



Enjoying the Sunshine State

Sunshine! Hibiscus! Palm trees! Oh my ...

Jessica Walliser

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Photo by Jessica Walliser Sunshine! Hibiscus! Palm trees! Oh my ...

I'm feeling super fortunate these days for such an amazing family. My husband, who stayed home in the cold to manage all the snow and ice melt-off seeping into our house; my son, who is a great traveler and has never been more excited to see green in his whole little life; and my parents, who spend 6 months of the year in sunny Florida and are awesome enough to invite us down every winter just when we need it the most.

We are here now, enjoying their hospitality and weather that, even on its worst days, kicks the pants off what we're having at home.

I had nearly as much fun looking at the beautiful tropical plants at the Naples Zoo as I did looking at the animals. So much lushness nearly sent my son into shock (apparently it's hard for a four-year-old to understand how two hours in a plane can bring on a whole different season). I love all the Spanish moss hanging from the trees, all the bromeliads and all the orchids they have there. Just beautiful.

Photo by Jessica Walliser

We also went to a citrus farm (how could we not?) and got to watch them make the fresh squeezed OJ they sell at the farm store.

We were not allowed to walk into the citrus groves as there had been some rattlesnakes spotted recently but we did get an up-close and personal look at their bee hives. There were several stacks of them placed throughout the groves to ensure good pollination. On this farm they are permanent fixtures, though other farms 'import' temporary hives when the trees are in bloom.

Mom got a bag of Meyer lemons for some cooking later this week, some oranges and grapefruits for fresh eating, and I bought some golden honey from the very bees we had just visited.

Trips are also planned to the mini-golf course (not sure what kind of flora I'll find there...), the beach (the mangroves thrill me every time!) and a boat ride to see the manatees. Oh, and I'd better not forget to thank my lucky stars while I'm here. Thanks!

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