

My New Jersey and the Real Jersey Shore

When most people think of New Jersey, they think of this ...

Or this...

Or even these...

But I want to tell you about my New Jersey, the real New Jersey.

My name is Marlene Monfiletto Nice. I'm the Assistant Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna. And I was born and raised in Belmar, N.J. I still call Manasquan my home. Those are two beach towns on the Jersey Shore. New Jersey has 127 miles of beautiful coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. That stretches from Sandy Hook to Cape May, N.J. Tourists from northern New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia flock to our beaches in the summertime.

New Jersey is one of the original 13 colonies. So many battles were fought in New Jersey during the Revolutionary War, that it earned the nickname, "The Crossroads of the Revolution." One battle in particular, The Battle of Trenton, was extremely important. That's when George Washington crossed the Delaware and surprised the Hessian troops on Christmas day and that turned the war in the favor of the colonists.

New Jersey's real nickname is the Garden State. In New Jersey, so many people have backyard gardens. And in fact, New Jersey is known for its beefsteak tomatoes and sweet Jersey corn. New Jersey is one of the top producers of blueberries and cranberries in America. My state has 9,800 farms, covering 790,000 acres of farmland.

And it has more horses per capita than any other state in the United States. The U S Equestrian Team is headquartered in Gladstone, N.J.

New Jersey is also a state of many firsts. New Jersey was the first state to sign the Bill of Rights and the third to ratify the US Constitution.

The first boardwalk in the world was built in Atlantic City in 1870. And Atlantic City still boasts the longest boardwalk in the world. You know the Monopoly game? The blocks on the Monopoly board were named after the

streets in Atlantic City. Now Atlantic City is pretty much known for casinos, thanks to Donald Trump.

The first seaside resorts opened in Cape May and Long Branch in the early 1800s and we've been riding merry go rounds and Ferris wheels and roller coasters on our boardwalks ever since. New Jersey is also famous for inventing salt water taffy. That was invented on our boardwalks in the early 1870s.

Speaking of inventions, the first phonograph was made by Thomas Edison in Menlo Park, N.J., in 1877. In 1879, Edison invented the first light bulb. And 10 years later, he filmed the first movie. In the 1890s Hollywood was actually located in Fort Lee, N.J, and all the films were produced there.

Here are some other firsts from New Jersey:

Princeton University is tied for first place with one other U.S. university as the top-ranked college in the United States.

The first condensed soup in America was cooked and canned in Camden, N.J. – anyone know what soup is umm umm good?

For more Firsts from New Jersey, you can check out this website:

http://www.nj.gov/nj/about/famous/famous_firsts.html

New Jersey is one of the smallest states in the United States. But it's also one of the most densely populated states. 8.7 million people live in New Jersey. Many immigrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in New Jersey, like my grandparents, who sailed from Italy to Ellis Island in the early 1900s. Did you know the Supreme Court ruled that while the Statue of Liberty stands in the New York Harbor, the island it's located on is actually part of New Jersey?

Today, nearly half of all New Jerseyans are minorities and 19 percent are foreign born.

With such a diverse population, it would figure that so many significant people come from New Jersey.

Frank Sinatra came from Hoboken, Queen Latifah comes from Irvington, and the Jonas Brothers were born in Wyckoff, N.J.

One more first: The first solid body electric guitar was invented by Les Paul in Mahwah in 1940. New Jersey is very rock 'n roll.

Jon Bon Jovi was born in Sayreville and Bruce Springsteen, of course, comes from Freehold, N.J. These two and lots of others got their start at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park, N.J.

With all these singers, it's a wonder New Jersey is the only state without an official song.

By the way, you know our Governor Chris Christie? He's also known as a rock star among governors.

New Jersey is also home to two presidents. President Grover Cleveland was born in Caldwell, N.J. President Woodrow Wilson was smart enough to move to New Jersey to become President of Princeton University and then our governor.

What's my favorite thing about New Jersey? It's one of only two states where self-service at gas stations is illegal. Jersey Girls don't pump gas.

New Jersey is a great place to visit. Just ask the 8.7 million people who live there.