

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

High-octane ways to enjoy fall colors

From roller coaster rides to white-water rafting to zip lines, the kids will find these family outings all right

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There's no doubt that when it comes to fall foliage, New England steals the show. The problem is your kids couldn't care less about pretty views and vividly colored leaves. They need action! Forget the slow-going, scenic byways clogged with leaf peepers. Instead, consider these fun activities where spectacular scenery is only part of the equation.

1. DO THE RIDE THING

Your kids love roller coaster rides, but you're long weary of crowded amusement parks. They're begging for another trip to Six Flags, but you're craving crisp mountain air and pretty views. Here's a solution: head to **Okemo Mountain Resort** in southern Vermont. There are plenty of activities to keep your active brood happy, including zip line tours, mountain biking, climbing walls, and mini golf. But the top thrill is a ride on the Timber Ripper Mountain Coaster. Board your own rider-controlled sled (one or two people per sled) and start the 1,600-foot climb up the mountain. And then, hang on! The sled, moving along 3,100 feet of track, whips down the slope, reaching speeds up to 25 miles an hour. There are waves, bumps, banking loops, and twists to add to the excitement. Let the kids ride it again, while you sit back and enjoy the vista of mountain peaks and fiery, fall-tinged forests. (802-228-1600, www.okemo.com, \$13 driver, \$9 passenger, open weekends through Columbus Day, reopens early December for winter season. Drivers must be 48 inches or taller; passengers must be at least 36 inches tall.)

2. RAFT THE RAPIDS

Get in. Sit down. Hang on. For the next couple of hours you'll be bounced and pitched up and over mountains of screaming white water and attacking rapids like Magic Falls (because it makes rafts disappear), Whitewasher, Alleyway, and Three Sisters. After being pummeled with sheets of water and rocked by frothy boils, the river calms down, turning from chaos to calm. Now, you can catch your breath and take in the splendid scenery: a dark mountain gorge, covered in trees lighted with brilliant fall color. That's the thrill and beauty of rafting the Kennebec River in western Maine in autumn. (Plus, fall rafting and accommodations are available at a significant discount over summer pricing.) Book a cabin at the **Northern Outdoors Adventure Resort**, with a restaurant, pub and brewery, where you'll have creature comforts (and a soft bed) at the end of the day. The resort also offers ATV adventures on some 6,000 miles of back roads and trails. (207-663-4466, www.northernoutdoors.com, daily through Oct. 11. Starting at \$69 per person, ages 10 and up; ages 8-9 can raft half the river, joining the group for the riverside lunch and rafting on the lower section of the river.)

3. SKYROCKET THROUGH TREES

Dangling from 250 feet in the air while you soar across a deep mountain cleft is guaran-



1

OKEMO MOUNTAIN RESORT



2

NORTHERN OUTDOORS



3

ATTITASH MOUNTAIN RESORT



4

KINGDOM TRAILS

teed to get your heart pumping. On the **Attitash ZipTour**, you'll get a brief lesson and do a short, introductory zip line. This is just a warm-up to the real thing. Next, you'll take the chairlift to the Bear Peak summit, home to the Flying Bear Zip, the single longest zip span in the East. "Don't brake," the attendant told us as we prepared to leave the platform. The zip is nearly a mile long, and some 25 stories high; we tried to take in the forest and mountain views as we soared from the peak over the valley to Attitash Mountain. The next zip line, the Attitash Aerial Zip, was the fast one, if you don't put on the brakes, rider-controlled speeds can reach up to 65 miles per hour as you travel 2,196 feet back to the base of Attitash. The scenery was great, but the rides took our breath away. (603-374-2665, www.attitash.com, weekends through Columbus Day, \$70. Riders must be at least 10, weigh between 50 and 260 pounds, and be between 48 and 82 inches tall.)

4. BIKE THE BACKROADS

The little town of East Burke, Vt., is known as one of the top places in the country for mountain biking. It's home to **Kingdom Trails**, a 100-mile network of bike trails that weave through the countryside. In autumn, it's sublime, when the landscape is a dazzling mosaic of brilliant hues. The sugar maples, decked in flaming shades of scarlet and tangerine, provide a backdrop for the subtler yellows of beech, aspen, oaks, and purple ash. It's pretty and it's fun. Stop by the Welcome Center and the folks will recommend the best trails based on your ability and time frame. There are plenty of gnarly single-track routes, but beginners and young kids can pedal trails too. Start at the skills trail and pump track (a loop of berms and dirt mounds), and then hit the hills. Some favorite family-friendly trails include Kitchel, Bemis, and Old Webs. (802-626-0737, www.kingdomtrails.org, daily through October; day pass \$15, ages 8-15 \$7, under 8 free)

5. REV IT UP

We love a slow-moving chairlift or gondola ride, where we can sit back and take in the views on the trip up the mountain. Our kids? They're not so thrilled. In winter, it's mostly a means to an end. This time of year — meh. But whisper the word "ATV" and they perk up immediately. **Stratton Mountain** understands the appeal, and offers guided ATV rides (through an independent company) to the top of its 3,875-foot summit. It's all about revving up the engines and bouncing through the bumpy terrain. The trails, buried under snow in the winter, are rutted, potholed, and log-strewn, perfect for a wild ride to the top. Squeeze in a little time to take in the 360-degree view from the summit. On clear days you can see the White Mountains, Adirondacks, Berkshires, and the Green Mountain range. Just remember: What goes up must come down. (802-379-1483, www.strattonadventures.com, daily through Columbus Day; \$107 driver [must be at least 16 with valid driver's license, \$42.80 passenger [must be at least 3])

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HERE

MOUNTAIN-CHIC HOTEL DEBUTS IN STOWE, VT.

Combine a luxury lodge with rustic modern design and you get Field Guide, Stowe's newest boutique hotel debuting Oct. 1. The first non-coastal property in the Lark Hotels collection, Field Guide aims to be your home base for all leaf peeping, hiking, skiing, and other Vermont vacation experiences. Located on the site of the former Ye Olde England Inn, the hotel offers 30 accommodations — 17 standard guest rooms, 10

suites, and three private-entrance cottages — designed with fabrics and furnishing that evoke the shapes and textures found in nature. Amenities include curated breakfasts of small plates, seasonal heated pool, year-round hot tub, fire pit, spa treatment room, and lounge with vintage games, field guides, and fireplace. A restaurant is scheduled to open in winter 2016. Seasonal rates from \$139. 802-253-8088, www.fieldguidestowe.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOLIDAY FAMILY FUN
Celebrate the colors of autumn

at Waterville Valley's Fall Foliage Fest over Columbus Day Weekend (Oct. 10-12). Three days of family-friendly activities include pumpkin painting, corn hole tournament, 5K and 1.6K fun races, bounce house, open-mic night, pie-eating contest, and bike and boat rentals. A merchant tent plus the annual BBTS ski and snowboard swap attract those looking for bargains. In the town square, sample fall beers in the brew tent and enjoy a midday barbecue while reveling in live music performed in the gazebo. In addition, you can nibble bake sale sweets, test your mettle at the hot-sauce tasting, show off your strength at the Stein Holding Competition, and meet Bruce the Moose. Resort accommodations from \$219. 800-468-2553, www.visitwatervillevalley.com

THERE

AMERICA'S CUP TEAMS RACE TO BERMUDA

Competitive sailors from around the world will converge on Bermuda (pictured at left) for the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series (Oct. 16-18). Located just two hours off the East Coast, alongside Bermu-

da's pink sand beaches, the event will be the first opportunity to see all the America's Cup teams racing on the Great Sound. In celebration of the event, Fairmont Southampton is offering a Race to Bermuda Package that includes luxury accommodations, daily full breakfast, and complimentary transfers to the Race Village in the capital city, Hamilton, where family-friendly events will feature concerts, arts and crafts, food, fireworks, and more. Rates from \$333; available for stays Oct. 10-23. 1-866-540-4497, www.fairmont.com/southampton-bermuda/

READERS' ESCAPE TO PARADISE DEAL IN FLORIDA

Start your fall vacation with tropical flair — and two signature welcome margaritas — at the all-new Margaritaville Beach Resort. Located on the boardwalk in Hollywood, Fla., the 17-story, 349-room resort and entertainment complex is offering Boston Globe readers an exclusive, limited-time introductory offer, Escape to Paradise. Enjoy coastal-luxe accommodations, and the aforementioned cocktails, as well as an extensive lineup of on-site water recreation activities,

three pools, multiple restaurants and bars, on-site resort retail, spa, and dynamic live entertainment. Inspired by the lyrics and lifestyle of singer, songwriter, and author Jimmy Buffett, the resort aims to provide a worry-free tropical environment. Rates from \$198 for stays through Dec. 15. 954-874-4444, www.margaritavilleresorts.com/escape

EVERYWHERE



GPS FOR TRAVELING PETS

If you love to travel with your pets but worry about them getting lost, you can worry no more. Gibi, an accurate GPS enabled tracker, offers an easy-to-use and effective way to find Fido and Fluffy if they wander from sight. Simply attach the small waterproof device (pictured above) to your pet's existing collar, and then use your smartphone for up-to-the-minute information regarding Rover's location including turn-by-turn directions on Google Maps. If you must leave your pet at home, you can set up vir-

tual safe zones where they usually roam. If they ever leave the zone, you, your pet sitter, or designated friends will receive an e-mail or text alert. \$99.99. getgibi.com

STAY DRY OUTDOORS WITH A HI-TECH BLANKET

Hikers, campers, surfers, and other nature lovers will want to check out the new pocket blankets by Matador. Made of high-tech nylon, the lightweight, puncture resistant, and water repellent fabric is designed to keep you clean and dry at picnics along the river, concerts in the park, bonfires at the beach, or any other scenic spots you stop to rest. Weighted corners keep it grounded on breezy days. For hassle-free transport, each ultra-compact blanket easily folds into an attached storage pouch. Available in two sizes, large enough for two or more people to sit or lounge. \$19.99; \$24.99. matadorup.com/pages/product-details

NECEE REGIS

