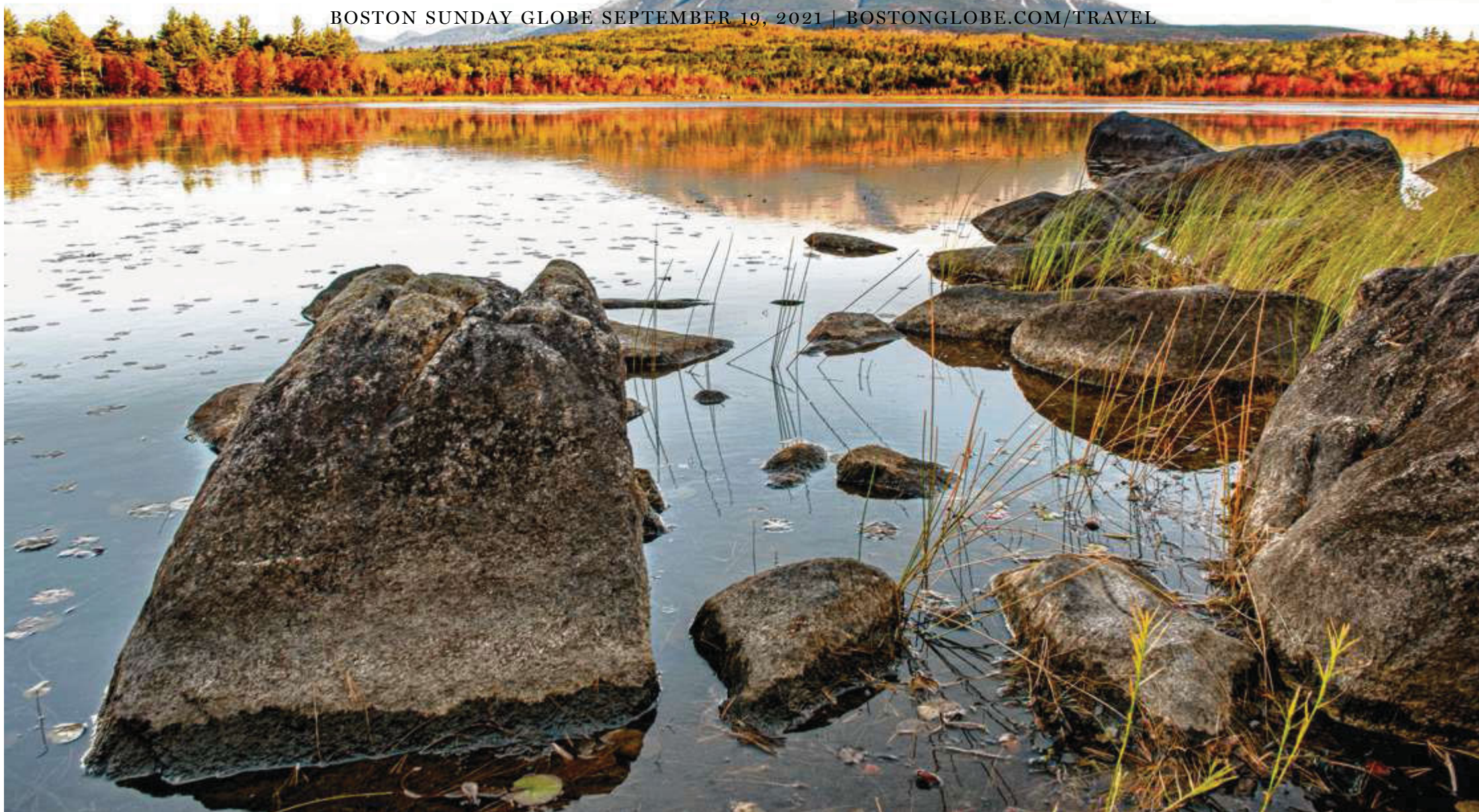


SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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VISIT MAINE

You don't have to head to Maine's mountains to see fall splendor. Travel along the Saco or Penobscot River to experience all the great views you can handle.

Where the color is — and the crowds aren't

BY DIANE BAIR AND
PAMELA WRIGHT
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

Look out, Vermont Route 100, the Mohawk Trail, and the Kancamagus: The leaf peepers are coming. Color-worshippers tend to choose the same routes year after year, in spite of the fact that New England is awash in color. Even traveling souls like us are guilty of taking the same photos of the same sugar maples every single year. Don't let this happen to you!

Here's a look at the places that the leaf peeping hordes haven't discovered yet, as shared by local tourism folks. Because, frankly, bumper-to-bumper traffic isn't exactly scenic. (Warning: You may have to hop into a gondola or a kayak to experience these off-the-beaten-path locales.)

Vermont

When it comes to fall color, the Green Mountain State is an Instagrammer's dream of white-steepled churches and rustic farmhouses juxtaposed with fiery foliage. Alas, there

We asked local tourism experts about unexpected leaf-peeping locales



Here's what they had to say.

are no secret scenic spots here — or are there? Caleigh Cross of the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing was kind enough to share some less-known (but gorgeous) locales. "Groton State Forest is a beautiful drive, rich with the bright colors of the season," she notes. Comprising more than 26,000 acres, the forest (<https://pr.vermont.gov/groton-state-forest>) is home to seven state parks, located within the towns of Danville, Groton, Marshfield, Orange, Peacham, Plainfield, and Topsham. The color-drenched forest is dotted with eight lakes and ponds, and features unique environments like Peacham Bog Natural Area. Roads, fire lookouts, and picnic shelters were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. A bonus: "Groton is close to Montpelier and Barre, both historic downtowns with lots to offer in terms of arts, culture, and food," Cross notes.

Runner-up: Vermont's Route 15 stretches from Danville to Winooski, making it a great roadway for exploring

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ADOBE

Talk about a bucket list item: See foliage from a hot-air balloon

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

A sheep, a duck, and a rooster get into a hot air balloon. This is no joke — the first "manned" hot air balloon flight included this trio in a launch over Versailles on Sept. 19, 1783. According to historical accounts, the flight lasted eight minutes and was witnessed by King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and a crowd of some 130,000 people. Apparently, the animals fared fine on the flight, paving the way for humans. The reasoning being that if it's safe for a sheep, a duck, and a rooster, it must be

safe for us.

Actually, hot air ballooning really is quite safe. Statistically, the FAA finds it to be the safest form of all air travel, and much safer than driving in a car. And it's a dreamy adventure, soaring with the wind, like an eagle in flight, with bird's-eye views of New England's deep valleys, dense forests, soaring mountains, wiggly waterways, and toy-like towns. And what better way to take in our spectacular fall foliage? Here's where you can give it a try.

High 5 Ballooning

This well-established and highly touted company has been

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**NEW HAMPSHIRE
WOLFEBORO
WONDER**

Pickering House Inn is rated tops locally and nationally by readers of Travel + Leisure

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3 fall foliage trips your kids might actually enjoy

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

We love gawking at New England's fabulous fall fiery forests. We could road trip for days, taking in view after view. Kids — not so much. Sitting in the back seat looking at trees — even if they're glowing — gets old fast; meltdowns are guaranteed. That doesn't mean you and your family should give up your autumn New England getaway. Here are three cool fall trips that your kids will love, where the scenery is splendid — yet secondary to the fun.

Jackson, N.H.

This pretty little village, accessed

through a historic 1876 red-painted covered bridge, is one of our favorite places to visit in the fall. It's surrounded by the White Mountain National Forest in all its fall glory and sits in the shadows of the Presidential Mountain Range, with lofty 360-degree views. It's quieter than neighboring North Conway, too, with a

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OKEMO MOUNTAIN RESORT

Unexpected leaf-peeping locales

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the state's lushly forested Northeast Kingdom. Route 15 runs near the pretty, tourist-friendly towns of Stowe and Waterbury, Cross adds.

Or consider this: Head north on **US Route 5** to Lake Willoughby in Westmore (Northeast Kingdom). "The fjord-like lake is tucked into the mountains, with breathtaking foliage views," Cross says. Hike Mount Pisgah or Mount Hor, alongside the lake, for views of distant, color-dappled peaks, or rent a kayak and paddle the lake, one of New England's most enchanting settings. www.VermontVacation.com

Maine

Surprise! You don't need to head into Maine's western mountains to see fine fall foliage. "People think they need to head inland or north, but the **southern Maine coast** is delightfully, unexpectedly colorful," says Steve Lyons, director of the Maine Office of Tourism. The region is more famous for its beaches than its fall color, "but if you were to start in York Village and head west and north to Mount Agamenticus, you'd enjoy a great drive and see beautiful scenery," including color-drenched views from the top of the 692-foot mountain. Seaside towns lined with old homes and mature trees offer as much New England charm as one can handle, and exploring is more relaxed in autumn, after the summer tourist crowd has decamped.

Runners-up: A river runs through it — fall foliage, that is. Lyons recommends following the **Saco River** on local roads from Saco up to Fryeburg. Take in seaside communities of Saco and Biddeford, winding through historic small towns like Salmon Falls and Cornish, en route to the outdoorsy burbs of Brownfield, Hiram, and Fryeburg. Plan time for a hike on 1,232-foot Mount Cutler in Hiram, for glorious lofty views. Another option: Travel up the 109-mile **Penobscot River** from Bangor to Millinocket, as Henry David Thoreau did in 1846 (he also climbed 5,269-foot Mount Katahdin — not required!) www.visitmaine.com

Or consider this: The Amtrak **Downeaster**. Skip the driving (even if that means missing Pop-eye's Louisiana Kitchen at the service plaza!) and settle into a cushy seat for a 3-hour, 25-minute journey from Boston's North Station to Brunswick, Maine. Stops include Old Orchard Beach, Freeport, and Portland. From \$30 round-trip. www.amtrak.com

New Hampshire

The Kancamagus (NH Route 112) is a popular route, but (psst!) you can take the less-used **Bear Notch Road** and still enjoy colorful vistas while bypassing traffic in Conway and North Conway. This tip comes from Sabastian Wee of Drive Brand Studio, representing the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce. Heading toward Bartlett, you'll go past Bear Notch Road View and Attitash Trailhead on this two-lane country road, which eventually becomes Albany Avenue before it reaches Bartlett and the White Mountain Trail (NH Route 302.) Take a left on Route 302 toward Crawford Notch, a major pass through the White Mountains. Consider a stop at 5,775-acre Crawford Notch State Park (www.nhstateparks.org) to stretch your legs — the hiking is first-rate for every level.

Runner-up: Running between Glen and North Conway, **West Side Road** is another of Wee's favorite fall routes. Get off at Passaconaway Road to drive alongside the Swift River, Red Eagle Brook, and Red Eagle Pond, with a backdrop of autumn hues. "The road will take you past Boulder Loop, which then pops you out onto the Kanc," says Wee.

Or consider this: A ride on **Omni Mount Washington Resort's gondola** to the beautiful new Rosebrook Lodge. A ride in the eight-passenger gondola may well be the most enjoyable 12 minutes you spend this fall, as you take in the White Mountains drenched in autumnal hues. Yes, it's a bit of a haul to get to Bretton Woods, so plan to spend some time at the resort, the better to enjoy the food and views of Rosebrook Lodge. Available through Oct. 11. www.omnihotels.com/hotels/brettonwoods-mount-washington; www.mtwashingtonvalley.org

Massachusetts

The Berkshires get all the love, but the north-central region of Massachusetts is a worthy destination when it comes to fall color. Ryan Murphy, marketing manager of Visit North Central Massachusetts, directed us to a couple of spots that will make color-seekers swoon with joy. The largely undeveloped **Tully River Valley** (think Royalston, Athol, and Orange), is a great destination for active foliage fans thanks to myriad options for hiking, biking, and paddling. For vivid color views, he recommends the 4.5-mile foot trail around 200-acre Tully Lake in Royalston, and the 7.5-mile option for mountain biking and hiking that runs adjacent to Long Pond. Access the trails via Tully Lake Recreation Area on



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Route 32, and Tully Lake Campground, at 25 Doane Hill Road in Royalston, managed by the Trustees of Reservations (thetrustees.org/place/tully-lake-campground).

Runner-up: Another Trustees property, **Jacob's Hill Reservation**, wins major points from Murphy for its panoramic westerly views across the Tully Valley. The woodsy hike up Jacob's Hill, a segment of the 22-mile Tully Trail, offers two ledges with stunning views of Tully Mountain, Mount Grace, and the Berkshire Hills. Peer down to see

From top: Omni Mount Washington Resort gondola; White Memorial Conservation Center; view at Maine's southern coastal region; scenic Stowe near Route 15.

Long Pond and the east branch of the Tully River. A highlight: views of cascading 150-foot Spirit Falls (thetrustees.org/place/jacob-hill/; www.visitnorthcentral.com).

Or consider this: Looking for a late-season splash of color? Consider **Martha's Vineyard**.

Nancy Gardella of the Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce says it's the real deal. Local color-changers include red maples, beetlebung (a local name for tupelo), sumac, sassafras, and hickory. Blueberry and huckleberry bushes, found in the heathlands, turn red in autumn too. "Foliage comes later to the Vineyard than the rest of Massachusetts," she notes, typically, late October into early November. Top spots for color include the Menemsha Hills, the island's south shore, and Long Point Reservation. Plus, "One of the

lesser-known things about the island is the amazing network of walking, biking, and hiking trails that make leaf-peeping so much fun," Gardella adds, recommending that Vineyard-bound foliage watchers download TRAILSMV (sheriffsmeadow.org/trailsmv-app/), a free app that reveals the island's pristine trails. www.mvy.com

Rhode Island

Looking for a jolt of leafy splendor in the Ocean State? The **Blackstone Valley** is the go-to zone. Visitors can expect to see maple, chestnut, red oak, white birch, and evergreen trees, says Dr. Bob Billington, president and CEO of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. "The color palette is endless." Skip the car and experience it by cycling or walking along the 11-mile Blackstone River Bikeway (tourblackstone.com/blackstone-river-bikeway/); it skirts the river and the Blackstone Canal in Cumberland, Lincoln, and Woonsocket. Or get right onto the water in a kayak or canoe. Blackstone River Expeditions Kayak Rentals (www.rivertourblackstone.com) offers rentals on Sundays through October, so guests can enjoy DIY fall foliage paddling tours. www.blackstonevalley-tourismcouncil.org

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Five ways to experience fall foliage from a balloon

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offering hot air balloon rides in Southern New Hampshire for more than 21 years. Owner and pilot Tony Sica and crew get rave reviews for their professionalism and smooth rides, and, of course, the views. You'll meet in Salem, N.H., and launch at a nearby site, just before sunrise, when the winds are calmest. The flight lasts about an hour with 360-degree views of the White Mountains, Atlantic Ocean, Boston skyline, and the sinewy Merrimack River. 603-893-9643, www.high5ballooning.com, \$200 per person, shared ride

Misty River Ballooning

"Gentle winds and soft landings" is the motto of this company in Western Massachusetts. Owner and pilot Don LaFountain, who was once a member of the American team competing in the Irish Ballooning Championships, started the company 14 years ago, offering sky high views of the scenic Pioneer Valley. You have a choice of launching just after sunrise or just before sunset, floating above farms

and fields with views of the Berkshires, Green Mountains of Vermont, and the vast Connecticut River as it hurries south to Long Island Sound. 413-387-5658, www.mistyriverballooning.com, \$600 for two passengers

Berkshire Balloons

The scenic landscape of Farmington Valley and Litchfield Hills, Conn., with farmlands, rolling hills, and small towns, is especially gorgeous when viewed from a drifting hot air balloon. Pilot and owner Robert Zirpolo has been showing off this corner of the Nutmeg State for 40 years. The one-hour or so flight will travel 5 to 15 miles, depending on the wind, but, under clear skies, you'll have expansive views into upstate New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. They offer winter flights, too. 860-620-3754, www.berkshireballoons.com, \$350 per person

Balloons of Vermont

Imagine floating in a basket tied to a balloon, hovering over Quechee Gorge, a 165-foot-deep



ADAM L. COPPOLA

cleft formed some 13,000 years ago, and dubbed the Grand Canyon of the East. Or, flying low, barely over the tops of the trees, waving to children below, or perhaps a splash and dash, dipping into the flowing currents of

the Ottauquechee River. Owner and pilot Darrek Daoust runs this outfit, offering sunrise and sunset balloon rides out of Quechee, Vt., with splendid views of Vermont's Upper Valley. This is one of the few companies

in New England offering rides year-round. 802-369-0213, www.balloonsofvermont.com, \$275 per person

Above Reality

"Well-oiled machine." "Pas-

Passengers drift over treetops in a hot air balloon operated by Berkshire Balloons in Connecticut.

sion for what they do." "Breath-taking." "Nothing short of stunning." "Most amazing hot air balloon ride ever." These are just some of the comments from riders who consistently give Chief Pilot Jeff Snyder and his crew five-star reviews. They operate out of Essex, Vt., flying over Vermont's northern landscape of mountain peaks, expansive valleys and farmland, and the shimmering waters of Lake Champlain. They offer both sunrise and sunset rides, which conclude with the traditional champagne celebration, along with mimosas, sparkling cider, Vermont cheddar cheese and crackers, and Vermont-made fudge. 802-373-4007, www.balloonvermont.com, \$310-\$375 per person, private baskets also available

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