

Summer Escape

My family has always looked forward to leaving Florida during the torrid summer months. It is a tremendous relief to get out of the heated hustle and bustle of summer living in Florida. Each summer, we follow the yellow brick road to our hometown in upstate New York.

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 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 toward the car, waving hello and flashing their mysterious black spots toward us as we drive by.

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.

It is at this point that 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.

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 and are aware of our surroundings. A couple of turns later, we are there. We have reached our destination; we are home.