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**A White Mountains Vacation – Most Scenic 100 Miles In New England**

**By Cliff Calderwood**

This amazing trip through the White Mountains of New Hampshire includes gorgeous views, a visit

to the home of the world wind speed record, and one of most scenic train rides in the east. The White Mountain National Forest is a 4-hour drive north of Boston, Massachusetts. Deep in New Hampshire, the mountains are part of the Appalachian Mountain system that covers the Eastern United States. Within the forest park is the White Mountains Trail, and it's a drive that's arguably the most scenic 100 miles in New England. Here's a selection of my favorite stops along the way – some of them require prior planning and are day trips in themselves.

**WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST VISITOR CENTER**

Most people begin the drive from the White Mountains Visitor Center in North Woodstock on route 112 and head out on route 3N to the Franconia Notch area.

If you're traveling with kids then you'll want to pencil dates back in this area at the Clark's Trading Post, and The Whale's Tale attractions -- both in Lincoln on route 3N. At Clark's you can see Bears, ride a steam train, climb towers, and generally keep the young ones happy. The Whale's Tale is a water park with a wave pool, picnic areas, and live entertainment.

Back on the road head north towards Franconia Notch, and shortly you'll see the sign for our first stop – the Flume Gorge.

**THE FLUME GORGE**

The Flume Gorge was formed over 200 million years ago when the White Mountains were molten rock. As the terrain here cooled quickly, softer material was forced into the fractures that formed. These fractures wore down with natural erosion much quicker than the surrounding granite rock -- leaving the gorge. And so now you get to enjoy a geological wonder at the base of beautiful Mount Liberty.

The Gorge has a visitor center where your tour starts and ends, one of the oldest covered bridges on the White Mountains Trail, and some dramatic photo opportunities.

## A White Mountains Vacation – Most Scenic 100 Miles In New England

Continue to head north on Route 3 until it joins Route 302 and follow 302 towards Bretton Woods. Here the mountains get taller and taller until eventually you see the grand daddy of them all — Mount Washington at 6,288 feet.

### THE ROOF OF THE WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST...

Depending on time available, you've got three options for experiencing Mount Washington: take the Cog Railway train ride to the top, drive the auto road to the summit — the quickest way, or you can hike if you're well prepared. But don't consider hiking to the top unless you're in great condition and with somebody. This mountain claims lives every year – even in the summer – as conditions in this area can deteriorate dramatically within minutes.

And yes, it's worth getting to the summit. On a clear day the view is stunning. Visit the museum at the

top and learn about the day in 1934 when the highest wind speed ever recorded on earth was taken – 231 MPH. You'll learn why its unique geographic position provides the mountain with the worst weather on earth.

Now get back onto Route 302 and head south to the town of North Conway.

### THE CONWAY SCENIC RAILROAD

Schedule at least enough time to take the shorter valley scenic train, which you board in North Conway. The train rides offer wonderful views of the scenic valleys and notches in the surrounding area.

The valley train is a 55-minute roundtrip, and the Notch train is 5 hours. Both have a first-class car if you want to have a different experience. The notch train has a dome car as well, where you get magnificent views of the steep ravines and sheer bluffs. The trains usually run from mid-June until mid-October.

### THE KANCAMAGUS HIGHWAY

Let's finish up our White Mountains Trail tour by joining back up with route 112 at Conway and driving back to the White Mountain National Forest Visitor Center.

Route 112, or as its better known the Kancamagus Highway, is the only road that runs directly east and west through the heart of the White Mountain National Forest. This is a dramatic road that shows off the magnificence of one of New Hampshire's best-loved scenic spots. From this road your vistas include wilderness and the highest peaks in the presidential range.

During the summer and fall foliage months you're likely to have plenty of company on your drive. But if the weather is clear who cares if the going is a little slow – this isn't a drive to rush anyway. But it's a magnificent end to our 100-mile scenic drive. You'll find a map of this scenic drive at my web site

[www.new-england-vacations-guide.com/](http://www.new-england-vacations-guide.com/)

For more details on these and other attractions on White Mountains vacations and to pick up your free vacation reports go to Cliff Calderwood's New England Vacations site at:

<http://www.new-england-vacations-guide.com/>

## **Fall Foliage Scenic Drives In New England – Six Of The Best**

### **By Cliff Calderwood**

Fall foliage in New England provides a showcase for Mother Nature. Perhaps nowhere else in America, and maybe even the world, are the fall colors as stunning and spectacular as October in New England.

Fall foliage in New England really begins in August. The shortening daylight hours trigger the deciduous trees to begin the process of shedding their leaves. It happens all around North America, and all around the world. But in New England it results in a display of special landscapes painted with fiery autumn colors.

Why is fall foliage in New England so different and special?

It's a factor of many things but mostly an abundance of different types of deciduous trees, warm autumn days, and cool – but not freezing – nights. When these and a few other conditions are all mixed in the right proportions, then you get the world famous stunning shades of reds, yellows, oranges, and browns on the hills and mountain sides of New England.

Between mid–September to late–October, visitors flock to New England to see the fall foliage. Many take special bus tours or even train rides. But most take to the road and these six scenic drives offer some of the best autumn views available from anywhere on the planet.

### **FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – MOHAWK TRAIL MASSACHUSETTS**

In Massachusetts the most popular fall foliage scenic drives are along the famous Mohawk Trail, and the area known as The Berkshires. The Mohawk trail rolls out through the northwestern part of the state on route 2, and winds through the hills and mountains of the Berkshires, touching picturesque towns like Williamstown, Deerfield, Shelbourne, Colrain, Charlemont, and Shelburne Falls. The road follows an ancient foot path used to move between Massachusetts and New York by Native Americans.

Mount Greylock, the highest point in The Berkshires and Massachusetts, offers stunning views of the surrounding area and Mohawk Trail.

### **FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – KANCAMAGUS HIGHWAY NEW HAMPSHIRE**

## A White Mountains Vacation – Most Scenic 100 Miles In New England

The White Mountain National Forest is home to many wonderful scenic drives but the most popular – and rightly so – has to be the 34-mile Kancamagus Scenic Highway that runs along route 112 from Conway to White Mountains Visitor Center in Lincoln. This drive is considered by many to be the top fall foliage New England scenic drive. You'll see beautiful forests ablaze with autumn colors and plenty of photo opportunities with walks along gorges and streams, and with breathtaking views of the highest mountains in the Presidential Range.

### FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – CENTRAL VERMONT AREA

Vermont is a popular destination state in the fall. With many fall foliage scenic drives to choose from,

the Central Vermont area, around Killington, and the towns and highways of Woodstock, Rutland and Ludlow, offer up some of the most dazzling. This area is deep in The Green Mountain National Forest area, and not surprisingly offers dramatic fall foliage color and scenery.

### FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – LAKES AND LEAVES MAINE

Maine is a vast wilderness and given its proximity is the first New England state to display peak fall foliage color. Maine has many unparalleled scenic drives to choose from, and it's difficult to single out one. But the Lakes and Leaves drive that skirts the shores of Moosehead Lake on Route 15 and then heads south on route 201 provides an amazing view of this empty, but beautiful backcountry. You'll see incomparable fall foliage views of the tree-lined banks of the Kennebec River, and the surrounding mountains on this Maine Scenic Highway.

### FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – RHODE ISLAND COAST

Rhode Island provides open roads and coastal drives for fall vacationers and leaf peeping. The 61-mile Rhode Island Coast Scenic Drive follows the coastline east from Westerly towards Point Judith passing nature reserves and secluded beaches, until turning north along Narragansett Bay, and eventually over Newport Bridge on route 138. The drive finishes over the breathtaking Ocean Drive in historic Newport.

Always close to a picnic stop along this short drive it begs to be taken slowly and to stop occasionally and breathe in the crisp fall salt air.

### FALL FOLIAGE SCENIC DRIVE – CONNECTICUT ROUTE 169

Far from being the forgotten step child of the other fall foliage scenic drives in New England, Connecticut is full of its own collection of scenic drives. One noteworthy trip to take in autumn is Route 169 in the eastern "Quiet Corner" region. Here the backdrop is rolling farmland, stone walls, and picturesque towns and villages that line the route.

New England is littered with fall foliage scenic drives, and look at those mentioned here as springboards to visiting other country roads that lead to surprises and discovery at every turn. The backroads of New England are where the gems are located, so don't be afraid to explore.

For more details on these and other New England scenic drives and to pick up your free travel reports go to Cliff Calderwood's Vactions in New England travel site at:

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