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Take My Second Home, Please

As the number of people owning vacation homes continues to rise, they are finding a new way to use those homes — to facilitate still more vacations. Home exchange services report that second homes are increasingly being swapped by their owners as an alternative to using hotels when traveling.

“People are seeing that they can leverage the money they put into these houses to essentially help pay for vacations elsewhere,” said Ed Kushins, president of Homeexchange.com.

About 25 percent of his 7,500 listings are second homes, up from 10 to 15 percent two years ago.



HomeExchange.com

Helen Bergstein has seen a similar trend on Digsville.com, her 10,000-member home exchange Web site.

“Vacation homes are the fastest-growing part of my business,” she said.

With Digsville.com, Homeexchange.com and other online services like Intervac (intervacus.com), those who pay an annual fee (generally \$35 to \$70) post a profile and view others. Members make trade arrangements.

Trading second homes — pied-à-terres in Manhattan or houses on Lake Tahoe — offers owners scheduling flexibility; with vacation homes, which may sit empty much of the year, exchange partners don’t have to travel simultaneously.

In addition, having two homes available increases the chances that someone will want to swap at least one of them — or, perhaps, both. Bruce Janklow, a marketing consultant living in Brooklyn, recently joined a home exchange site and listed his family’s Park Slope brownstone and Catskills weekend house as a package. “We were contacted by someone who has a flat in Paris and a home in Provence,” he said. “And that’s looking awfully good to us.”

ARIC CHEN