

Have fun this fall with the kids

By BETH J. HARPAZ
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Invite a 10-year-old boy on a walk to see fall foliage, and he won't even glance up from his video game. But ask him to navigate a corn maze or tour a haunted house, and you've got yourself a companion for a fun outing. Here are some ways to get kids out of the house this fall.

FOOD AND FESTIVALS

Pick apples and pumpkins, then let the kids help you make a pie or carve a jack-o'-lantern. Check the Web site for your state Department of Agriculture or tourism office to find orchards nearby. Try www.pickyourown.org, www.farmstop.com or www.applejournal.com.

Vermont's "cheese trail" — www.vtcheese.com/vtcheese/charliestory.htm — includes several farms with guided tours where you can visit animals and watch cheese being made, including Sugarbush Farm, in Woodstock, Vt., which also has maple syrup-making demonstrations, www.sugarbushfarm.com, and Taylor Farm, in Londonderry, which has hay rides, www.taylorfarmvermont.com.

Many fall festivals have family-friendly activities like pumpkin decorating and petting zoos. The Keene Pumpkin Fest takes place Oct. 21 in Keene, N.H., www.pumpkinfestival.com or (603) 358-5344. In La Junta, Colo., check out the "Soar a Gourd" event Oct. 14, in which gourds are catapulted into the air via slingshot, air cannon or your trusty pitching arm; details at (719) 254-6978. The Scarecrow Fest, with all types of contests for kids, takes place Sept. 22-24 in Wanatah, Ind., www.scarecrowfest.org.

Yankee Magazine lists the 25 best family events and destinations for fall at www.yankeefoliage.com, including pick-your-own farms like Lyman Orchards, Middlefield, Conn.; the Topsfield Fair in Topsfield, Mass., Sept. 30-Oct. 9, and the colonial-themed Harvestfest, York, Maine, Oct. 13-15.



CORN MAZES

You can find easy walk-throughs for little kids, but for older children, look for a six-acre odyssey that will take an hour to navigate. Some mazes have guides stationed in towers in case you get lost inside their larger-than-life 3-D puzzles.

The most intricate labyrinths are professionally designed, with fields carved to resemble images ranging from maps to presidents' faces to sports logos. But most of the designs can only be appreciated with an aerial view. If you're inside the maze, all you'll see is a 12-foot-

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HIKES

Nancy Ritger, senior interpretive naturalist for the Appalachian Mountain Club, says one way to get children excited about a hike is "to have a goal of some sort — a waterfall or a pond, or maybe just a scenic overlook, but have something they can count on getting to.

Ritger suggests bringing a net to dip in a pond or river; a magnifying glass for examining insects, and binoculars for the grand view. Food is a good motivator, too. Make pumpkin muffins together as a snack for the hike, or let kids help make trail mix, including treats of their choice like M&Ms.

Conduct a scavenger hunt. Look for acorns, see who can find the biggest fallen leaf, and collect as many different types of leaves as you can.

Talk about safety before heading out. Stay together in the woods and

remind kids to stay put and make a lot of noise if they get lost.

AMC's "Fall into Adventure with the AMC" link — www.outdoors.org/lodging/fallguide.cfm — has a trip planner with recommended foliage hikes.

TRAIN RIDES

Many rail companies offer themed rides with entertainment for kids.

New Hampshire's Conway Scenic Railroad — www.conwayscenic.com or (800) 232-5251 — stops near the AMC's Crawford Notch (Highland) Center.

In North Carolina, the Raft'N Rail Excursion package, through Oct. 28, includes whitewater rafting on the Nantahala River and a ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad from Bryson City, N.C.; details at www.wildwaterrafting.com/nanrafttrail.html or (800) 451-9972.

In Ohio, the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad runs the Great Pumpkin Express, departing from the Rockside station, Oct. 21-22 and 28-29, with a visit to a pumpkin patch and corn maze; <http://cvsr.com/halloween.shtml>.