



In the land of warm winters *by Sara Tusek*

An enormous country with great extremes of geography and climate (ranging from the arctic reaches of Alaska to the subtropics of Florida, from below-sea-level Death Valley in California to the heights of Mt Denali in Alaska, from the searing-hot deserts of Nevada to the desolate swamps of South Carolina, and so on), the United States offers a huge variety of elevations, soil types, forests, levels of humidity, grasses, and minerals.

But for most Americans, what all this splendid topographical magnificence amounts to is one thing: the weather. And, to be more specific, the winter weather.

WINTER

Most parts of the U.S. have a decent summer. Even above the Arctic Circle there are days of sunny warmth and rapid plant growth in July. You can have a productive garden in almost every part of the U.S; you can swim, sunbathe and shed most of your clothing in summer.

But winter is another story altogether. In about 3/4 of the U.S, winters are long, cold and snowy. Ice storms, bliz-

zards, treacherous highways, slick pavements, frosty breath and lungsful of chilly air are the norm from as early as October to as late as April. The most fun people have in these states all winter long is the constant opportunity to complain about winter.

But for about 1/4 of the U.S., winter is not so bad. It's not so long, or not so bitter, as in the other states. And in a few lucky states, there is no winter.



Hawaii, along with parts of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas experience no winter to speak of.

And in the state of Florida, winter barely exists at all.

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How about a nice Christmas Day swim in Jacksonville?

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Merry Christmas from Washington Oaks State Gardens!

"A Lesson on English" is a series of short lessons created for people who want to become fluent in conversational English. The lessons are practical and useful for students learning English in a traditional classroom setting or on their own.

The land of warm winters—*from p. 1*

WARM WINTER

Florida has a number of features that make it an extremely attractive place to vacation or to live. These include

- Abundant resources of fresh water, mineral springs, forests, wild animals (bears, panthers, deer, alligators, foxes, raccoons, armadillos, iguanas, birds of every description, an infinite variety of lizards and insects), flowering plants and shrubs, and fertile soil.
- Hundreds of miles of seacoast, with white sand beaches, orange pebble beaches, marshes, river mouths, barrier islands, and reeds.
- A relatively small population (around 16 million), with the majority of people concentrated on the coasts, leaving the interior still rural and even wild in many areas.
- Numerous national and state forests, parks, wildlife sanctuaries, natural springs (Florida has over 100 significant natural springs, many of which you can swim in at national and state park facilities), rivers, lakes, creeks, ponds and sloughs.

And, of course, the biggest—Florida winters range from very mild to non-existent.



ILI program, March 2007: Lida and Kaja on the beach

North Florida has just a few days each winter in which the temperature may dip below freezing, but you can cover your outdoor plants with sheets and they won't freeze. Central Florida has winter lows only in the 40's and 50's Fahrenheit (17-20 Celsius), while in Miami the temperature is about 96 all the time (31 Celsius).

HOT SUMMER

Of course the price of warm winters is hot summers, with long stretches in the 90's and above during June, July and August.

But there is a saving grace: the thundershowers and thunderstorms that spring up many hot summer afternoons can bring the temperature down by 10 degrees in a matter of minutes. You can also catch a cool breeze many afternoons in Florida.

FLORIDA, LAND OF FLOWERS

The Spanish explorers of the 16th century called the land south of the St. Mary's River "florida," the land of flowers. Sunshine, water and good soil have created a beautiful state blessed with warm winters, one that beckons tourists and new residents alike.

Each day approximately 1000 people move to Florida from other states or countries with the intention of making their homes in the land of flowers. And each Christmas these new residents call their friends in colder climates to wish them a merry Christmas, and casually mention that they just came back from a warm December swim!