Travel · Posted 23 hours ago

18 Worthwhile Vacation Destinations That Are Even Better In The Fall — Both In The US And Beyond

Fall is a pretty incredible time to travel. After the summer crowds die down and before winter break begins, you can take advantage of fewer tourists, shoulder season deals, and have relative peace and quiet.

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The weather is cooling down, the days are getting shorter, we're approaching peak fall and Halloween — and you're probably dreaming about your next vacation. Well, turns out fall is a pretty spectacular time to travel. When the summer crowds die down and before winter break begins, you can take advantage of fewer tourists, shoulder season deals, and have relative peace and quiet. Here are 18 spectacular destinations — both in the US and beyond — to consider for your autumn adventure.

THE US, CANADA, & MEXICO:

1. Hudson, New York

Phil Haber Photography / Getty Images

This town at the gateway to the Catskills is just two hours from New York City and accessible by Metro-North Railroad or Amtrak. It's often called the Brooklyn of the Hudson Valley for its progressive, artsy vibes, and chic downtown.

The main stretch, Warren Street, is lined with great restaurants (don't miss Lil Deb's Oasis and Cafe Mutton), antique shops, galleries, vintage boutiques, and home decor stores. From Hudson, you can also explore the hiking trails, farms, and great outdoors of the Catskills.

2. Nova Scotia, Canada

Curtis Watson / Getty Images/EyeEm

Summer may bring the best weather to Nova Scotia, but traveling in the fall months (up until the end of October) **is the most pleasant time to visit thanks to the dwindling crowds and bargains to be found.**

It's also the best time for hiking Kejimkujik National Park, visiting Cape Breton Island for stunning fall foliage, exploring the Bay of Fundy with its unique fossils and geology, wandering around Peggy's Cove, and surfing the quiet Eastern Shore.

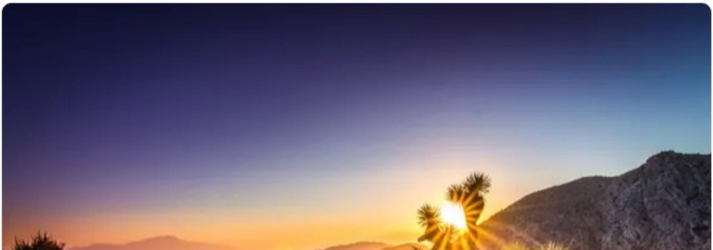
3. Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

Holly Hildreth / Moment Editorial / Getty Images

Tourism drops drastically after Labor Day in this popular midwest vacation town. The colors along the river are totally stunning, and October and November are some of the best months for fishing.

The weather cools down from the summer, but it won't be cold enough to keep you off the water, and the fall golf opportunities are endless. Explore Ha Ha Tonka State Park and all of its hiking trails or even try spelunking in one of the many caves along the lake like Bridal Cave or Stark Caverns.

4. Joshua Tree, California

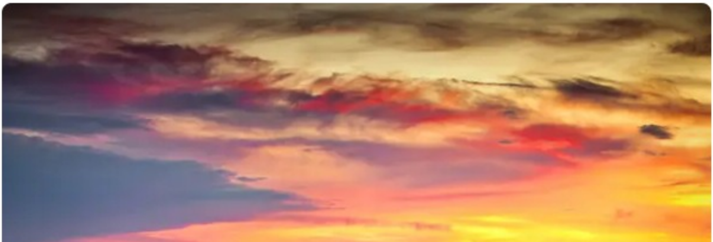


Mate Steindl / Getty Images/EyeEm

October and November are two of the best months of the year to visit this National Park that straddles the Colorado Desert and the Mojave Desert. **Temperatures can still be unbearably hot during September, but come late fall the weather in Joshua Tree is cooler and more comfortable.**

It's the perfect time to take in the stunning desert scenery and hike some of the many trails. You can easily pair your park visit with a stay in nearby, stylish Palm Springs.

5. Asheville, North Carolina



Werksmedia / Getty Images/iStockphoto

This Blue Ridge Mountain town is known for its thriving arts scene, great restaurants, and craft breweries. **Fall is the best time to visit, as you can see the leaves changing along the Blue Ridge Parkway until the end of November**.

Go gallery hopping among the warehouses in the River Arts District, admire the Biltmore Estate, go on a beer crawl, hike in the Pisgah National Forest, Mount Mitchell State Park, or Looking Glass Rock. If the weather holds up, raft or picnic along the banks of the French Broad River or drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway, stopping at some of the many scenic overlooks to take in the ultimate fall vistas.

6. Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Halbergman / Getty Images

Summertime brings an influx of visitors to Cape Cod, but **fall is the perfect time to experience the beauty of this destination without all the tourists (and the expensive hotel prices)**. It may not be sunbathing weather, but fall is ideal for walking along the Cape's many scenic beaches and nature preserves. Take a tour of one of the many cranberry bogs, bike along the Cape Cod Rail Trail, and go pumpkin picking. Or just grab a PSL and curl up by the fireplace to embrace the coziness and beauty of New England fall.

7. Columbia River Gorge, Oregon

Freebilly / Getty Images/iStockphoto

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is a canyon that stretches from Oregon to Washington, and it's a must-visit for wine lovers, outdoor enthusiasts, and nature lovers thanks to its many waterfalls, wineries, farms, and apple orchards. It's beautiful all year long, but the fall colors are spectacular.

You can make it a short trip, thanks to its location right outside of Portland, or spend a long weekend. Drive the Historic Columbia River Highway past waterfalls for epic, panoramic views of the gorge in all its autumn glory, and be sure to pick one of the many trails for hiking.

Bike-ride along the Fruit Loop, a 35-mile stretch of farms and orchards. Go wine tasting in Columbia River AVA, home to some awesome wineries like Hiyu Wine Farm and The Grateful Vineyard.

8. Taos, New Mexico

Jannhuizenga / Getty Images

This artsy and mystical town is set in the desert at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. **If there's one reason to visit Taos in the fall, it's the 85-mile Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway, which begins and ends in Taos.** The autumn scenery along the route is nothing short of magical.

Stop by the Harwood Museum of Art and then tour the Taos Pueblo, a

UNESCO World Heritage Site known for traditional adobe-style buildings. **Drive the entire Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway, which showcases the state's most impressive scenery lit up for fall.** Hike some trails in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument or Carson National Forest. If you visit during October, try to time your trip around the Taos Mountain Balloon Rally, when hundreds of colorful hot-air balloons fill the sky.

9. Portland, Maine

Dougall_photography / Getty Images/iStockphoto

Just about two hours from Boston, **the New England city of Portland**

combines amazing food and urban comforts with coastal charm. It's also an ideal starting point for exploring southern Maine's sleepy fishing towns.

Eat lobster to your heart's content, take a coastal hike to the Portland Head Light, stroll around the old port, visit the Portland Museum of Art, or drive along the coast exploring nearby towns like Kennebunkport, Bath, Freeport, Brunswick, and Ogunquit, all complete with seafood shacks and cute shops.

10. Charleston, South Carolina

Pgiam / Getty Images

While the temperatures are dropping in much of the Northern US, Charleston stays warm and pleasant well into November. It's an excellent long weekend destination for couples, families, or friends alike.

For foodies, Charleston is a haven for incredible eats (from seafood to barbecue and everything in between), complete with a vibrant cocktail and beer scene. The picturesque city is just begging to be explored by foot, but if you want to escape city life for the coast, drive to nearby Sullivan's Island for a beach day.

11. Northern Michigan

Dszc / Getty Images

Michigan's Upper Peninsula is a serious contender for the best fall foliage in the country. **If you're one for leaf peeping and pumpkin spice lattes, you don't want to miss it. In addition to many a scenic drive or hike, you'll also find fall festivals, apple orchards, cider mills, and farmer's markets.**

Compared to the busy summer months, you'll find fewer tourists in Traverse City and Mackinac Island, and you'll be able to enjoy the great outdoors without the crowds in Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and all along the shores of the Great Lakes.

ABROAD:

12. San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

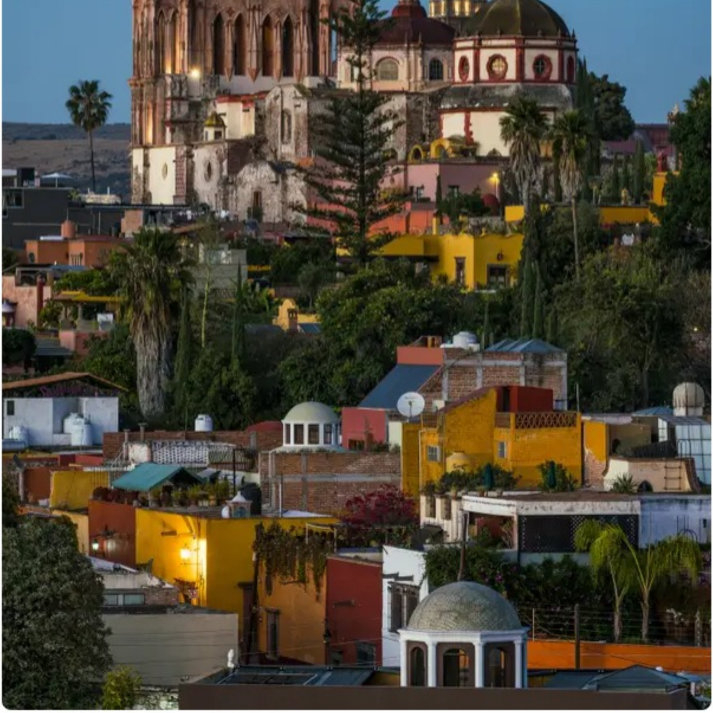


Image By Erik Pronske Photograph / Getty Images

The weather in San Miguel de Allende is pretty consistent (read: delightful) year-round, but fall is mostly very dry and a great time to beat the winter vacation crowds. **Don't expect a beach town: San Miguel de Allende is a picture-perfect colonial city complete with cobblestone streets, Crayola-colored buildings, and walls covered with azaleas.**

This artsy town has attracted artists from around the world and there is no shortage of museums, but San Miguel is also gaining a reputation as a serious city for food and wine.

13. Patagonia, Argentina and Chile

Franckreporter / Getty Images

October through November might be fall in the Northern Hemisphere, but in Patagonia, it's springtime. This means you'll be able to take advantage of nice weather and long days without all the summer crowds. **Choose to visit either the Chilean side of Patagonia (home to Torres del Paine National Park) or the Argentinian portion (where you'll find Parque Nacional Los Glaciares, home to Perito Moreno glacier).**

Bariloche in Argentina's northern Patagonia is famous for wildflowers that blossom during the springtime, and Peninsula Valdes is a great spot for whale watching. Whichever side you choose, you're guaranteed to find some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, complete with jagged glaciers, snow-kissed mountain peaks, and glistening lakes.

14. The Azores, Portugal

Rockson Armaah / Getty Images/EyeEm

This archipelago of nine **islands off the coast of Portugal features dramatic landscapes of sapphire blue lakes, hot springs, volcanic craters, fishing**

villages, and endless green pastures.

With temperatures in the mid-70s, fall is as good a time as any to visit this unique destination. Split your time between Furnas and Ponta Delgada and you'll be able to explore all the nearby waterfalls, craters, and hiking trails.

15. Piedmont, Italy

Francesco Riccardo Iacomino / Getty Images

Not that there's any *bad* time to visit this prized Italian wine region, but fall might just take the cake for the absolute best time of year. **Even in November, temperatures hover in the 50s, which is perfect weather for tasting the region's prized full-bodied Barolo and Barbaresco wines**.

Spend a day exploring the city of Turin at the foot of the Italian Alps, relax at Lago d'Orta (a quieter alternative to Lake Como), taste hearty red wines in the Langhe, and treat yourself to delicious Piemontese food (think: pasta with local truffles and rich meat-filled agnolotti. And as an added bonus: fall is when you'll find the world-famous Alba White Truffle Fair.

16. Morocco

Henryk Sadura / Getty Images

Fall in Morocco is pure bliss. It's the ideal time to explore the country's colorful cities like Fes, Marrakesh, Chefchaouen, and Tangier. **But don't forget that Morocco is a big and diverse country with so many different landscapes.** In September, you'll find the beach town of Essaouira is basically empty but still warm enough for swimming. October is a great time to hike in the High Atlas Mountains, and if a visit to the vast Sahara desert is on your travel bucket list, November is an ideal month to see it.

17. Athens, Greece

Matteo Colombo / Getty Images

Many Greeks flee Athens during the hot and sweltering summer months for the nearby islands, but come fall Athens is bursting back to life. **Of course, there's the Acropolis and the Parthenon, but there's far more to Athens than its ancient history.**

Visit the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (the EMST), go shopping for antiques and tchotchkes in the Monastiraki neighborhood, walk around the charming narrow streets of Plaka, and sample Athens' excellent restaurants and world-class cocktail bars.

If you're craving some sunshine, **take a day trip to the Athenian Riviera or a weekend trip to one of the nearby islands like Hydra or Spetses, which stay warm and delightful until the end of October.**

18. Switzerland

Roberto Moiola / Getty Images

While many people head to the Swiss Alps to ski during the winter months, it's easy to overlook autumn. The landscape is still lush and the temperatures are still warm, but once Labor Day hits most of the summer tourists have already left Switzerland. There's so much to do between hiking, sailing in St. Moritz, wine tasting in some underrated regions, exploring Bern, Zurich, and Switzerland's many quaint alpine towns. Make sure to take the Glacier Express train through the countryside, passing stunning Alpine foliage along the way.

What's your favorite fall vacation destination? Tell us in the comments!

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