

Summer Escape

Leaving Florida during the summer is a relief for my family. We escape the heat and busyness of the season by traveling to upstate New York, where we have always enjoyed returning to our hometown.

As we drive through state after state, it becomes apparent that the world around us is changing. In South Carolina, we already begin to notice changes. The trees appear to be touchable, offering soft, plush leaves which sway in the breeze, and the grass actually invites us to share its place rather than scaring us away with mounds of intruding fire ants. As each state brings new surroundings, our anticipation builds, and home seems closer all the time.

Leaving Florida during the summer is always a relief for my family. The hot, busy season is replaced by the cooler, more relaxed atmosphere of traveling to upstate New York. As we drive through state after state, we take in the changing scenery. In South Carolina, we see trees with plush leaves and grass that invites us to stay. As we cross into each new state, our anticipation builds until finally we reach home. Home is where we feel most comfortable, surrounded by the people and things that we love. It's a place where we can be ourselves and relax after a long journey.

Leaving the flatlands and entering an area where we are suddenly surrounded by hills of purple and blue are by far the most awakening moments. Virginia and Pennsylvania offer brilliant scenery with majestic hills and checkerboard farmlands. As we descend through the curves and winds of the northern region of the United States, home is now very close: we are almost there. Suddenly, we have driven from wide-open flatlands to a narrow, winding road surrounded by hillsides of stone and trees. Around every curve, orange and black tiger lilies claim their place in the world as they push themselves out from underneath rocks, towards the sunlight. The last hour of our drive is always the most exciting; home is so close that we can almost taste it.

The journey home is almost complete. As we begin our final descent through the state of Pennsylvania into upstate New York, the surroundings become comfortably familiar. Before long, we are welcomed by a sign that reads "Waverly, 18 miles" and the familiar fields of grazing cattle. Through the

last stretch of Pennsylvania, the bursting foliage seems to envelop us and carry us over the hills like a carriage created by nature.

We're almost finished with our journey home. As we descend through Pennsylvania and into upstate New York, the surroundings become more familiar. Soon enough, we see a sign that says "Waverly, 18 miles" and the normal fields of cattle grazing. In PA's last stretch, it seems like the bursting foliage is carrying us over hills as if nature made a carriage just for us. It is always bittersweet to return home after being away for so long. There is a part of me that never wants to leave again once I'm there, but eventually, I have to say goodbye and begin my journey back south. As I sit on the porch swing and watch the world go by, I know that home will always be waiting for me when I'm ready to return.

At this point, our family - even the youngest member - knows that our vacation in New York is about to begin. Our eldest son has joked for years that he can "smell" Grandma's apple pie already. We all know what this means; we are finally close to home. Approximately fifteen minutes pass and as our vehicle takes us over the final crest, we see the smoke stack from the local factory as we cross the border of Pennsylvania and New York. At this point, we are fully aware of our surroundings and take notice of each turn that leads us closer to home. Finally, we are close to our destination.

As soon as we pull into our driveway, the long journey is finally over, and we can finally relax in the comfort of our own home. Home is where we feel most comfortable, surrounded by the people and things that we love. It's a place where we can be ourselves and relax after a long journey. For me, there is no feeling in the world quite like it. Home is where we feel most comfortable, surrounded by the people and things that we love. It's a place where we can be ourselves and relax after a long journey. We are home.

