

## My New Jersey

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I am proud to call New Jersey my home state. I believe this is one of the amazing hotspots of natural wonders in our country. New Jersey is home to a multitude of beautiful ecosystems that flourish and bring life to every corner of the state. Whether you enjoy sprawling out by spring-fed lakes, hiking through evergreen forests, scouring the wetlands for turtles, or soaking in the rays at the beach, New Jersey is home to every bionetwork you could wish to absorb yourself into. As someone that enjoys the outdoors, I have spent many afternoons exploring and capturing images to express myself through photography of the world around me; capturing some of the most amazing shots of animals and plants that live and grow near the lakes by my home. Anyone with an interest in the outdoors would surely love to explore my home state's endless beauty.

One aspect of this state which is much overlooked is the wide variety of weather we have here in New Jersey. We experience a winter full of snow and cuddling up to the fire; a spring blessed with the color of brilliant blossoms and life; a summer under the hot sun tanning ourselves while having fun in the ocean; and a fall beautiful with the changing colors of the leaves around us. Even if I did not live here, I would be attracted to the gorgeous summer weather for a vacation on the beach.

Our beaches in New Jersey are some of the breathtaking of the entire east coast, whether Cape May or Ocean City, they are second to none. As far as I have traveled up and down this side of the country, I have never come to find an ocean side wonderland as clean or as safe as ours. I love our beach and boardwalk because it belongs to us. I grew up in the sand every day of the spring, summer, fall, and even winter. In the summer our beaches are especially welcoming, year after year, I faithfully return to and relive the best memories of my life. I was privileged to work on the beach this past summer as a Sea Isle City beach tagger; spending my days enjoying paradise around me while walking in the warm sand, meeting thousands of wonderful people, both local and visiting. Though I was working, I always felt proud to live here year-round and call this my home.

Aside from the beach itself, the boardwalk is also a place of great fun and excitement. I will never forget the memories I had made as a child on the boardwalk in Ocean City, New Jersey. My siblings and I would get incredibly excited when we got the gift of going to the amusement rides. Every year, the Easter bunny brought my brother, sister and I Morey's Pier tickets for the rides, and each year it was still just as fun. We still go during the summers to this day and now we bring along my four-year-old cousin, so she can grow up with the same wonderful memories. Whether meeting new friends on the boardwalk or family coming in from out of town for a visit, this is a place that brings people together and everyone to happiness.

Around New Jersey, we also found incredible adventures away from the beaches, camping with our family in the deep forest. If we wanted a little "getaway", we could pack up the camper and head to the woods at Bass River State Park for a weekend excursion. We could travel a short distance and we would be at an entirely new journey; kayaking the streams in Lake Absegami, watching bald eagles gracefully soar overhead, or looking up at an untouched star-filled night sky; New Jersey truly has it all.

In New Jersey, it is impossible to run out of fun activities to do whether that be with your family or your friends. New Jersey shares an incredible natural oasis of biodiversity, from the clean, comfortable, sandy beaches of Cape May and Ocean City, to the thick woods of New Greta and Bass River State Park. There is fun for every kind of person in my home state of New Jersey.

