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## Plan Now to See Fall Foliage

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Kompass

When the long days of summer start to shorten, signaling the approach of autumn, the transition triggers a visual show in many parts of the U.S.

Nowhere, though, is the annual change of colors on trees and shrubs more spectacular than along the East Coast, particularly New England.

So, while your air-conditioning may still be set to high, it's a good time to start planning a fall getaway trip to Color Country.

Here's a guide to leaf watching that includes:

- Why leaves turn color and which colors to expect
- When and where to go
- How to maximize your experience
- Resources, online and offline, such as fall foliage reports, hotline numbers and state tourism offices
- KOA Campgrounds along your way

The calendar, above all, controls the timing of leaf color change. "As days grow shorter, and nights grow longer and cooler, biochemical processes in the leaf begin to paint the landscape with Nature's autumn palette", according to a [U.S. Forest Service fact sheet](#).

Colors that you see indicate tree species: red, brown, russet leaves are on oaks; golden bronze, hickories; golden yellow, aspens and yellow poplars; purplish red, dogwoods; light tan, beeches; and crimson, sourwoods and black tupelos.

Colors for maples vary from brilliant scarlet on red maples to orange-red on sugar maples and glowing yellow on black maples.

Veteran leaf watchers consider sugar maples tops for colorful foliage. They're most abundant in southern Quebec and Vermont, which gets a big chunk of the millions of visitors who flock to the Northeast each fall.

Fall foliage generally peaks about the end of September in much of Maine, northern New Hampshire and Vermont, plus neighboring Quebec and Ontario. Other parts of New England, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia follow suit throughout October, along with the mountain regions of Virginia and North Carolina.

Fall foliage pros, however, caution that it's impossible to predict peak color. Weather effects such as drought or mild temperatures in early autumn can delay color change. Conversely, normal rainfall during the spring and summer growing season and cool nighttime temperatures once fall arrives can help keep color changes closer to traditional timetables.

The best way to plan trip details, experts say, is to check the Internet and other sources for up-to-date information. We've put together a collection of resources the end of this article to help you quickly find leaf-watching essentials.

Experts recommend that visitors keep their plans flexible. For example, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism provides the following tips:

- Make hotel reservations as far in advance as possible since it's a busy time of year.
- For less traffic, plan a mid-week trip.
- Explore back roads for adventure and to find sights sometimes missed.
- Enjoy the range of color throughout fall, rather than concentrating on "peak" color.
- Plan time out of your vehicle to experience fall at its best

Once you've parked your vehicle, [options for slower-paced but enjoyable travel](#) include hiking, canoeing, bicycling or even hot air balloon rides. Visitors may also want to leave the driving to someone else and join a bus tour along the foliage routes.

Recreational vehicle owners have many KOA Kampgrounds to choose from while following fall color's march down the East Coast. KOA Kampgrounds for leaf watchers include locations in [Quebec](#), [Ontario](#), [Maine](#), [New Hampshire](#), [Vermont](#), [Massachusetts](#), [New York](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Maryland](#), [West Virginia](#), [Virginia](#) and [North Carolina](#).

## Leaf watching essentials

### FOLIAGE REPORTS

[U.S. Forest Service Fall Color Hotline](#) - 800-354-4595

[Maine](#) - 800-533-9595, option 3

[Massachusetts](#) - 800-227-6277

[New Hampshire](#) - 800-258-3608

[New York](#) - 800-456-8369

[Western North Carolina](#) - 800-847-4862

[Pennsylvania](#) - 800-325-5467

[Quebec](#) - 877-266-5687 (English version)

[Vermont](#) - 800 VERMONT or 802-828-3239

[West Virginia](#) - 800-225-5982

### OTHER TRAVEL PLANNING RESOURCES

[New England Fall Foliage Guide](#)

[The Foliage Network](#) - During September, October, and November, network collects data twice a week from about 500 spotters in the Northeast, Southeast and Upper Midwest. Data is plotted, analyzed and transmitted to newspapers, television states and web sites. Archived reports, dating back to 1999, can be used as a guide for planning a fall trip, although tourists are advised that the timing of the color change varies each autumn.

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