

Fall is for Leaf Peeping

Written by Connie Valimont
Tuesday, 28 February 2012 15:50

Red, yellows and oranges seem to be at every turn during the fall. While New England takes most of the credit for spectacular fall color, here are five other places around the world where nature puts on a brilliant show of color! It's never too early to plan your fall getaway ... and have something to look forward to during our long, hot summer!

JAPAN

Think leaf-peeping is an American invention? The Japanese have been at it for centuries, only it's called Momijigari (hunting for trees that are turning red) there. The ancient capital, Kyoto, turns vibrant shades of yellow, orange, and red in November, thanks to the hundreds of varieties of maple, offset by golden palaces and dark-wood teahouses. Stroll the leafy Philosopher's Walk temple trail, a 2-km maple-tree-lined path covering 5 significant temples and 2 shrines. Kyoto is like Mecca for "foodies," so save up for at least one feast of kyo-ryori cuisine (the city's signature cuisine). Directly translated, it simply means "Kyoto food," yet the phrase is synonymous with the ultimate in quality, service, refinement, omotenashi hospitality, and luxuriant style.

NAPA

Maples might get all the leaf-peeping glory, but the autumn in California's Napa Valley is hard to beat, with hills covered in the russet-red leaves of the vines. This time of year is called "crush" by locals, and not just because it's harvest season. The social whirl is in full swing, so there's plenty to do when you're not viewing the foliage, including the *Flavour! Napa Valley Food and Wine Festival*, taking place

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November 14-18, 2012. Whenever you come, pack a picnic, pick up a bottle from one of the local tasting rooms and have a sunny lunch amid the red vines -- then stay at one of the renown hotels or B&Bs in the area and save the driving for the next day.

AUSTRIA

The lively Lower Austria Fall Wine Festival season begins in August and continues through November. Numerous wine and culinary events from rustic and boisterous to elegant and glamorous are staged in a stunning landscape in the idyllic, terraced vineyards of the Wachau valley. Between events take a leisurely bike tour through the wine villages and romantic cellar lanes and enjoy a picnic in the vineyards. Enjoy breathtaking views of the fall colors and steep vineyard terraces as you sip exquisite Riesling Smaragd while cruising the Danube River on a ferry boat. The locals will make sure that you try the “sturm” which is the newly harvested, fresh, fizzy white wine that is still fermenting. You’ll leave with pleasant memories of the warm hospitality of Lower Austrian wine country.

ASHEVILLE

Drive carefully in North Carolina in October. The car in front of you might suddenly stop to marvel at the rainbow of leaf colors carpeting North Carolina’s Great Smoky Mountains. Maples, oaks, gums, cherries, and hickories turn soft yellows, zesty oranges, and deep maroons, sprinkled with evergreen pines and firs, and the occasional dash of black — around 1,500 beautiful black bears roam these hills.

Unlike the bears, you can’t sleep in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Instead, drive half an hour to the pretty mountain town of Asheville. If you’re seeking fall color, there’s no better place to revel in autumn than on the Biltmore Estate, which is home to some of the region’s oldest and most beautiful trees. By foot, by bike, by horse or by Segway – guests have

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many ways to enjoy the thousands of colorful mums in the gardens and the vibrant forests. The peak of fall color also coincides with harvest time in the mountains. The Winery is bustling with the energy of the local grape harvest, allowing guests to see the process involved in making their award-winning wines.

CANADA

Intensity of autumn color tends to be best in the eastern parts of Canada; so, although, the western provinces have something to offer, if the sole purpose of your visit is to see fall foliage, Ontario, Quebec or the Maritime provinces are probably your best bet. Just a couple of hours north of the New York and Vermont borders, you'll be surrounded by sweeping views of flame-colored hills and valleys, a color-blend effect of the mixed forests of beeches, birches, and maples, which individually turn red, gold, and orange.

And, what better way to "sea" the fall colors than by cruise ship. To enjoy the most breathtaking fall foliage, cruise from Boston along the New England coast and Eastern Canada. These special cruises departing from Boston in September and throughout October specialize in showing you fabulous foliage color and scenery. In addition to vibrant vistas of crimson and golden foliage, all the more beautiful against blue water, you'll see many lighthouses, quaint villages and ornate "summer cottages" along rocky coastlines. At ports of call along the way, dine on lobster, visit maritime museums or just walk along scenic, leaf-peppered paths.

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