



Columbia River Gorge



Great Smoky Mountains

# Fall Fever

This season, head to a prime leaf-viewing area near you to see gorgeous foliage—and have some fun.

By Julie Collins

**As autumn approaches, few things hold as much seasonal splendor as the vibrant hues of changing leaves.** With pleasant weather and striking fall colors on display within driving distance of most areas in the United States, plan a day or weekend road trip to one of these destinations. See trees in all their crimson and gold glory, and experience the other fun fall activities each locale offers too.

## Columbia River Gorge

**WHERE:** Oregon and Washington  
**WHEN:** Mid-September through the end of October

This 80-mile-long canyon that cuts through the Cascade Mountains is particularly vibrant in fall, when dark green conifers mingle with the brilliant hues of big-leaf maple,

cottonwood, Oregon ash, and vine maple leaves. With the north walls of the gorge in Washington and the south walls in Oregon, you'll find stellar leaf-viewing sites in either state. One of the best spots for viewing is the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area just east of Portland, Oregon. On the Washington side, drive along Highway 14 to Beacon Rock State Park.

**WHILE YOU'RE THERE:** The Columbia River Gorge is a prime spot for hiking, camping, fishing, wildlife watching, and wildflower viewing in the Pacific Northwest. You won't want to miss the breathtaking waterfalls that tumble over cliffs throughout the gorge, including Multnomah Falls on the Oregon side.

**FOR MORE INFO:** Washington Fall

Foliage Hotline, 800/354-4595; [www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia)

## Lake of the Ozarks

**WHERE:** Missouri

**WHEN:** Mid-October through early November

Summer may be high time for recreation at this popular lake-resort vacation destination, but when fall arrives there's still plenty to see and do. Leave the car behind and travel by foot or canoe for unparalleled views of dogwoods, thong trees, and oak-hickory forests. State parks and national forests are plentiful in the area—in the Mark Twain National Forest, you'll spot oaks, sweetgum, and sugar maples; in Ha Ha Tonka State Park, towering limestone bluffs, caves, natural springs, and bridges

pair with the shades of autumn to create stunning vistas.

**WHILE YOU'RE THERE:** All that fall foliage provides the perfect backdrop for local festivals. The Old Tyme Apple Festival, with more than 400 crafts and food booths, a carnival, music, and more takes place October 5 to 6 in Versailles. Or head back in time to the 1920s, '30s, and '40s at Oma & Noma Days in Lake Ozark from September 28 to 30, where you can see antique and vintage autos; hear bluegrass, blues, and Ozark music; and shop for crafts.

**FOR MORE INFO:** Lake of the Ozarks Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800/386-5253; [www.funlake.com](http://www.funlake.com)

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park

**WHERE:** North Carolina and Tennessee

**WHEN:** Mid-October through early November

Brace yourself for an explosion of color as you enter Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the North Carolina-Tennessee border. With wooded mountains and valleys filled with 100 vibrant species of trees—including sugar maples, scarlet oaks, red maples, hickories, and sweetgums—it's little wonder

that it's the most-visited national park in the United States.

**WHILE YOU'RE THERE:** Cruise along the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway. This route—which runs through the southern Appalachian Mountains from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—is made for leisurely drives. Recreation opportunities abound, including three-hour guided canoe trips to view the fall colors on Saturdays in October. It's festival season too: the Molasses Festival in Granite Falls features bluegrass music, clogging, and molasses-making on October 13; the Apple Harvest Festival on October 20 showcases arts and crafts in downtown Waynesville; and the Maggie Valley Fall Arts & Crafts Festival boasts some of the southeast's most talented artisans showcasing their work from October 20 to 21.

**FOR MORE INFO:** Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 865/436-1200; [www.blueridgeparkway.org](http://www.blueridgeparkway.org)

## Chautauqua-Allegheny Region

**WHERE:** Pennsylvania and New York

**WHEN:** End of September through mid-October

Drive even a portion of the Chautauqua-Allegheny Region and you'll see a blaze of color. This area includes Lake Chautauqua and Allegheny State Park in New York and the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. For a short drive, head to the Longhouse Scenic Byway in Allegheny National Forest. Along the 29-mile-route you'll see the dramatic foliage of oak, cherry, yellow poplar, ash, and maple trees. Or head north to Allegheny State Park—the largest state park in New York. Also in the area: the 17-mile-long Genesee Gorge in Letchworth State Park, called the "Grand Canyon of the East" for its lush forests and water roaring over cliffs as high as 600 feet.

**WHILE YOU'RE THERE:** In Mayville, New York, board the *Chautauqua Belle* for a steamship adventure on the waters of Lake Chautauqua. Or take a 7.5-mile excursion on a WWII-era diesel-electric locomotive; on weekends in October, fall foliage runs start in Arcade and travel through countryside largely unchanged since the 1880s. (Just be sure to reserve your spot ahead of time.) And any time of year, the covered bridges—rivaling the famed ones found in Madison County, Iowa—are worth a stop.

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FOR MORE INFO: New York State Division of Tourism, 800/225-5697; [www.caweb.info](http://www.caweb.info)

## Napa Valley

WHERE: **Northern California**

WHEN: November through December  
The harvest and fall-color seasons overlap in northern California, making fall the perfect time to head to wine country. You'll see gorgeous trees, of course, but it's the vineyards that steal the show. Napa Valley is hopping during harvest season (mid-August to mid-October), with perfect weather and plenty of activities at the wineries. Wait until fall-color season for a more mellow experience, when you can sample upcoming vintages while gazing at miles of fruitless vines aglow in hues of purple, gold, and brown.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE: For tastings and winery tours with a twist, sign up for a bike ride through wine country (with stops for food and wine) through Napa Valley Bike Tours. Or take a ride on the Napa Valley Wine Train to savor gourmet meals and local wines while the colorful scenery rolls by.

FOR MORE INFO: Napa Chamber of Commerce, 707/226-7455; [www.napavalley.com](http://www.napavalley.com). ■



## More Can't-Miss Sites

Haven't found the locale you're looking for yet? Here are a few more states with bold-color bragging rights:

**ARIZONA.** Hike the rugged mountains and desert landscapes of the northern part of the state for an up-close look at striking shades of autumn.

**TEXAS.** In Lost Maples State Natural Area, the extraordinary (and uncommon) red tint of the Uvalde maples is worth a look.

**IOWA.** The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway follows the Missouri River Valley in the western part of the state. The hardwood forests cover hills the likes of which are only found in one other place: the Yellow River Valley in China.

**MICHIGAN.** Surrounded by lakes Michigan, Superior, Eerie, and Huron, the Upper Peninsula is worth a stop. Try the Ottawa and Hiawatha national forests for spectacular vistas that include lighthouses and multicolored forests.

**MASSACHUSETTS.** The 27,000 acres of cranberry bogs, forests, and natural and historical sites of the Cape Cod National Seashore can't be beat in the fall.

**CONNECTICUT.** Admire the views of maples, oaks, aspens, and more on the road (by car) or from the sky (by hot-air balloon) on a stop in the Litchfield Hills.