



# Coming Home

Even the swaying palm trees of Florida are no match for memories of living in South Jersey. *By Lisa A. Beach*

**W**hat do I miss most about living in South Jersey?

Picking out fresh Jersey tomatoes at local farmers markets. Jet Skiing in the Mullica River near Sweetwater Casino. Shopping in the quaint Rancocas Woods Village. Noshing on delicious wood-fired pizza. Visiting Batsto Village in Wharton State Forest. Celebrating special occasions at Settlers Inn. Going down the Shore for a day in Stone Harbor. Being regulars at Mitchell's comedy shows in Riverside—free admission with a two-drink minimum and the same lame opening jokes at *every* show. Picking up scallion pancakes from our favorite Chi-

nese take-out spots. Window shopping along Main Street in Haddonfield. Playing volleyball in the community league at Rancocas Valley Regional High School, then grabbing beers at Dadz Bar & Grill.

When I moved from Mt. Laurel to Orlando in 1998, I knew I'd miss my family and friends, who had provided years of memories and a built-in support system. But I didn't count on the little snippets of Jersey life that would sometimes trigger waves of homesickness. While balmy temperatures and swaying palm trees certainly deliver the Sunshine State ambiance I crave, it doesn't fill the void left by my move from South Jersey.

I admit, I'm not a homegrown Jersey girl. A transplant from Pennsylvania, I

met my husband, Kevin, at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, and he whisked me away to beautiful Mt. Laurel. Having grown up in Marlton, Kevin introduced me to local gems sprinkled throughout Burlington, Camden and Gloucester Counties. I fell in love with the area.

We go back every few years (not often enough, honestly) to visit our New Jersey crew and pop into our old haunts. Sadly, some places (like Settlers Inn) no longer exist. But others still deliver that feels-like-home vibe.

On our recent visit, Kevin and I drove by Roberts Mill Apartments in Maple Shade, checking out our first home as newlyweds. Within walking distance, Gallo's Bakery still serves up the region's best cream puffs. We drove along Kings Highway, passing Burl-Moor-Driben Animal Hospital, whose veterinary staff provided such compassionate care for our beloved cat, Zeke. As we meandered along Main Street in Moorestown, the Community House looked as striking as ever, reminding me of my volunteer efforts at the Big Brothers/Big Sisters office there.

Another day, our friends Jimmy and Fran took us sightseeing. We ate breakfast at the new-to-me Flying W Airport and Resort in Medford, sipping coffee as we watched small planes take off. Then we popped into Johnson's Corner Farm so we could take some local flavor (apple butter!) back to Florida.

Much of the area looks different now; there are new housing developments and shopping plazas where once there were fields. But much remains the same: rolling hills, maple trees, and iconic restaurants that are still dishing up local favorites.

While I don't miss traffic circles and state income tax, I most certainly miss New Jersey—past *and* present. Yes, I miss old favorites, but I embrace the changes I see, too. On my next Garden State itinerary: checking out the exploding craft brewery scene. *I'm coming for you, Lower Forge Brewery!* 🍷

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