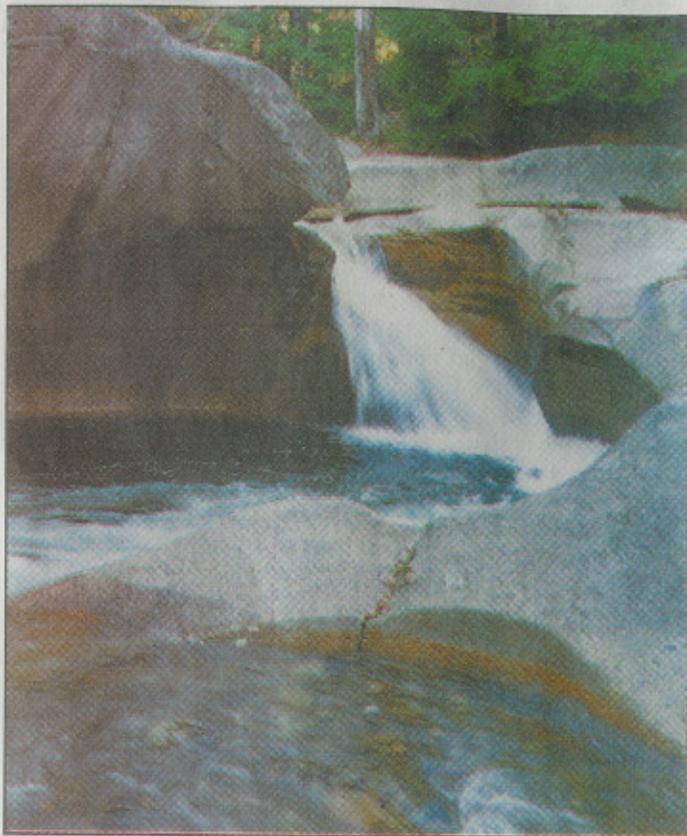


# Mother nature's fall pallete touches New England



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LINCOLN, N.H. — Though Cedar Mountain can be pretty in autumn, it's impossible to rival the beauty of New England in the fall. The White Mountains of New Hampshire host some of the best colors of them all in early October.

Because of the sheer amount of trees you are bound to get spectacular colors nearly anywhere in New England if you hit it at the right time, but the White Mountains also offer a bevy of other impressive sights.

For a good sampling, state Route 112 passes through the heart of the White Mountains from the Vermont border to Maine. It's only about 70 miles across, but there are plenty of stops and side trips to justify a full day along the drive.

One of the first stops east of Vermont is an old, gray covered bridge in Swiftwater that dates back to 1849. The one-lane



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**Above: An old, one-lane covered bridge stretches across the Wild Ammonoosuc River near Swiftwater, N.H., just off state Route 112 in the White Mountains. Left: Water plunges into the final, churning pool of The Flume at Franconia Notch State Park in the White Mountains of New Hampshire on Oct. 5.**

bridge crosses the Wild Ammonoosuc River just upstream from a slight waterfall. Large boulders in the water offer a great chance to climb and

stretch your legs a bit.

Continuing on the road passes a small lake surrounded by high mountainsides blanketed with a rainbow of colors — red, yellow, orange and green (courtesy of a mixture of evergreens within the primarily deciduous forest).

Soon you arrive in Lincoln and the junction with Interstate 93. Most people don't think of freeways as being that scenic, but when you are in New England in the fall, everything is scenic.

I-93 through the White Mountains, however, is possibly the prettiest stretch of interstate in the country and is worth a brief side trip north through Franconia Notch State Park. This unique part of I-93 has a low speed limit — only 45 miles per hour in places — and scenic pullouts abound.

The most famous of the sights in the park no longer exists,

unfortunately. Only a few years after it graced the surface of New Hampshire's quarter, the Old Man of the Mountain formation on a high granite cliff succumbed to natural erosion and crumbled. Still it's worth a stop at the former viewpoint to see where the old face once jutted out from the mountainside and to read the signs about its demise.

Another must-see stop in the state park is a unique waterfall area called The Flume that more closely resembles a ride at a water park. Here a swift stream plummets along a stone chute, occasionally plunging off small drops of four or five feet, at one point leaping over a ledge into a churning pool below. The moderate hike offers gorgeous scenery along the way.

After the detour along I-93, backtrack to Route 112 and head east again toward Maine. This stretch of the road is called the Kancamagus Highway.

Here is possibly the most brilliant color display in all of New England.

The Kancamagus Highway climbs and switchbacks through high elevations ... by East Coast standards (a few thousand feet). High mountains on both sides are swathed in trees.

Though the mountaintops are stately, the real beauty of the Kancamagus Highway is when it hits an open stretch. Driving though it is like passing through a rainbow canyon as the trees tower above you on both sides of the road.

If there is a perfect "autumn in New England" experience, the Kancamagus Highway is it.