

Autumn is peak season for

By LAURIE BAIN WILSON
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The window of opportunity for parents to connect with their kids is narrow and, once closed, hard to open, as any parent of a 'tween or teen can attest. It seems that one day, like popcorn, children burst open and become their own person and would rather be grounded than spend time with — horror of horrors — a parent.

With that in mind, here are 10 fun spots around the region for you to enjoy with your kids this fall. Most are outdoors — where Mother Nature treats us New Englanders, young and older alike, to her annual show.

New Hampshire Highland Games *Loon Mountain, Lincoln, N.H.* 800-358-SCOT, www.nhscot.org

The premier Scottish event in the Northeast coincides with the fall foliage season in what is one of the region's most spectacular spots for leaf peeping — the Kancamagus Highway. The games take place Friday through Sept. 24 and include more than 60 clans participating in such events as a Scottish fiddle championship, bagpipe bands, sheep dog trial and a youth program that promotes Scottish culture through crafts and workshops. Event and gate prices vary. Kids younger than 12 are free.

Haunted Happenings *Salem*

877-SALEM-MA, www.hauntedhappenings.org

Harry Potter meets Halloween in this witchy town that's a broomstick ride away from Boston. Visit during October when Salem celebrates Haunted Happenings, a monthlong fantasy of events, kicking off with a



grand parade Oct. 6. Events include a Halloween Costume Contest for animals; a kids costume parade and brunch; a Haunted Footsteps Ghost Tour; Hogwarts Fall Festival; and Phoenix School's Hogwarts Halloween Party contest with Harry Potter-themed games and crafts (www.phoenixschool.org). Bonus: The Salem Witch Museum has extended hours all month.

Art's Dune Tours *Provincetown* 800-894-1951; www.artsdunetours.com

Colorful leaves in the mountains are only a part of New England's fall lure; the season is also beautiful along the shore when the beach plums darken and wisps of beach grass turn golden. Celebrate the changing season at the Cape Cod National Seashore by way of a one-hour narrated tour. In addition to the dunes and sea, you'll see the dune shacks where writers and artists such as Eugene O'Neill created their works, inspired by the sand and sea

that surrounded them. Bonus: The sunset tour is breathtaking. Tours are given through Halloween. Cost: \$20 adults, \$15 kids ages 6 to 11 (sunset tours are \$30 adults, \$19 kids).

Fall foliage chairlift *Vermont ski mountains* www.stratton.com, www.killington.com, www.stowe.com, www.mountsnow.com

One of the more unique — and thrilling — ways to see the canvas of color this fall is by chairlift, and several ski resorts in Vermont oblige. Stratton Mountain, southern Vermont's highest peak, offers daily chairlift tours Saturday through Oct. 9. Cost: \$10 adults, \$5 seniors, \$6 kids 13 to 18, kids 12 and younger free. Stowe, Mount Snow and Killington also offer gondola and chairlift rides during the fall.

WaterFire *Providence*

888-624-6345, www.waterfire.org
On a crisp autumn Saturday night why not warm your hearts at this

BEWITCHING DECORATIONS: Salem shows its spirits during October's annual Haunted Happenings, above. A wee lassie takes in the **New Hampshire Highland Games**, right.

family fun in New England

spectacle of water and fire in downtown Providence? More than 100 bonfires transform the three rivers in Providence into a magical event that's complemented by music. As the fires burn, the scent of cedar and pine perfumes the air. WaterFire takes place every Saturday night throughout the fall from shortly after sunset until midnight. Bonus: It's free.

Greylock Ramble Mount Greylock

800-444-1815, www.berkshires.org

A great way to take in the Berkshires' stunning fall foliage is by joining 3,000 hikers of all ages this Columbus Day at the 41st Greylock Ramble. At 3,491 feet, Mount Greylock is the highest peak in Massachusetts, offering hikers great views of the mountains washed in fall colors. "Last year the youngest was 2 years old and oldest was 84 years old, and both made it to the summit," according to an event spokesman. Note: Parking is limited near the trailhead; take one of the Ramble shuttle buses. Bonus: It's free.

Mount Washington Cog Railway Bretton Woods, N.H.

800-922-8825 or 800-DO-SEE-NH,
www.mtwashingtonvalley.org

An unusual way to see the White Mountain National Forest draped in a quilt of golds, crimsons and oranges, this steam-powered train has been chugging since 1869 and is a hit with kids. The three-hour round-trip excursion climbs Mount Washington, the tallest peak in the Northeast, for views of four states, the Atlantic Ocean and Canada.

Cost: \$57 adults, \$52 seniors, \$37 kids 4 to 12, kids 4 and younger are free (on lap).

B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill Old Mystic, Conn. 860-536-3354

If autumn means apples to you then you won't want to miss this cider mill that dates to 1881. This is the only remaining steam-powered cider mill in the United States and a national historic landmark. Sit on the porch here and sip cider and munch on doughnuts. You'll also want to buy a bottle or two of the 28-proof "black out" cider (for those long winter nights ahead) as well as apple pies and jams. Take the tour between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., through October.

Early holiday shopping Freeport, Maine www.visitmaine.com

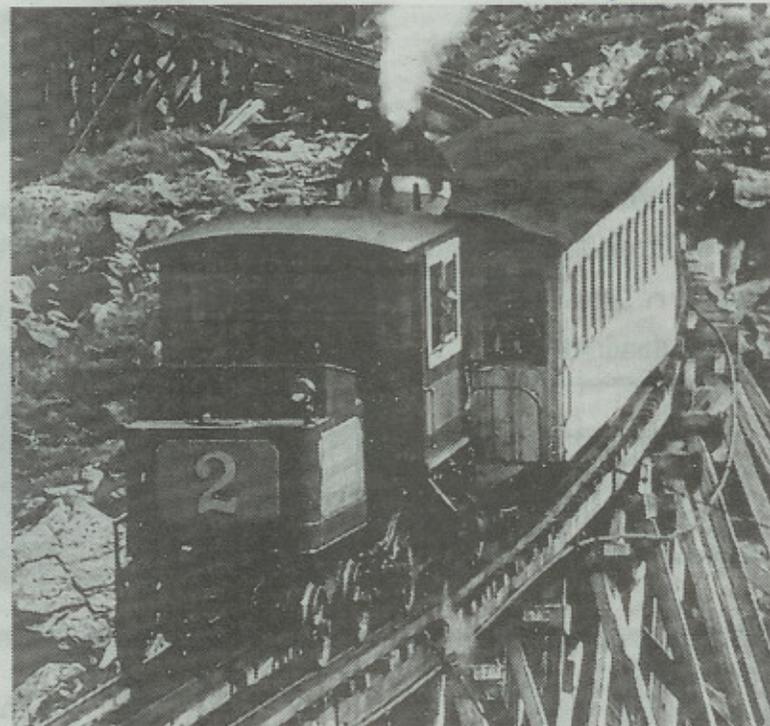
Shopping doesn't get any better than in this sprawling shop-until-you-plop town that's headquarters to L.L. Bean (www.llbean.com). Stroll the 170 shops and outlets here, where even the hardest-to-please teens will find something to IM their friends about. Bonus: Stop for a bowl of lobster stew at the Harraseeket Inn (www.harraseeketinn.com, 800-342-6423), within walking distance of L.L. Bean (better yet, spend the night here) and then indulge in a hot fudge sundae at Ben and Jerry's.

Cranberry harvest Carver 508-866-3654, www.flaxpondfarms.com

Think Plymouth, and pilgrims

and Thanksgiving come to mind. But earlier in the season, Plymouth County celebrates its thousands of acres of cranberries during the harvest each September. While many of the cranberry farms are closed to the public, 100-acre Flax Pond Farms offers tours. You'll visit the screening house where the cranberries are sorted by an antique separator and talk bogside about the cranberry farming process. Tours are given daily between 1 and 6 p.m., until Oct. 30. Visit the gift shop for cranberry popcorn and cranberry taffy.

Laurie Bain Wilson is a travel writer whose specialty is family travel. She is the author of several books, including "New York City With Kids" (Open Road/Simon & Schuster), which was just published in a second edition.



HERALD PHOTO BY FRANK CURTIS

ON TRACK: The Mount Washington Cog Railway chugs along.