Moving to Bakersfield

The honest version, from someone who lives and works here

What your money actually buys, how the city is laid out, what surprises people, and how to buy a home here from out of town.

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Start here

Most relocation guides are written to sell you a city. This one is not.

I work with people moving to Bakersfield from Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange County and the Bay Area almost every month. The ones who are happy a year later did the same thing. They came in with clear eyes about what they were gaining and what they were giving up, and they picked an area that fit how they actually live.

So this guide gives you both sides. The math, the geography, the things nobody mentions until you are already here, and how a purchase works when you are buying from three hours away.

What your housing dollar does here

Bakersfield

$419,790

Median sale price, three months ending July 2026

Source: Redfin, Bakersfield housing market

Los Angeles

$1,055,302

Median sale price, three months ending August 2026

Source: Redfin, Los Angeles housing market

That gap is the entire reason most people start looking here. It is not a small difference in monthly payment. It is often the difference between renting forever and owning something with a yard and a garage.

What it does not tell you is whether the rest of the trade works for your life. That is the rest of this guide.

How Bakersfield is laid out

Think of the city in broad directions rather than in neighborhood names.

Southwest and Northwest

Where most newer housing sits. Wider streets, newer construction, most of the current new home communities, most of the retail and restaurants built in the last twenty years. Rosedale sits on the northwest edge and keeps going, with a lot of the newest building happening out that way.

Central and Older Parts of Town

The established housing stock. Larger lots in places, mature trees, more character, and older systems that need a closer look during inspection.

East and Southeast

The oldest housing stock in the city and the lowest prices, with a wide range of condition from one block to the next.

I cannot steer you toward or away from an area based on schools, who lives there, or how an area feels to me. That is fair housing law and I follow it. What I can do is show you the housing stock, the ages, the lot sizes, the commute times, and the data, and point you to the public sources so you can decide for yourself. That is a better answer anyway, because it is your life and not mine.

New construction and resale, side by side

Bakersfield builds a lot of new homes, and the new construction option is more real here than in most California markets.

New Construction

- A home nobody has lived in
- Builder warranty included
- Modern insulation and HVAC
- Often a builder incentive

Tradeoffs: A build timeline, a smaller lot in most communities, and incentives that usually require the builder's own lender.

Resale

- Mature landscaping
- Established neighborhoods
- Larger lots in many cases
- A home you can walk through before you commit

Tradeoffs: Age, deferred maintenance, and competing with other buyers on the good ones.

If you are relocating, the honest question is when you need to be in. A build that finishes in six months does not work if your lease ends in sixty days.

What actually surprises people

The Heat

Summer here runs hot for months, not weeks. Your July and August electric bills will be the highest of the year by a wide margin. Ask about the age and condition of the HVAC on every home you consider, and ask whether the home has solar and whether it is owned or leased.

Winter Valley Fog and the Air

The Central Valley sits in a bowl. Winter brings fog days, and air quality is a real topic here for people with respiratory conditions. Look it up on public air quality sources before you decide, the same way you would look up anything else that matters to you.

Water

Landscaping choices and water costs matter more here than in coastal markets.

Agriculture

Kern County is a major agricultural region. That shapes the economy, the traffic on some roads, and the seasonal smells in some parts of the county. Most people stop noticing. Some never do.

Distance to Everything Else

The coast, the mountains and Los Angeles are all a drive, not a quick trip.

The commute question, answered straight

Bakersfield sits about 110 miles north of Los Angeles on Interstate 5, over the Tejon Pass, the stretch everyone calls the Grapevine.

On a clear day with no traffic, that drive runs roughly two hours each way. In practice it is longer, and in winter the pass can close for snow with no notice.

People do commute it. Very few do it five days a week for long. If your plan depends on driving to Los Angeles regularly, test it before you buy, on a weekday, at the hour you would actually drive it.

Where the math does work is hybrid and remote. If you go in one or two days a week, or you work from home entirely, the trade is very different, and that describes most of the relocation clients I work with.

The costs after the mortgage

Property Taxes

Under Proposition 13 the base rate is one percent of assessed value. Voter approved bonds and local assessments are added on top, so the real bill usually runs a little above one percent. Newer developments may also carry a Mello Roos special tax, which is separate and can be significant. Pull the actual tax bill for the actual parcel before you write an offer. Never assume.

Insurance

Get a real quote early, not an estimate, and ask about anything the property has that changes it.

Utilities

Budget for summer cooling. Ask the seller or the builder what the home actually costs to run in July.

Solar

Owned is an asset. Leased or on a power purchase agreement is a contract you have to qualify to assume. Find out which one it is before you fall in love with the house.

HOA

Common in newer communities, less common in older parts of town. Get the documents and the current dues in writing.

Buying here from out of town

This is most of what I do, and it works.

1 A real conversation first

We start with a call about how you actually live, not about house features. Commute, schedule, whether you work from home, what you are leaving behind and what you refuse to give up.

2 You build a feel for the market

Then you go on a search that emails you homes as they hit the market, so you build a real feel for what your number buys before you ever drive up.

3 Honest video tours

I tour homes for you on video, honestly, including the parts a listing photo hides. If a house is wrong I tell you it is wrong.

4 A focused scouting trip

When you come up, we see a focused list in one or two days instead of wandering.

5 Remote closing

Offers, inspections, appraisal and signing all happen remotely. Electronic signature is standard, and a mobile notary can come to you for closing.

Making your scouting trip count

- **Come on a weekday if you can**

  Weekends hide traffic patterns.

- **Drive the actual commute**

  Drive the commute you would actually drive, at the hour you would drive it.

- **See at least one home in each direction**

  Even the ones you think you have ruled out. People are surprised constantly.

- **Visit the ordinary places**

  A grocery store, a gym, a park, wherever you would spend a normal Tuesday. That tells you more than any tour.

- **Eat somewhere local and talk to people**

  It is a friendlier town than its reputation, and that is worth measuring yourself.

Questions to answer before you pick an area

Answer these five honestly and the area choice usually answers itself.

1

Your driving reality

How many days a week will you actually drive somewhere, and where?

2

New or established?

Do you want a newer home with less yard, or an older home with more land and more maintenance?

3

Long term or shorter stop?

Are you buying to stay a long time, or is this a shorter stop?

4

Your real move in date

What is your real move in date, and does that rule out new construction?

5

Your non negotiables

What do you refuse to compromise on, and what are you willing to trade?

When you want a real conversation

No pressure and no pitch. If you are six months out or a year out, that is a fine time to talk. Most of my relocation clients start a long way before they move.

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I am not a lender, an attorney or a tax advisor. Market figures cited come from Redfin, Bakersfield housing market, July 2026, and Redfin, Los Angeles housing market, August 2026, and they change every month. This guide provides no school, safety or demographic characterizations of any area, by design and by law. Consult public sources directly for that information. Equal Housing Opportunity.