

Going Places, Near & Far...

On The Road: Leaf Peeping In New England

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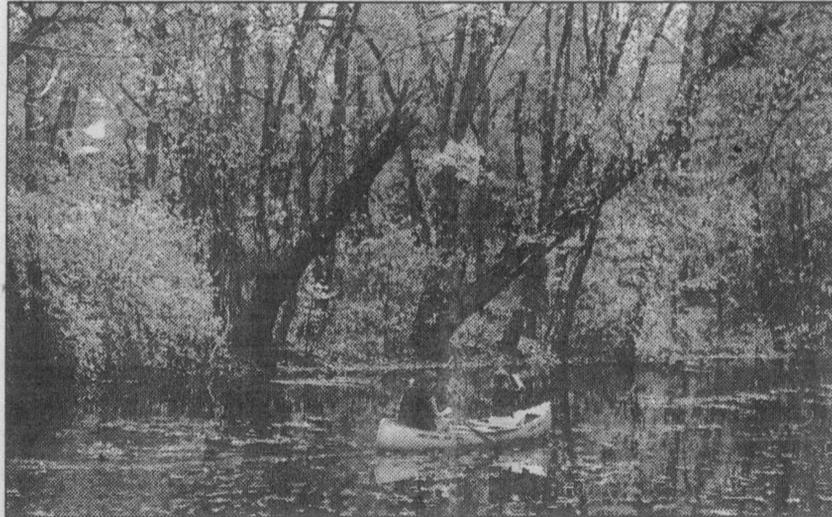
By Karen Rubin

Even a cynic like Jack Kerouac could not help but be caught under the magical spell of New England's annual display of fall color, and experts in leaf-peeping are predicting a brilliant foliage this year.

"We've experienced many bright sunny days and received plenty of moisture this summer, which has created ideal growing conditions for all vegetation," says Ginger Anderson, Chief of Forest Management for the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing offers a number of resources on its website at [www.VermontVacation.com](http://www.VermontVacation.com) for foliage season visitors. The site includes tips on planning ahead, a Lodging Availability Forecaster, and the Foliage Forecaster which shows the progression of the colors across Vermont during a typical foliage season. Also included are seasonal stories and 20 different suggested driving tours. Visitors can also access the Vermont Travel Planner, an extensive database of lodging, dining, events, attractions and recreational opportunities.

Weekly foliage reports are available on the [www.VermontVacation.com](http://www.VermontVacation.com) website and also the state's toll-free



Fall foliage provides the perfect backdrop to outdoor activity like canoeing on the Raritan Canal, New Jersey (photo by Karen Rubin).

visitor information line 1-800 VERMONT. As the season progresses, the reports will be updated twice weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

A suggested itinerary for leaf peeping in Vermont, is the Southern route that travels along the west side of Green Mountain National Forest. Start on Route 7 in Bennington. Traveling north, pick up route 7A (or stay on 7) to Manchester Center, a drive of about 25 miles. Route 9 is also a pleasant

drive that traverses the southern part of the Green Mountain state from Brattleboro in the east, through Wilmington, to Bennington on the western border, where Vermont meets New York. The drive is approximately 40 tranquil miles across the southern section of Green Mountain National forest. Bennington-Brattleboro-Manchester (see [visit-vermont.com/southern.html](http://visit-vermont.com/southern.html))

This itinerary in Vermont is available at [visit-vermont.com](http://visit-vermont.com) and through the Visit New England website which offers wonderful links to driving itineraries, lodging packages, special events (like Halloween), special interests like agri-tourism and ecotourism and travel ideas year-round ([visit.newengland.com](http://visit.newengland.com)).

Other fall foliage driving itineraries in New England include:

MASSACHUSETTS SCENIC DRIVES

**The Berkshires and Pioneer Valley:** Follow Route 7 north from Sheffield near the Connecticut border, to Williamstown. Route 8 runs from Sandisfield to Dalton, between two state forests. Route 183 takes you from Great Barrington to Lenox, follows the Housatonic River. Take Richmond Road, off of Route 183, just south of Tanglewood, and stop at the overlook for views of Stockbridge Bowl and the southern Berkshire Hills. Route 43 east, off Route 7, is the lower road to Williamstown. Enjoy the scenic farmland, as well as more mountainous terrain (Sheffield - Lenox - Williamstown). ([visit-massachusetts.com/berkshiresandpioneervalley.html](http://visit-massachusetts.com/berkshiresandpioneervalley.html))

**The Mohawk Trail:** Route 2 from Orange to Williamstown is known as the Mohawk Trail, one of America's first designated automobile tour routes encompassing no fewer than 14 state parks and forests. Upcountry views include the Whitcomb Summit. There, you will negotiate a needle-eye turn, but not before taking advantage of the scenic overlook that offers a near-to-heaven view of hills, valleys, fields and farms, and the winding road to yet another summit,

that of Mount Greylock. Other sites along Route 2 include French King Bridge, Millers Falls; the Bissell Covered Bridge, Charlemont; and the enchanting Bridge of Flowers and Shelburne Falls (Orange - Greenfield - Williamstown).

A South Shore route takes you into Cranberry Country, where the foliage of Plymouth and Bristol counties provide scenic leaf-peeping with historic towns, farms, cranberry bogs, and seaside views. From Interstate 195 East of New Bedford take the exit for Route 105. Travel north through Rochester, past the lakes to Lakeville. Leave Lakeville by going north on Route 28 to Bridgewater. In Bridgewater pick up Route 106 going east. You can take this all the way to the shoreline town of Kingston, just north of historic Plymouth. Or just before Halifax turn right on to Route 58 South, which will take you through Carver and to I-495 just outside of Wareham (New Bedford - Plymouth - Wareham).

NEW HAMPSHIRE SCENIC ROUTES

New Hampshire, with its more rustic wilderness and peaks of the White Mountains offers a huge selection of drives - so just find the towns you will traveling to and pick one, or more, of these routes to drive. Recommended routes: Route 112, the Kancamagus Highway, between Conway and Lincoln; Bear Notch Road, between Bartlett and the Kancamagus Highway; NH Route 26, between Colebrook, Dixville and Errol; NH Route 16, between Conway and Errol; NH Route 2, between Lancaster and Shelburne; Franconia Notch Parkway, which runs between Franconia and Lincoln; NH Route 302, between Bethlehem and Glen; NH Route 10, between Orford and Woodsville; NH Route 112, between Bath and North Woodstock; NH Route 118, between North Woodstock and Rumney; NH Route 16, between Errol and Milan; U.S. Route 3 between Colebrook and the Canadian border; NH Route 49 in the Waterville Valley; NH Route 110, between Dummer and Northumberland; and NH Route 117, between Franconia and Lisbon ([visit-newhampshire.com/whitemountains.html](http://visit-newhampshire.com/whitemountains.html)).

RHODE ISLAND SCENIC DRIVES

Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley offers stunning scenery. For leaf-peeping, try the Gloucester Loop: Ride along country roads, dotted with farms and picturesque apple orchards. Take Exit 7 off of I-295 and travel on Route 44 West. Pass through Chepachet and stay on Route 44 to the hamlet of West Gloucester where you will turn left onto Route 94 South. You will travel through the other small hamlets of North foster and Foster Center. Route 94 ends at Route 14 where you will turn left. Follow route 14

F Continued on page 7A

# On The Road: Leaf Peeping In New England

Continued from page 2A

through Scituate and at Route 116 turn left to travel north. When you reach Route 44 turn right and return to I-295. ([visitri.com/blackstonevalley.html](http://visitri.com/blackstonevalley.html)).

Bring your bike to enjoy one of the most beautiful bike paths, the 15-mile East Bay that runs north from Bristol to Providence, RI.

## CONNECTICUT SCENIC DRIVES

Connecticut offers a slew of fall foliage driving itineraries, all within a few hours drive.

In the Mystic area (where you must stop in to visit Mystic Seaport and the Mystic Aquarium), take the **River Road - Pequot Trail - Route 1**: Start in Downtown Mystic on the Groton side of the drawbridge by turning onto Pearl Street. After a few blocks of charming homes you will see the Mystic River on the right. Stay close to the river and you will be brought onto River Road, which meanders alongside the river to Old Mystic. River Road is used by many walkers, runners and bikers so please drive slowly and enjoy the views. Shortly after you pass a cemetery on the right you will come to a traffic light. You are now in Old Mystic. Turn right at the light and then turn right at the stop sign on to Route 27 South. Just past the view of the river on the right, and the refurbished brick mill, turn left onto Route 234-Pequot Trail. The road climbs quickly and sharply and then gently twists and turns through Stonington. Follow the route 234 signs. When you reach the traffic light at Route 1 turn sharply to right onto Route 1 South. Follow Route 1 back to Mystic. Total drive time is about one-half an hour ([visitconnecticut.com/mystic.html](http://visitconnecticut.com/mystic.html)).

Another choice is **Routes 49 and 14A**: A State Scenic Highway, Route 49 begins in North Stonington, in Southeastern CT, and runs north to Route 14A in Sterling. Along the way, travelers enjoy dramatic vistas viewed from large hilltop farms. Three of those farms have been used by the same families continuously for almost 300 years. This route runs for 19.5 miles north to the Sterling Hill National Register Historic district. Offering views of fields and farms, it's a great way for visitors to nearby Mystic (in Southeastern CT) to extend their trip northward to Northeastern CT (North Stonington - Plainfield).

Another exquisite area is the Connecticut River Valley Countryside. For spectacular views, take **The Connecticut River Drive**, Route 82: Begin at Exit 7 off Route 9 in Chester and wend your way through a portion of the Cockaponset State Forest. The road then crosses the Connecticut River into East Haddam, offering a stunning view of both the Goodspeed Opera House and Gillette Castle. You'll meander through the village of East Haddam, past the opera house, and then back into the countryside. The road also goes right through Devil's Hopyard State Park, before continuing east into Salem and Norwich in the eastern

part of the state.

**Shoreline Town Drive**: For a scenic trip through the shoreline towns of Old Saybrook, Westbrook, Clinton, Madison, Guilford and Branford, begin in Essex and take Route 154 south into Old Saybrook. 154 goes right through the center of Old Saybrook and then heads out to Saybrook Point where it turns and follows the coastline. Great water-views can be found all along the route, but the scene of the Sound from Saybrook Point with the homes out in Old Lyme in the distance (assuming good visibility) is unforgettable. In Westbrook, 154 will intersect with historic U.S. Route 1. Following U.S. 1 west into Branford (where you can pick up I-95 for a speedier trip from there) will take you through traditional New England village centers, past numerous shoreline and marina settings, and even near to the popular Hammonasset State Beach.

With a cornucopia of harvest festivals, colorful hikes and leaf peeping drives, visitors can take a day trip or make a weekend out of it enjoying charming New England towns and cozy bed and breakfasts and this year's scene promises to be a good one.

**Leaf Peep' in the Litchfield Hills**: Take a drive through the rolling hills of Litchfield with a **Fall Foliage Driving Loop**, one of the country's most scenic driving destinations and located just two hours from New York. Breathe in the fresh, autumn air while traveling along 100 miles of scenic roadway, beginning in Torrington and into Winsted, with rolling hills and quaint farms along the way. Cross the 19th century historic **West Cornwall Covered Bridge** which has been in continuous service since 1864. Visitors can still drive across the bridge, which spans the Housatonic River for a distance of 242 feet. Stop by one of several exceptional craft shops including Cornwall Bridge Pottery Store with handcrafted pottery. For a side trip, take Rte. 128 to Rte. 7 South to **Clarke Outdoors** for canoeing and kayaking while enjoying scenic views of Lake Waramaug. There, view 18th century mansions that are still kept as residential homes.

**Harvest Festivals**: Nothing says autumn at its finest like a fresh, cinnamon donut, a cup of hot

apple cider and a pumpkin picking outing surrounded by the beauty of fall foliage. For an active adventure, stop by the Preston Farms in Preston through October for its **Fourth Annual Cornfield Maze**. Last year's maze consisted of more than three miles of intricate, winding trails along with live music as the background. Stop by Stonington Vineyards for its annual **Harvest Wine & Food Festival** September 29-30 from 11 am-5 pm for a weekend filled with live music, wine tastings and wine cellar tours. Local restaurants and gourmet vendors will be serving up favorite lunch dishes. Visit the Mystic Seaport ([mysticseaport.org](http://mysticseaport.org)) and indulge in a New England tradition with Chowderfest October 6-8. Enjoy specialty foods provided by local restaurants - and don't forget the chowder. **Lyman Orchards' Pumpkin Festival** in Middlefield is the perfect time to pick apples, peaches and pumpkins ([lymanorchards.com](http://lymanorchards.com)). The festival takes place on October 27, with pumpkin painting, pumpkin carving, games, prizes and hayrides.

**"Inn-dulge" In an Overnight Stay**: Check into **The Copper Beach Inn** ([copperbeachinn.com](http://copperbeachinn.com)) in Ivoryton for some of the most scenic views of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound shoreline. The inn also boasts award-winning French-country cuisine, led by Executive Chef Francois De Melogue. In the heart of New Haven lies the **Omni Hotel at Yale University**. Many of the hotel's rooms offer breathtaking views of one of the nation's oldest university campuses, Yale, as well as panoramic views of Long Island Sound from its rooftop restaurant, John Davenport's. Sweeping views of the Farmington River await guests at **The Old Riverton Inn**, listed on the National Register of Historic Places ([rivertoninn.com](http://rivertoninn.com)). It overlooks the tumbling west branch of the river, a popular spot for tubing, kayaking and white water rafting, from its grindstone terrace to its Hobby Horse bar.

**Cruise, walk, climb**: Take a cruise to check out some of the most breathtaking views of fall. Norwalk's Maritime Aquarium ([maritimeaquarium.org](http://maritimeaquarium.org)) offers **Fall Foliage Cruises** on the Long Island Sound giving leaf peepers a chance to

experience fall in all its dazzling glory. Or, take a ride on **The Essex Steam Train and Riverboat** ([essexsteamtrain.com](http://essexsteamtrain.com)) in Essex for a journey upriver and then board the **Chester/Hadlyme Ferry** along the Connecticut River to the Gillette Castle. Cruise aboard the steamboat Sabino at Mystic Seaport ([mysticseaport.org](http://mysticseaport.org)), a tour of the Thimble Islands on the Sea Mist ([thimbleislandcruise.com](http://thimbleislandcruise.com)) in Branford or a memorable sail excursion on the Connecticut River aboard a Lady Katharine fleet vessel. Hike your way through The Last Green Valley ([thelastgreenvalley.info/index.html](http://thelastgreenvalley.info/index.html)) for one of its **Walking Weekends**, a series of free, guided hikes to view fall foliage at its best. Weave through corn mazes and pumpkins carved from nature's bounty, and relish the tang of hot apple cider. Check out sweeping fall scenery on the Quinebaug River Trail in Putnam, or visit the Tower Trail at **Sleeping Giant State Park** in Hamden. The top of East Rock Park and the trails in West Rock Park, which border New Haven, are perfect for a leisurely fall day.

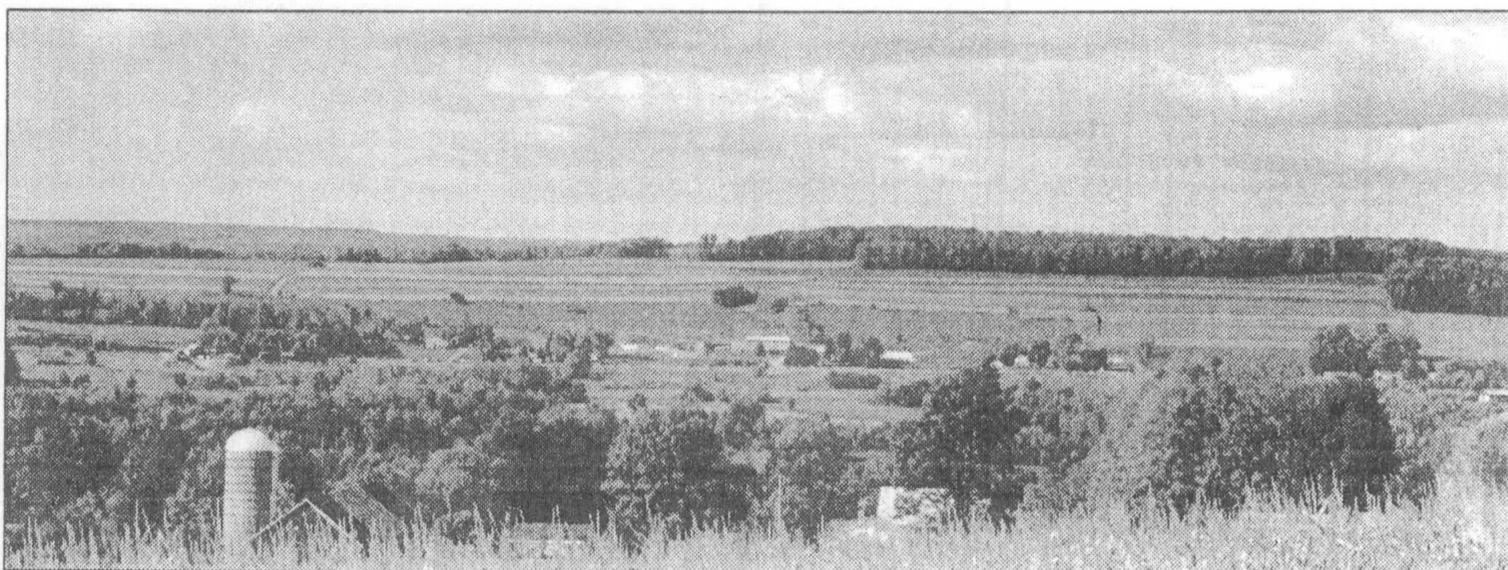
For a change of pace, bike, walk or roller blade the **Farmington Canal Trail**, starting in Hamden, just north of New Haven (though the trail is extending into New Haven, right at Yale University). The eight mile trail (part of an 80-mile canal trail between New Haven and Massachusetts) winds up in the scenic town of Cheshire (203-785-1482).

For further information and detailed itineraries on Fall Foliage Driving Loops visit [http://www.tourism.state.ct.us/driving\\_loops/fall\\_loops\\_main.asp](http://www.tourism.state.ct.us/driving_loops/fall_loops_main.asp); to view a fall foliage status report for Connecticut, visit [www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com).

For complete information about Connecticut's 52 Getaways, country inns, B&Bs and other places to stay, call 888-CTvisit (1-888-288-4748) or log on at [www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com).

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More travel on Page 14A



\**Courier & Ives couldn't have painted a more beautiful landscape, such as in upstate New York, near Ithaca (photo by Karen Rubin).*