

Laurence: From the wine country to God's country

Contributed by Star Laurence
Wednesday, 12 November 2008

As I count the "switch-backs" and the number goes past 12, I look over at my husband to see if he is tolerating the drive. He seems to be so I focus, instead, on the rocky and tree-filled landscape before me. I can see why the Native Americans of this area chose to live here many years ago. It still has that raw and phenomenal beauty that must have captivated them when they stumbled upon it. Not to mention the plethora of natural resources available.

The first question I am often asked is, "Aren't you going to feel extremely isolated?"

I'm referring to moving to the quaint and lovely small town of Hidden Valley Lake. Coming from another small town of Sonoma, this often surprised me.

"Well, no more than what I felt like moving to Sonoma from Marin I guess."

Still, people gave me a sideways glance with a raised eyebrow when I told them my good news that we were relocating to the lovely area of Lake County.

"What will you do for fun? How are the schools? Isn't it really hot there?" The questions persisted. At times, they hinted at the socio-economic status.

In my mind, I imagine they are all just jealous and this is plain old envy. I answer, "It's beautiful there, we will do more outdoor kinds of things. The school my children will attend is rated quite high and I love the teaching philosophy which is unique and inspiring (International Baccalaureate) – and free. Last year, my daughter attended a private school that was far less superior in academics. Yes, it can get hot, but I seem to remember several very hot days here in Sonoma as well, and of course we have access to the beautiful lake of Hidden Valley, in addition to the pool. Oh, and I seem to recall a rather large lake close by that is scenic and spectacular in my humble opinion."

Stumped, one friend actually said, "I hope you don't like it."

If that's not honesty, I don't know what is.

Regardless, we do like it. In fact, we love it. It has been the best move for us, and although the commute for my husband can be somewhat daunting in the evenings (he travels to and from Santa Rosa as many in our community do), I know when he walks in the door he feels a sense of peacefulness and tranquility that living in the middle of Sonoma often did not provide.

Don't get me wrong, Sonoma is lovely. However, when you live across from the hospital and at the end of a bike path, the people parking in front of your house and the disrespectful dog walkers who ignore common decency to pick up after their animals get to be a bit of a distraction to say the least.

This doesn't even include the cost of housing, which is absurd unless you happen to be John Lassiter and can afford a house the size of a block on the upscale "east-side."

For us, when we first perused this area, our main concern was driving over the "hill." I was told, "You get used to it." This has proved to be fairly accurate. A bummer sometimes, yes, a scenic and gorgeous view, also yes. We have decided to take the good with the bad.

We went from a tiny home with one small bathroom to double the size and room for out of town guests. It is on top of a hill and the view and wildlife is fantastic. Maybe I could do without the rather large rattlesnake that we met on one of our "walk-throughs" or the scorpion on the ceiling of the kitchen who just needed to come in out of the cold. I was told rattlesnakes' mean "new life" and the scorpion was a good omen because I myself am a "Scorpio." Believe it or not, it doesn't matter to me. I am happy in this beautiful small town, and so are my children, husband and dog.

Although my dog wasn't too pleased when he got "head-butted" by an extremely large buck, at least he doesn't bark every 10 minutes at people parking in front of our house as he did in Sonoma. As I frantically called for my dog to save him from the charging deer's antlers, I realized life would certainly be different here. I might have to deal with more aggressive wildlife, but I prefer that to the noise and congestion of the ever growing town of Sonoma.

Attending a local farmers market had become almost as aggressive as the male deer when I just wanted to buy a few tomatoes. Walking through with a stroller had become impossible, and the "small town" feel that had attracted us in the first place was replaced by too many tourists and "wanna be" wine country enthusiasts.

I prefer waking up to hot-air balloons and shopping at our local Hardester's market where their tomatoes are just as plump and delicious and I don't have to drive around the block six times to find a parking place.

Star Laurence lives in Hidden Valley Lake with her family.

{mos_sb_discuss:4}