



## New Yorkers can't stand that Florida is the new nexus of the US

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There's something strangely *obsessive* about the New York superfans who spend so much time bashing Florida.

Last year, in the midst of his relentless anti-Florida kick, the New York Times' Paul Krugman contended that the state was "one of America's leading laboratories of democratic erosion." In Bloomberg last year, a Wall Street banker named Jason Mudrick suggested that the "problem with moving to Florida is that you have to live in Florida." In these very pages a couple of weeks ago, Post columnist Steve Cuozzo told New Yorkers who'd moved to the Sunshine State: "You'll all be sorry. Florida sucks, and you'll all be back in five years."

Will we? I rather doubt it. I've been in Florida for five years now, and I wouldn't return for anything. Because the *best* thing about living in Florida is that *you get to live in Florida*. That's why, between 2010 and 2020, a net 280,000 New Yorkers moved to Florida — the largest exchange between any two states in the union.

Earlier this year, while visiting from the UK, my parents asked me and my wife if we have ever missed living in New York, and we realized to our surprise that at no point since we'd moved in 2017 had the question so much as *occurred* to us. Sure, we've occasionally lamented the loss of a given bar or restaurant — although, frankly, that's true of everywhere we've ever lived. But the city, and the state, and all that living in them entails? Not on your life. In Florida, we have sunshine, low taxes, a nice house, friendly public services, year-round-sports, and — shock horror! — good food to boot. Last year, US News and World Report ranked the 50 states "in 71 metrics across eight categories," and Florida ended up at number 10 — 11 points above New York. That sounds about right.

As for freedom? In its most recent report, the Cato Institute ranked Florida second (after Texas) out of all 50 states in "personal and economic freedoms." Since 2014, Florida has never moved out of the top two. Since 2000, New York has placed 50<sup>th</sup> every single year.

Unlike New York's, Florida's elections are meaningfully contested. Unlike New York's, Florida's laws make it extremely easy to vote. Unlike New Yorkers, Floridians know who has won their elections within hours — rather than weeks — of the polls having closed.

Embedded in most critics' conceit is the belief that New York remains the center of the known universe while Florida remains an eccentric indulgence. Alligators! Hurricanes! Disney World! But this is no longer true — and, indeed, it hasn't been true for a while. On the contrary: These days, *Florida* has a claim to be the standard, and New York to be the curiosity. Yes, we Floridians have to deal with swamp-dwelling, flesh-eating, semi-feral dinosaurs. But at least they don't live in our Governor's Mansion.

After a certain point, New Yorkers start to sound like the crazy ex-boyfriend who spends his evenings promising "she'll come crawling back," when, in truth, she's happily drinking bottomless margaritas with her new guy down in Miami. "New York? Oh yeah! I remember *that* guy. The one with the taxes and the broken roads and the chronic inability to fix elementary problems. It was fun for a while, I suppose."

Historically, the nexus of the United States has often moved around. In the Revolutionary era, it was Virginia. In the nineteenth century, it was New York. Today, it is up for grabs. Once upon a time, America's tastemakers were baffled by people who moved out to California. "Why," they inquired, "would anyone go out *there*?" Eventually, it became obvious why. In 2022, the same objection is often applied to the Sunbelt — and, especially, to Florida. Eventually, its appeal will become obvious, too.

Honestly, it already should be. Ask yourself: Where is the energy and attention and dynamism right now? Is it in Florida or is it in New York? In 2021, Florida led the US in newly formed businesses, added more tech companies than any other state, and welcomed hitherto-New York-based giants such as Goldman Sachs, Citadel, Blackstone, and R&B Realty.

The intensity is all in one direction. The New York Times is obsessed with Florida; the newspapers of Florida are not obsessed with New York. When I talk to my friends from New York, they talk to me about Florida; when I talk to my friends from Florida, they talk to me about Florida. And the U-Hauls keep moving South.