

THE WEEK

A sunshine state of mind: the mass exodus to Florida

Could Florida be the new New York?



Downtown Miami: 'Wall Street South' Art Wager/Getty Images

Year-round warm weather. Beaches. Low taxes. A rich Hispanic and Latino culture. It's easy to see the appeal of Florida, said Jonathan Levin on [Bloomberg](#). Yet while Americans have long enjoyed taking holidays in the Sunshine State and retiring there, not that many working-age people have ever chosen to up sticks and move there – until now.

Thanks to the rise of remote working, a large number of Americans have chosen to settle in Florida over recent years. The census estimates that between July 2020 and July 2021 alone, it saw a net gain of 221,000 residents. Tech firms are pouring in, and a growing cluster of finance

companies around Miami and West Palm Beach has been dubbed “Wall Street South”. It's an exciting time for a state that has long struggled to establish an economic identity outside of trade and tourism.

So Florida is the new New York, eh? What rot, said Steve Cuzzo in the [New York Post](#). “Chattering-class media slobs” are gushing over the state after a few junkets to “overhyped food and art festivals”, but the picture they paint bears little resemblance to “real life in the land of palm trees, manatees and badly mixed mojitos”.

The reality is an alligator-infested state beset by hurricanes and floods, where the humid summers are – according to friends who live there – “like living inside a wet sock”, and where the dominant cultural icon is Mickey Mouse. The truth is that “Florida sucks”. All the New Yorkers settling there will be back in five years.

Speaking as a Brooklyn native who has made the move, I wouldn’t bet on that, said Karol Markowicz in the [US Spectator](#). I’ve encountered no pangs of regrets among my fellow migrants. It’s not just the weather and the plentiful school places; it’s the freedom from overly bossy politicians, and the sense of local pride. Whereas New York is holding on to “a heyday long since past”, Florida feels open and forward-looking.

I’ve lived in the state for five years now, said Charles C.W. Cooke in the [New York Post](#), and I certainly have no plans to return to New York. It’s worth remembering that America’s tastemakers were once “baffled” by people choosing to relocate to California. Why, they wondered, would anyone want to go all the way out there? “Eventually, it became obvious why. In 2022, the same objection is often applied to the Sunbelt – and, especially, to Florida.” Stand by for history to repeat itself.

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