



NEWS

You can see fall foliage even in or near these big cities – here's how



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The [fall season](#) officially begins on Sept. 22, and there's no reason you can't get a head start on planning your fall foliage trips – no matter where you're located.

To help with your plans and make sure you see the leaves change colors at the right time, [SmokyMountains.com](#) publishes an interactive [fall foliage prediction map](#). While this tool (and others like it) can't say with complete certainty when and where the leaves will be their most colorful, the creators pull millions of data points to assemble the map at a county-specific level.

The map has been updated for the 2021 season, so you can use it to estimate when the best time to take trips will be depending on your destination.

When you think of the great outdoors or nature, a big city might not immediately come to mind. But there are places to see fall foliage even if you're located in a metropolitan area. Here's your fall leaf spotting guide in and around four large cities in the U.S.

Atlanta



The Great Smoky Mountains. (Photo by Tony Barber/Getty Images)

The [Smoky Mountains](#) are one of the country's most beautiful areas during the fall, and they are about a three-hour drive from Atlanta (or Charlotte, North Carolina).

You can use points to stay in historical areas such as Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg (try the [Black Fox Pigeon Forge Lodge, a Tapestry Collection by Hilton](#)) or opt for a rustic cabin rental. For the best views of the changing leaves, head to the observation deck at the peak of Clingman’s Dome, or embark on one of the many scenic drives in the area such as Cade’s Cove Loop Road, the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#) or the Foothills Parkway.

Boston



(Photo by Dominic Defelice/EyeEm/Getty Images)

[The Berkshires](#) are accessible from both [Boston](#) and New York City, which makes for an easy weekend fall getaway. There’s something for everyone in The Berkshires — whether you love hiking, trying new food or learning more about the region’s culture and history.

There are several hotels to choose from, but you might want to splurge on the [Miraval resort in the Berkshires](#) if you have Hyatt points.

This adults-only wellness oasis is just a short drive from many metropolitan centers in the Northeast, making it an incredibly convenient option for a quick vacation. Food, non-alcoholic drinks and many activities are included with Miraval stays. However, Miraval isn't assigned a category within the [World of Hyatt award chart](#), and free nights cost 45,000 points for one guest per night. A second adult can be added for an additional 20,000 points per night. This is still a fantastic redemption (if you can find availability), considering cash rates can cost nearly \$1,300 per night.

Central Vermont is also an option for Boston residents, as it's about a three-hour trip from the city. Situated in the heart of Woodstock, the historic [Woodstock Inn & Resort](#) — established by Laurence and Mary Rockefeller — recently reopened after a \$16 million renovation that updated the Federalist-style building and its 142 rooms and suites. Its bucolic mountain landscapes and small-town charm make for a scenic autumn getaway.

New York City



[New York City](#) isn't called the "Concrete Jungle" for nothing. The city is more known for its tall buildings than nature, but the [Big Apple](#) has some of the country's most stunning fall foliage options.

If you want to see the leaves change colors close to home, look no further than Central Park – one of the most popular parks in the city (and perhaps the country). The park is home to over 18,000 trees, and there are countless places for selfies, picnics or just a stop to take in the sights.

The Central Park Conservancy publishes a [fall foliage map each year](#), and guides lead walks from the Pool through the North Woods Ravine if you want a personal tour. The Conservancy recommends spots like the Mall, the Reservoir and the Pool as some of the best locations to visit.

When I visited Central Park in mid-November 2020, the park was past-peak but still breathtaking. But if you do want to see the leaves at their brightest, make sure to book a little earlier in the season.

If you're coming into town, there are several places to stay that overlook the park, such as the Marriott Bonvoy [Category 7 Le Méridien New York, Central Park](#) (which starts at 50,000 points a night); the Category 7 [World of Hyatt Park Hyatt New York](#) (30,000 points per night); or the Hilton [Conrad New York Midtown](#) ([Hilton doesn't use an award chart](#), so rates can vary).

Of course, if you want to get out of the city, Saratoga Springs is only a three-hour drive or a four-hour Amtrak trip north. If you visit between mid-September and early October, you might even catch the harvesting action. From here, you can easily explore scenic Lake George and the high peaks of the Adirondacks. While there are points hotels here, you may want to stay in a bed and breakfast or a [cabin](#) to get a more authentic experience.

Orlando



[Florida](#) is definitely not a place that comes to mind when you think of autumn getaways – and certainly not [Orlando](#), home to Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando.

But the Sunshine State isn't just beaches, palm trees and theme parks. In fact, Florida has a [robust](#) fall foliage season, according to SmokeyMountains.com. Tourists can see fall foliage in several state parks, such as the Flying Eagle Preserve. It's about a 90-minute drive from Orlando. The Smokey Mountains site recommends tourists search for the Virginia creeper plant, which turns a gorgeous grape color in the fall.

There is no [shortage of hotels in and near Orlando](#), especially if you want to combine a fall foliage trip with a trip to Disney World. Orlando alone has more than 400 hotels and 100,000 hotel rooms – not to mention [Airbnbs](#), timeshares and other lodging options. Hotels closer to the Flying Eagle Preserve include mainly lower-category Hilton and Marriott properties, but there are some cute B&B and RV resorts if that's your thing.