

# Fall Foliage Guide

in Essex County



A publication of the  
Lake Placid/Essex County Visitor's Bureau  
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## Your Guide to the Beautiful Fall Foliage

### What kind of weather can we expect?

Temperatures can fluctuate dramatically between day and night with variances as great as 50°. If you are going out early, bear in mind that it may warm up to 75° or even 80° at mid-day and, likewise, if you go out during the heat of the day, when the sun goes down, the temperature may plummet amazingly fast and you don't want to be caught out on a hike without warm clothes.

Dress in layers and keep extras in the car or your knapsack. Most likely the days will be temperate, about 60 – 70 degrees but the nights will be cool, dropping quickly to 30 and 40 degrees.

**Foliage Season** generally begins in early to mid-September and ends in mid-to-late October. Peak color in some areas often coincides with Columbus Day/Canadian Thanksgiving weekend. Beginning in early September, the Visitors Bureau provides weekly Foliage Reports that are updated on Wednesdays.

Color	Stage Description	Percent Color
No Change	Still green	0%
Just Starting	Some but low color change	Up to 25% change
Mid-Point	Moderate but lots of color	Up to 50% change
Near Peak	High, bright color	Up to 75% change
Peak Color	Brilliant, full color	100% Change
Past Peak	Spotty conditions, dropping	Finished

The map displayed below indicates the approximate order that Fall Foliage occurs throughout the region and may be at its best in a particular area. Complete Foliage change in a locale typically occurs over several weeks. The **Lake Placid/High Peaks Region** usually begins color change early to mid-September and generally peaks near the end of September or beginning of October. Progression of color change moves steadily southward and down in elevation until mid to late October with along **Lake Champlain** generally being the last to change.

For early foliage, start in the higher elevations such as the **Lake Placid/High Peaks** and **Whiteface Regions**. These higher elevation locations may have some trees with peak color in mid to late September. Lower elevation areas along **Lake Champlain** may not begin color change until a week or two later than higher elevations as indicated on the map.

The lower and mid-level elevations in the **Schroon Lake Region** in southern and western Essex County may have some color throughout the season but may not reach peak color until early to mid-October.



### **When Does It Peak?**

Estimating "the peak" is a daunting prospect since the whole season in any given area only lasts about three weeks. When the leaves will change is purely speculation and prediction and it's about as reliable as predicting how much snow we will have for Christmas.

The "middle" of Foliage Season is roughly around the first week of October. In the northern part of the High Peaks one could comfortably say "peak" will be then, although there may be splendid colors in late September and even through the end of October in the lower elevations and along Lake Champlain.

One day of solid rain and/or wind can change everything overnight as will two very cold nights as can a few unseasonably warm days...the variables are too many to list.

### **How Long Does It Last?**

Generally, in each area, the foliage change lasts about three weeks. Sometimes you will see a tree that has begun to turn late in the summer. Trees that begin to turn very early are usually diseased or stressed in some way.

The most favorable weather conditions for brilliant red colors are warm sunny days followed by cool nights with temperatures below 45 degrees F. Rain and wind will end the show pretty quickly once the colors have changed.

### **What Colors Will I See?**

Yellow...red...scarlet...brown...purple...and some yet unnamed colors...

Yellow: Aspen, Birches, Beeches, Poplar, Cherries, Hickories, Maples

Red/Scarlet: Cherries, Maples, Oaks      Brown: Maples

Purple: Ash      Orange: Some Oaks, Some Maples

### **Reservation Tips**

- If you are traveling a long distance to the Adirondacks or you plan on making a weekend trip, we suggest that you make lodging reservations in advance. You can call **1-800-447-5224** or visit us on the web at **4everadk.com**.
- Try to plan your trip during mid-week; you will likely find more lodging availability and that roads are quieter giving you more opportunity to enjoy the views.
- Make an adventure out of your trip; explore the back roads. Some of the best sights are off the beaten path.
- Don't worry about missing "peak" color. You will still be able to enjoy a full array of colors that can be found before "peak". The spectrum of color is awesome!
- Make time to explore outside your car. Visit some areas on foot, by bike or on water. Hiking, biking or by canoe allow you to truly experience the foliage.

## Photo Ops

These days more and more people are purchasing digital cameras – not only are the prices going down, there are no processing costs. So, go ahead, experiment when taking pictures of this season's beautiful Adirondack fall foliage. If you don't like the picture, delete it, or use photo editing software to adjust the colors, sharpness, size, etc. Here are some additional tips:

- Come Informed** - Before you start shooting, glance through your camera's manual – it's sure to have a few good pointers.

- Don't Miss Out** – Don't wait for the leaves to start changing in your backyard before you plan your visit to the Adirondacks. Check out foliage reports on [www.lakeplacid.com](http://www.lakeplacid.com) to make sure you visit at the height of the season.

- Think Small** – Often times its difficult to capture vibrant colors in big, overall shots. As far as composition, keep it simple. Look for a dominant element, such as one tree in a field or a single branch of leaves against the sky. Try isolating elements by using a shallow depth of field. Also, change your point of view – get down on your belly or up into that firetower.

- We Don't Need No Sun** - Early morning and late afternoon provide the most interesting light, but overcast and even rainy days will often show color better than sunny days (as long as there is enough light to illuminate the leaves). Sometimes the best days are when the clouds are high and thin... it softens the direct rays of the sun.

- Brighter Colors** - A polarizing filter will improve color for both film and digital cameras. In sunny conditions, a polarizing filter will cut glare and capture brighter colors in the leaves and sky offering better overall definition.

- Focus on the Scene** – If your camera has a scene mode for distance or landscape, use it – it will help the camera focus.

- Zoom** – If you're using a long zoom lens, consider a tripod or making sure the camera is very steady. If your camera has a shutter option, try to keep the shutter higher than the focal length scale on the camera to ensure sharp images.

- It's All About Balance** - If your camera has a choice of "auto white" balance or choosing a setting, pick the "daylight" setting. When you shoot brilliant colors, the camera will read them and even exaggerate them a bit. An "auto white" setting may neutralize the colors.

- Don't Shoot For The Sky** - When shooting trees from a distance, keep the amount of sky to a minimum (no more than one-fourth or one-third of the picture). Water, though, is a great accent. Try to position water between yourself and foliage.

- Options, Options** - When you find a good subject, take it from a few different angles and slightly different exposures. Try both the wide angle setting on the camera and the telephoto zoom, as they offer two different types of pictures.

And here are a few additional tips for those of you who are taking photos with point-and-shoot cameras:

•**Use 400-speed color print film.** The lenses of most point-and-shoots are fairly slow. A fast film helps you on those less-than-bright days and the quality and sharpness of modern 400-speed print films is outstanding. Don't worry about using it when the sun is bright. Print films have broad exposure latitudes and at worse, your automatic camera will be using its fastest shutter speeds (cutting down on camera shake) and its smallest lens openings (improving depth of focus).

•**Add Depth.** Add a sense of depth to your landscapes. When shooting the distant hills of color, include a closer tree, or other object in the foreground.

•**Scale.** Occasionally include an object for a sense of scale to visually depict how large a landmark is in real life. This way, when you're home looking at your vacation photographs, you can point to how high you were on top of Whiteface Mountain, for instance. You can include a man-made object such as the ski jumps or another person to achieve a sense of scale.

•**Think Macro!** Don't forget the macro setting on your camera. Most point-and-shoot cameras have a close-up or macro setting (many times indicated by a tulip symbol on the controls). Bringing your camera as "up close and personal" as its minimum focusing distance will allow, can give you a whole different type of foliage photo to enhance the large landscapes.

•**Cloudy Skies? - Don't Despair!** If the sun isn't out, sometimes the best foliage shots are possible. As long as you're not insistent on having blue sky in your photos, the light available from overcast even rainy days can give you a host of colors with a nice even contrast. On especially dark days, one of the new 800 or 1000-speed films might be advisable.

## Scenic Overlooks

Basically, if you're in the valleys, look up and if you're in the High Peaks or along Lake Champlain, look around. The views are everywhere!

### HIGH PEAKS/LAKE PLACID

#### REGION:

- Adirondack Scenic Railroad - scenic train ride between Lake Placid & Saranac Lake
- From the top of the Ski Jumps
- Boat Cruise on Lake Placid
- John Brown Farm
- Along the Cascade Lakes, Chapel Pond on Rt 73
- High Falls Gorge

#### LAKE CHAMPLAIN REGION:

- Mt Defiance overlooking Fort Ticonderoga
- Crown Point Historic Site
- Essex Ferry on Lake Champlain

#### SCHROON LAKE REGION:

- Newcomb VIC Center
- Blue Ridge Road between North Hudson and Newcomb
- Great Camp Santanoni

#### WHITEFACE REGION:

- If you want extra height...great panoramic opportunities exist, visit...
- Whiteface Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway (via car) to the top and the Castle
  - Whiteface Mountain Scenic Gondola ride to the top of Little Whiteface
  - Drive along the West Branch of the Au Sable River

## Suggested Itineraries

The following are some possible routes to explore while visiting the Adirondacks and experience the beauty of the Fall Foliage season.

### **1) Swing Around Whiteface Mountain...all the way around!**

Saranac Lake - Bloomingdale - Whiteface Mountain - Wilmington - Lake Placid - Saranac Lake

Departing from the Town Hall, (with the clock-tower) Saranac Lake head east on Main Street, passing the Hotel Saranac. Turn left at the stoplight. At the next stoplight, turn right and travel north on Route 3 out of Saranac Lake village, turn right in Bloomingdale, travel about .25 mile and turn right again onto the River Road. You will be covering territory along the "backside" of Whiteface Mountain. This country road winds along and you will reach Franklin Falls Pond. Go past Franklin Falls onto Route 431. You will come to the pond and Toll Booth to the Whiteface Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway. Continue down the Highway, passing Santa's Workshop and to the "4-corners" in Wilmington. From there, you can turn right onto Route 86 and complete this loop into Lake Placid and then back to Saranac Lake. Highlights and Side Trips below suggest some possible stops along the route.

Approximate travel time 2 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Robert Louis Stevenson Cottage (Saranac Lake)
- Whiteface Mountain Memorial Highway (Wilmington)
- Santa's Workshop (Wilmington)
- Whiteface Mountain Gondola Ride (Wilmington)
- High Falls Gorge Adventure Center (Wilmington)

### **2) Lake Placid - Wilmington - Jay - Upper Jay - Keene - Lake Placid**

Departing from the Olympic Center, Main Street, Lake Placid, head northeast along NY Route 86. At the second stoplight, continue straight on Route 86. Heading out of Lake Placid the views along the Lake Placid Club Golf Courses can be spectacular. Continue along Route 86 and you will be traveling next to the fly-fisherman's dream the West Branch of the Au Sable River. The high cliffs along the river are spectacular. The road can be very narrow in spots so be sure to use one of the pull-offs to view the scenery. Along the route you will pass High Falls Gorge, and the entrance to Whiteface Mountain before arriving at the "4-corners" in Wilmington. Turn right and continue along Route 86 approximately 5 miles to Jay. At the bottom of the hill in Jay, turn right onto Route 9N, follow to Upper Jay. In the village of Upper Jay, turn left and you will again continue along a branch of the Au Sable River to Keene. In Keene, turn right and follow Route 73 "up the mountain" passing along the Cascade Lakes and back into Lake Placid.

Approximate travel time 1.5 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Olympic Center (Lake Placid)

- 1932 and 1980 Olympic Museum (Lake Placid)
- Whiteface Mountain Memorial Highway (Wilmington)
- Santa's Workshop (Wilmington)
- Whiteface Mountain Gondola Ride (Wilmington)
- High Falls Gorge Adventure Center (Wilmington)

### **3) Elizabethtown and Around Loop**

Elizabethtown - Lewis - Keeseville - Au Sable Forks - Jay - Upper Jay - Keene - Elizabethtown

Departing from this historic town and county seat, Elizabethtown, from the Courthouse on Main Street, head north on US Route 9 passing through the Town of Lewis, into the Town of Chesterfield and past Poke-o-Moonshine campground and trail and into the village of Keeseville, you will pick up the route along the course of the Au Sable River where you head west onto Route 9N and drive about 11.5 miles into the village of Au Sable Forks. You will pass old farms and wide-open spaces along the way. Continue on Route 9N into the Town of Jay, then into the Town of Keene and back up over Spruce Hill and into Elizabethtown. Don't forget to check the panoramic view from the top of Spruce Hill before traveling back to Elizabethtown.

Approximate travel time 1.5 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Adirondack Center Museum (Elizabethtown)
- Essex County Courthouse (Elizabethtown)
- Poke-o-Moonshine
- Au Sable Chasm (Au Sable Chasm)

### **4) Short Loop, the "back way" from Au Sable Forks Wilmington - Jay - Au Sable Forks - Wilmington**

Departing the "4-corners" in Wilmington, follow Route 86 east to Jay, then turn left onto Route 9N and drive about 6 miles into AuSable Forks. At the blinker light on Main Street in Au Sable Forks, continue straight to the next corner. At the stop sign, turn left up the hill and follow for 5 miles. Turn left. From there, you can complete the loop by taking County Route 12 (Haselton Road) back into Wilmington. Note: This is either a great loop on its' own or added to Loops 1, 2 or 3.

Approximate travel time 1.5 hours.

### **5) Short but Scenic Circuit Exit 30 off I-87/Adirondack Northway - Keene Valley - Elizabethtown - Exit 30**

Exit the Adirondack Northway at Exit 30. Head west on Route 73 passing Chapel Pond into Keene Valley, home to many trailheads to the High Peaks and Mt Marcy. Go through the village of Keene Valley and continue west on Route 73.

Approximately 2 miles past Keene Valley, turn right onto Route 9N which takes you to Elizabethtown. In Elizabethtown, turn right and travel along Route 9 back where the road intersects with Route 73, bear left and continue back to Exit 30 of the Adirondack Northway. Note: This too is a great loop on its' own or added to Loops 3, 6 or 7.

Approximate travel time 1.5 hour.



Highlights and Side Trips:

- Adirondack Center Museum (Elizabethtown)
- Essex County Courthouse (Elizabethtown)
- Roaring Brook Falls

**6) The "Inner" Loop along I-87/Adirondack Northway Exit 30 of I-87/Adirondack Northway (Keene Valley/Keene Exit) - Exit 33 (Willsboro Exit)**

Lewis - Elizabethtown - Keene Valley

From Exit 30, follow Interstate 87/Adirondack Northway north to Exit 33 (approximately \_\_ miles) The scenery along the Northway is quite breathtaking and offers some great views of varying foliage along the route. At Exit 33, follow Route \_\_ to Route 9 South. Follow Route 9 through the Town of Lewis, into Elizabethtown. Continue on Route 9 South to where the road intersects with Route 73, bear left and continue back to Exit 30 of the Adirondack Northway.

Approximate travel time 2 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Adirondack Center Museum (Elizabethtown)
- Essex County Courthouse (Elizabethtown)
- Roaring Brook Falls

Note: This loop is a great extension when added to Loops 3, 5, 7 or 9.

**7) "Lower" Lake Champlain Circuit**

**Westport - Port Henry - Crown Point - Ticonderoga - Paradox - Severance - Schroon Lake - Westport**

In the Town of Westport, you will pick up Route 22 South. Following along the shore of Lake Champlain, your trip will take you through Port Henry, Crown Point and into Ticonderoga. A fall visit to the landmark Fort Ticonderoga should also be on your itinerary. A higher vantage point is Mount Defiance over Fort Ticonderoga. You can retrace your route along the lake back to Westport or take another scenic jog, Route 74 west from Ticonderoga through Paradox to Schroon Lake and out to the Adirondack Northway (I-87) and head north back to Keeseville.

Approximate travel time 3 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- The Champlain Monument at Crown Point Bridge
- Fort Ticonderoga (Ticonderoga)    · Forts at Crown Point (Crown Point)
- Iron Center (Port Henry)
- Hancock House (Ticonderoga)    · Mount Defiance over Fort Ticonderoga

Note: For a longer "explore", combine this loop with #9, the "Upper" Lake Champlain circuit.

**8) Traverse Some True Adirondack Wilderness Schroon Lake/Pottersville (off I-87 Exit 26) - North Hudson (I-87 Exit 29) - Blue Ridge - Newcomb - Minerva - Olmsteadville - Schroon Lake**

This is a great loop that takes you through some true Adirondack wilderness as well as along a scenic lake. You can actually start your journey in the Warren County hamlet of Pottersville, heading north on Route 9 into the village of Schroon Lake. Continue on Route 9 in the towns of Schroon and North Hudson, then turn left at Exit 29 of the Adirondack Northway onto County Route 2, known locally as the Blue Ridge Road. Head west on the Blue Ridge Road for nearly 20 miles, then turn right and head further west on Route 28N into the Town of Newcomb. The Adirondack Park Agency's Visitor Interpretive Center is well worth a visit; it's located just through town. You can then retrace your route on Route 28N, but stay on that road instead of heading back on the Blue Ridge Road. Route 28N will take you into the Town of Minerva. You can complete the loop back to Schroon Lake by heading toward the Roosevelt Marcy Memorial Highway, turning left onto AP Morse Memorial Highway (County Route 30), taking a slight left onto Longs Hill Road, turning right onto O'Neil Road and then another left onto Irishtown Road (County Route 24) for about 11 miles back to Route 9.

Approximate travel time 3 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Adirondack Park Visitor Interpretive Center (Newcomb)

**9) "Upper" Lake Champlain Circuit Keeseville - Au Sable Chasm - Willsboro - Essex - Westport - Keeseville**

You can start this one almost anywhere along Lake Champlain, but one ideal spot would be to head south on Route 9 from Keeseville, stopping at Au Sable Chasm for a spectacular view of the natural wonder. South of Keeseville, take Route 22 over to Willsboro and down the lakeshore into the historic hamlet of Essex, where you can continue tight to the lake on Lakeshore Drive into Westport. Follow Route 9N \_\_\_ miles west of Westport and pick-up I-87/Exit 31 of the Adirondack Northway to complete the loop back to Keeseville.

Approximate travel time 3 hours.

Highlights and Side Trips:

- Au Sable Chasm (Au Sable Chasm)
- 1812 Homestead (Willsboro)
- Essex Ferry (Essex)

Note: For a longer "explore", combine this loop with #7, the "Lower" Lake Champlain circuit.