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# Top 10 Fall Foliage Travel Destinations

## A leaf-peeper's guide to the top spots for fall foliage travel

By ShermansTravel Editorial Staff

Nothing – not sweaters, not the smell of fireplaces, not pumpkin patches, and not apple picking – says "fall" like the blazing red, glimmering gold, and burnt-orange leaves that cover trees and crunch underfoot during the autumn months. Whether you're practically a professional leaf-peeper or just a casual enthusiast, you'll need to know where to take in the season's splendor. Lucky for you, we've scouted out the 10 best fall foliage travel destinations – and while some perennially popular places made our list (because it just isn't possible to do a story on foliage without including New England), we think you'll be surprised by some of the less-obvious-but-just-as-glorious destinations that did, too. Oh, and no need to fret about when the peak colors will peek out – we've done the research for you, as well.

### Aspen, Colorado

While it's the place to see and be seen every winter, autumn brings a sense of serenity to Aspen – and the golden foliage of the town's namesake tree along with it. While Colorado's aspens don't offer the vibrant fall color spectacle of say, the Northeast, the yellows, golds, and bold oranges that cover the mountainsides here, against a backdrop of intermittent evergreens, are still reason enough for a visit. Mid- to late September is the ideal for fall foliage travel, but with the color change lasting just about a week, timing is everything.

### The Catskills, New York

When the fabled Catskills region, just 100 miles north of New York City, bursts to life with color every autumn, its thickly wooded hillsides are covered by a patchwork of

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Aspen, Colorado  
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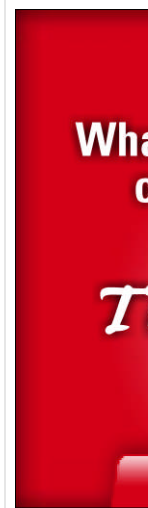
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fiery red, glistening golds, and vibrant orange leaves. Dubbed “America’s First Wilderness,” this bountiful and beautiful region harbors a variety of trees – maple, oak, birch, and beech among them – that come into their prime during the last two weeks of September or early to mid-October, the ideal time for fall foliage travel here. Historic towns boast charming B&Bs that make great bases for discovering the family-friendly harvest festivals, farmers’ markets, pick-your-own orchards, crafts fairs, and antique shops that define the region at this time of year.

## Columbia River Gorge, Oregon

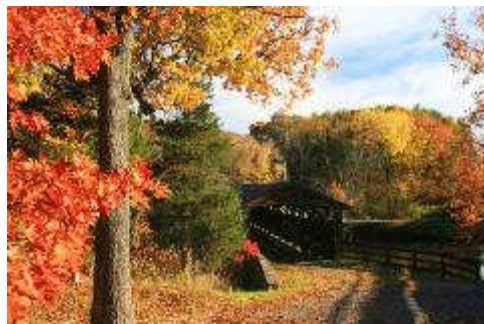
An autumn day along Oregon’s Columbia River Gorge gives nature lovers endless opportunities to experience the full spectrum of the season’s offerings, whether driving along the Columbia River on the state’s I-84, hiking a variety of trails, or white-water rafting or kayaking. A geological wonder, the gorge itself weaves its way through the Cascade Mountains, forming the border between northern Oregon and southern Washington, and is loaded with lush fir forests and twisted pines, big-leaf maple, cottonwood, Oregon ash, and vine maple trees that show their colors from mid-September to mid-October, the prime time for fall foliage travel here. The area is also known for its dazzling waterfalls, the remarkable 620-foot Multnomah Falls chief among them.

## Eastern Townships, Quebec, Canada

This section of Quebec stretches as far east as Maine’s border, perhaps explaining why some consider the region to resemble neighboring New England, but with the French influence you’d expect of the province. The area has been a summer getaway of the rich for ages, but those in the know head here in fall, a spectacular time to visit local towns like Knowlton and North Hatley. It’s no surprise that the maple leaf is the star of the show here, and visitors can enjoy a fiery display on horseback or on foot, particularly from mid- to late September when the the fall foliage travel season reaches its peak.

## Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina and Tennessee

The Great Smoky Mountains are a breathtaking sight, especially in fall when the mountain foliage turns to radiant shades of crimson, orange, and purple. Nestled between North Carolina and Tennessee, the most-visited national park in the United States is home to 100 species of native trees with an awesome display of turning leaves. Peak fall foliage travel is predicted for early October through early November; the most memorable colors coming courtesy of sugar maples, scarlet oaks, sweetgums, red maples, and hickories.



Columbia River Gorge, Oregon  
[Flickr/SarahMcD](#)



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## Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

If the sight of brilliantly speckled hillsides and crimson-hued leafy boughs makes you "ooh" and "ah," the same scene reflected in calm lake waters is bound to intensify your admiration. Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks is one place where the beauty of the fall season, particularly in mid- to late October, is even better, thanks to the area's wide array of lakeside activities. For truly memorable fall foliage travel, visitors can survey the Lake of the Ozarks State Park's amazing collection of dogwoods, thong trees, and oak-hickory forests by foot along various hiking trails, or via boat on a unique aquatic trail, complete with markers that explain the sights along the way.



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Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri  
Lake of the Ozarks Convention and Visitors Bureau

## Litchfield Hills, Connecticut

Located in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, the Litchfield Hills are a charming New England destination full of country inns, antique shops, and, most importantly come fall, an abundance of trees blazing with color. There are numerous biking and hiking trails in this part of Connecticut, plus opportunities to view the colorful mosaic from the air, via a hot-air balloon ride, or from the water, via canoe on the Housatonic River. Whatever your pleasure, visitors can expect to see maple, oak, aspen, beech, and birch trees, among others, at their peak for fall foliage travel in mid-October.



Litchfield Hills, Connecticut  
[Flickr/Smotz](#)

## Lost Maples Natural Area, Texas

While many think cacti is the main source of green in Texas, the Lone Star State is in fact home to the Lost Maples State Natural Area, which welcomes a beautiful flush come autumn, thanks in no small part to the relatively uncommon Uvalde Bigtooth Maples, whose reddish blush is most spectacular from mid-October through mid-November. Enjoy camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, bird-watching, and more amidst fall's fiery colors – and plan early because the scarlet splendor that overwhelms the park during this period makes it the busiest time for fall foliage travel.



Lost Maples Natural Area, Texas  
[Flickr/Charlie Ilewelin](#)

## Ohio

Though the "Buckeye State's" eponymous trees lose their leaves closer to summer's end, Ohio suffers no shortage of scenery come fall, when foliage from numerous buckeye hybrid varieties (like "Autumn Splendor" and "Prairie Torch") don hues of sharp scarlet and brilliant yellow. In all, some 125 species of hardwood trees (including sassafras, red maple, elm, and dogwood) add to the vivid display, with colors in the southern part of the state peaking just in time for Halloween (while Ohio's northern boundaries generally peak in the first half of October). Add to that the bounty of the harvest season, with fields of corn, wheat, and barley spilling across acres of pastoral countryside in golden waves. For a bird's-eye view of the kaleidoscopic landscape, soar above the



Ohio  
Holmes County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau

treetops via hot-air balloon – or through them on a zip-line canopy tour in Hocking Hills. Alternatively, opt for a classic fall foliage travel experience and drive along hundreds of miles of Ohio's scenic byways, or simply relax under the shade of sycamores in picturesque Holmes County, home to the world's largest Amish community.

## Washington County, Maine

For hard-core foliage enthusiasts looking to escape the crowds that plague much of New England each fall, Washington County, in Maine, is paradise for a leaf-peeper seeking solitude. Lobster is a way of life, lighthouses dot the coastline, and the sunrise each morning is the first one seen in the United States. Washington County is also the world's largest producer of blueberries – and you'll find them infusing everything from pies to pancakes to ice cream. The fall colors range from burnt orange to blazing red to golden yellow on the region's birch, maple, oak, aspen, and ash trees, and are most vibrant (and ideal for fall foliage travel) from early to mid-October.



Washington County, Maine  
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