.

If you decide to pick a town with less than 200 people, chances are your neighbors may lack a sufficient mix of skills, or the manpower
to organize the town and assure a proper defense and self-sustainability.

On the other hand, when there are more than 1,000 people competing for resources or arguing over which course of action is best, it may
turn the whole place into a powder keg. Sooner or later, it will be every man
for himself and no one would be able to keep them together if the situation
becomes desperate.

One noticeable thing that is worth mentioning is that some of them have picked a town where they have a generation of family living, or
there are good friends (childhood friends) close by.

Pros and cons of small-town and isolated retreats

Small town retreat

Here are the main advantages as depicted by my friends already living in small-town:

- You have ready access to barter and commerce economy.
- Becoming a member and integrating into the community is easier and you can form alliances if need

be.

- You will benefit from local agricultural payrolls, and you will take advantage of the collective knowledge.
- Ready access to medical facilities and local skills.
- You will benefit from local security arrangements (some have organized a small militia) when it hits the fan.
- Having someone you know, living in the same town (friends, family, etc.) will provide you access to a reliable workforce for your private projects.
- Access to social gatherings is an added bonus. Humans are social creatures, and having access to social interaction makes it a good place to raise your kids and, maybe, make it a permanent living solution.

As it comes to disadvantages, here are the things my friends noticed:

- Privacy is limited even when you are dealing with a small number of people. Transporting bulky logistics will attract attention, and if you want to minimize the exposure, you have to do it at rather odd hours.
- In certain cases, fuel storage may be limited in certain towns, and you need to consult the local ordinances on storage before you but the new property. Sure, you can make a gas cache, but as said before, transporting a fuel tank that you plan on burying on the property, will not go unnoticed.
- In some cases, you won’t be able to test-fire

your guns on your own property.
- In most cases, hunting will be limited to your land. The exceptions are only small game and pests.
- You will have to check with your local ordinances if you want to keep livestock.
- There is an increased risk of communicable diseases.
- Burglary may still be a problem if the proverbial brown stuff hits the fan.
- In a grid-down scenario, you may have to deal with poor sanitation and the troubles it brings. This can be avoided if the town has a gravity-fed water system.

This is pretty much the first-hand info I gathered from people living in small towns. It should give you a good start to decide if you should pick a small town as your bug out location.

Isolated retreat

I know some people that live off the grid, and few of them struggle with this lifestyle. However, I must mention that most of them had a head start when making the transition. They had some pretty good savings when starting this journey. Even so, here are the advantages or disadvantages they reported after living off the grid for more than 5 years.

The perks of having an isolated retreat:

- All of them have room to spare. They have more room for gardening, pasturing, and growing their own crops if they choose to do so.
- Keeping livestock is not a problem, and they won’t have to check with their neighbors.
- You can buy one for a lower house and land prices. Most often time you can find good deals as most owners sell the house and land since they live in the city. Properties inherited are often sold below the market price.
- You can stock up in quantity without having to worry about nosy neighbors.
- You can test fire and zero your guns without problems.
- One big advantage is that you can build non-traditional architecture, and you don’t have to worry about building permits or regulations.
- You can hunt on your land without worries.
- Cutting your own firewood is a nice perk to have
- There’s a much lower risk of contracting a contagious disease
- You can collect rainwater, and you can improvise all sorts of rain-catching systems.
- The fuel storage options are pretty much unlimited, and they are affected only by your budget. You can install an underground cistern and fill it with fuel if you so desire.

Disadvantages of picking an isolated retreat:

- A small family cannot properly maintain and defend the location. It’s pretty much a 24/7 job, and in the first 3 years, there’s little to no time for relaxation.
- If you have to deal with wildfire or if there’s a medical emergency, you can’t depend on your neighbors.
- Law enforcement support is pretty much out of

the question, and you have to fend for yourself until help arrives.

- A longer commute is necessary for shopping, going to church, and other activities of sorts. Every trip must be carefully planned to save fuel.
- If you plan to make this a permanent living location, there will be little social interaction. Think about this if you have small kids.
- Mother Nature becomes your main enemy, and there's no one to help you when you get snowed in, when the crops fail or when dealing with wild animals.
- Some isolated retreats may require a big start-up cost since you are aiming for self-sufficiency. Solar panels, hydropower, and all sorts of equipment will be necessary.
- Making an income is rather difficult, and you will rely mostly on your savings.

Conclusion

When you look at the above pros and cons for each but out solution, you may realize that things are not as easy as depicted in magazines or TV shows. Every way of living has its own learning curve and there's no guarantee that you will be able to have a full life in either of the two choices.

If you have teenagers in your family, moving them to an isolated retreat will become a frustrating experience for both parties. However, in a small town, they may find suited companions to

make the
transition easier.

If you have old people you need to take care of, moving them to a small town may be hard, but you could rely on help from your neighbors
while you're at work. They have much better chances of adapting to a new
lifestyle if they see a familiar face around. Also, medical aid will be
available, and in reach, so you should be covered in this regard.

Whether you pick a small town or an isolated retreat, think about the other first and put your requirements on the second front. You will have a hard life as it is, no matter what you pick, and the last thing you want to deal with is spending all of your time trying to make everyone happy.

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