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## The Most Charming U.S. Small Towns to Visit This Fall

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*From Alaska to Vermont, these lesser-known destinations are the perfect places to explore in autumn.*

The air is getting crisper, the **leaves are starting to turn**, and teenagers everywhere are lining up for pumpkin spice lattes. While a **scenic road trip** in the fall is always a good idea, one of our favorite ways to revel in the glories of autumn is to grab our **weekend getaway bags** and set up camp in a charming small town. We like to head to places with a big festival calendar, cute B&Bs, mom-and-pop shops galore, and extraordinary access to the great outdoors. What follows are suggestions for seven such small U.S. towns that come alive during fall, with added bonuses like whiskey saloons, rescue lions, and Viking cookery.



Beaufort, the third-oldest town in North Carolina, is full of maritime history. Photo by David Louis Econopouly / Shutterstock

## Beaufort, North Carolina

This sleepy little pearl on the southern Outer Banks is home to only 4,391 people. It's the third-oldest town in North Carolina, on the Crystal Coast halfway between Virginia Beach and Myrtle Beach.

Here you can explore artifacts salvaged from the shipwrecked *Queen Anne's Revenge* at the [North Carolina Maritime Museums](#), wander the crumbling tombstones in Beaufort's [oldest cemetery](#), or go seashell hunting at the 2,315-acre [Rachel Carson Coastal Estuarine Reserve](#), separated from downtown Beaufort by Taylor's Creek. There are two hiking trails within the reserve, but you can only walk the 1.1-mile Outer Loop trail at low tide; follow the markers from Town Marsh and look for piping plover, herons, and egrets. For food, the weekly [Olde Beaufort Farmers' Market](#), set up in front of the Carteret County Courthouse, runs through November 25.

To explore farther afield, the [Island Express Ferry Service](#) drops passengers off at the uninhabited [Shackleford Banks](#), the southernmost barrier island in [Cape Lookout National Seashore](#), known for its [wild horses](#) (more than 100 at last count). The [Cape Lookout Light Station](#), with its unique black-and-white diamond-print exterior, is another popular stop. Planning to spend time island hopping? Book a deluxe suite at the [Pecan Tree Inn](#), a peaceful B&B kitted out with two-person Jacuzzi tubs and Egyptian cotton towels. It's half a block from the boardwalk and yacht harbor.