

# FOLLOW THE *Maples*

Fall Colours  
in Canada



A breathtaking view from Cape Clear, Cape Breton  
Photo credit: Destination Cape Breton Association

By Josephine Matyas

Find it a challenge to pick the best time to visit the Quebec City region. It seems the busy city rarely takes a break; there's a calendar filled with spring and summer festivals and celebrations, while the colder months draw visitors to the world's largest winter carnival. But sandwiched between the warm days of summer and the nip of winter is autumn, the season that draws many visitors to the region. They come by car, bus, train, plane – and RV – to use the city as a home base while exploring the show of vibrant fall colours.

Fall colour tours – a.k.a. leaf peeping – draw scores of RV enthusiasts. It's tailor-made for the way we travel: independent road tripping with a theme, usually through spectacular countryside exploring pretty vil-

lages with shops stocked with hard maple candy, maple butter and, of course, maple syrup.

Quebec is one of the world's largest producers of maple syrup, and where there is maple syrup, there are forests of sugar maple trees, the stock and trade that produce the beautiful reds, oranges and yellows that make for the best fall foliage tours.

In fact, this is true for all of Canada – the regions with great forests of maple trees are the best bets for catching the show of colours. In general, this means the most intense concentration is in Ontario, Quebec and Eastern Canada. But that doesn't mean the west should be overlooked, either. Here are a few suggestions for destinations where you can catch the colours, with campgrounds and activities while in the area:

## THE MARITIMES

### Where to go: **The Cabot Trail**

When: mid-September until mid-October

For dramatic scenery, it's hard to beat the ocean-meets-mountain landscape of Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island. *National Geographic* let the cat out of the bag, naming Cape Breton as "Canada's best-kept secret."

The renowned Cabot Trail is a 298-km driving route around the northern arm of the island, so it's best done over several days. Expect dramatic views, a rocky coastline and cliff-hugging curves. The winding roadway is wide and lined with guardrails, but may not be suitable for nervous RVers. This is not a drive to be rushed.

Autumn is also the season for Cape Breton's world-famous Celtic Colours International Festival (October 11-19), when the island hops to life with music and step dancing against a forested patchwork of orange, red and yellow.

Camping within Cape Breton Highlands National Park will be in demand during the peak fall foliage season, but search the online reservation system for sites at Broad Cove Campground (open until October 27), where 202 sites offer both unserviced and electric options. The campground is nestled into a forest right next to a stunning ocean beach.

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[cabottrail.travel](http://cabottrail.travel)

[cbisland.com](http://cbisland.com)

[celtic-colours.com](http://celtic-colours.com)

[pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/cbreton](http://pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/cbreton)

[pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/cbreton/activ/camping/broadcove](http://pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/cbreton/activ/camping/broadcove)

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### Where to go: **Prince Edward Island**

When: mid-September until late-October

If the PEI landscape was not enough to lure you on an RV adventure, add in Charlottetown's annual Prince Edward Island International Shellfish Festival (September 19-22) for an appeal that's irresistible. There's nothing like the taste of fresh oysters, clams and lobster to round out a maritime camping experience.

Some of the island's best camping is at Prince Edward Island National Park, along the north shore. The park's beaches, dunes, red sand beaches and hiking trails are a major draw for hikers, bicyclists, birders and dog walkers. The Cavendish Campground (open until September 29) has 200 sites, many with electrical or full hookups. Some are drive-through sites that can accommodate larger RVs, and the campground has comfort stations with showers and laundry.

A short drive from the national park is Green Gables Heritage Place, a Parks Canada cultural site dedicated to author Lucy Maud Montgomery and her wildly popular heroine, Anne. The writer's love of the island shines through in the *Anne of Green Gables* series, beginning with the first book published in 1908. The property at Green Gables belonged to Montgomery's relative, but settings from the novels are true to the farmhouse, Haunted Wood and Lover's Lane.

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[tourismpei.com/pei-fall-foliage](http://tourismpei.com/pei-fall-foliage)

[peishellfish.com/en](http://peishellfish.com/en)

[pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/pe/pei-ipe](http://pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/pe/pei-ipe)

[pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/pe/greengables](http://pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/pe/greengables)

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## QUEBEC

Where to go: **Quebec City**

When: end of September and early October

You don't even have to venture out of the Old Quebec to see a display of fall colours. Urban parks like the historic Plains of Abraham (where a pivotal battle was fought in 1759 between French and English forces) boasts its own splash of colour, as well as fantastic views over the lower port and the south shore of the St. Lawrence River.

Exploring within the ramparts of the Old City is a treat – around every corner is a picture-perfect vignette of cobblestone courtyards, narrow laneways and 17th-century architecture. Parking an RV isn't always simple, but Quebec City Tourism has made the logistics much easier with an online guide to RV parking.

Autumn is the best time to visit the city's markets for pumpkins, apples and stacks of artistically arranged

vegetables and fruits. Best buys are cans of Quebec maple syrup, slabs of Migneron cheese from the Charlevoix region, fruit preserves, specialty vinegars and herb-infused oils.

A short hop from downtown is the pretty driving tour around Île d'Orléans, the sliver of land that splits the St. Lawrence River into two channels and is considered the "cradle of French civilization in North America." For most of its unruffled history, Île d'Orléans has remained pastoral farmland, earning its nickname as the Garden of Quebec. It is a major producer of strawberries, raspberries and maple syrup. The best drive is the Chemin Royal, the main road that circles the island, giving great views of the turning maple trees and their foliage of incandescent orange and fiery red.

The small island is just five kilometres from Old Quebec. That makes the Quebec City KOA a convenient campground choice to see both the island and the city. The campground (open until October 22) is located on the south shore, just a 15-minute shuttle ride away from the walls of the Old City. There are sites with both partial and full hookups that can accommodate rigs up to 65 feet long.

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### FIND IT ONLINE

[quebec-cite.com/en](http://quebec-cite.com/en)

[ccbn-nbc.gc.ca/en](http://ccbn-nbc.gc.ca/en)

[blogue.quebec-cite.com/en/tips-recommendations/parking-rv](http://blogue.quebec-cite.com/en/tips-recommendations/parking-rv)

[tourisme.iledorleans.com/en](http://tourisme.iledorleans.com/en)

[koa.com/campgrounds/quebec-city](http://koa.com/campgrounds/quebec-city)

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## ONTARIO

Where to go: **Restoule Provincial Park**

When: mid-September through October

If you know what a "leaf jam" is, then there's a good chance you've been to Algonquin Provincial Park during the fall colours season. During this popular time of the year, the park exceeds its capacity to serve visitors, resulting in traffic congestion and long lineups, so Ontario Parks now recommends that leaf peepers find alternative locations to get their fall colours fix.

Luckily, this part of Ontario has no shortage of other destinations splashed with vibrant fall colours, including nearby Restoule Provincial Park (four hours north of Toronto, just past the Muskoka Lakes). The park's rugged landscape includes forests of red and sugar maples, yellow birch and red oak. The park has



hiking trails from easy to challenging, mountain biking trails and paddling galore. Exploring the splash of fall colours from a canoe or kayak cannot be beat.

The park's campground has 286 sites including 97 with electricity, comfort stations and even a designated dog beach. It is open until October 15.

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[ontariotravel.net/en/play/tours/fall-colour-and-harvest-tours](http://ontariotravel.net/en/play/tours/fall-colour-and-harvest-tours)  
[ontarioparks.com/park/restoule](http://ontarioparks.com/park/restoule)

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#### Where to go: **Prince Edward County**

When: mid-September through October

Fall is the perfect season to visit The County, not only for its spectacular fall colours but also for its gastronomic offerings. Prince Edward County – a peninsula about two hours east of Toronto and one hour west of Kingston – is renowned for its artisanal cheesemakers, wineries, cideries, breweries and produce stands. The self-guided Taste Trail links local artisan shops, food and drink producers, produce stands and farmers' markets.

The annual self-guided Studio Tour (September 20-22) showcases 47 artists in 31 locations throughout The County. It's a way to connect with the artisans in

the spaces where they create paintings, photography, sculptures, jewellery, pottery, fine furniture, fibre art, tapestries and ceramics.

In the summer months getting a camping reservation at popular Sandbanks Provincial Park takes heroic effort and a lot of luck, but things loosen up in the fall when there is less demand. The park is known for its vast beaches and towering barrier sand dunes. It makes the perfect home base for exploring the area's food, wine and arts. The park is also well known for birding in both spring and fall as it's along migration routes.

In total there are 500 campsites spread over five campground areas. Many have electricity and are pull-through sites. The campground loops have comfort stations, dump facilities and are open to October 21.

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[visitpec.ca](http://visitpec.ca)  
[ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks](http://ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks)

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## BRITISH COLUMBIA

#### Where to go: **Kootenay Rockies**

When: mid-September through October

Fall in the Kootenay Rockies means days that are crisp and clear – perfect conditions for a dramatic colour palette. The Kootenays have the greatest diversity of tree species in British Columbia, so you'll see a mix of green conifers with multi-coloured ribbons of birch, aspen and maple. The best way to experience the fall colours at Kootenay National Park is to drive the north-south Banff-Windermere Highway (Hwy 93 south) along the Kootenay River. Picturesque towns like Nelson, Kaslo, Fernie and Golden are excellent spots to stop for cafes, shopping and a fix of Canadian heritage sites.

Redstreak Campground at Kootenay National Park has 242 sites (most without services but 50 with full hookups and 38 with electricity only), hot showers, comfort stations and a sani-dump. Redstreak is open until October 15 and is the only one of the park's three campgrounds open past early September.

It's a five-minute drive from the campground to the park's most popular stop, the hot mineral pools at the family-friendly Radium Hot Springs. The steaming pools are the perfect cure-all after a long day of sightseeing from the front seat of an RV or after tackling a stretch of the park's 200 km of hiking trails.



Sandbanks Provincial Park | Photo credit: Josephine Marvas



Rossland, BC | Photo credit: Destination BC

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[kootenayrockies.com/explore/road-trips](http://kootenayrockies.com/explore/road-trips)  
[pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/kootenay](http://pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/kootenay)  
[pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/kootenay/activ/camping/redstreak](http://pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/kootenay/activ/camping/redstreak)  
[radiumhotsprings.com/listing/radium-hot-springs-pools](http://radiumhotsprings.com/listing/radium-hot-springs-pools)

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#### Where to go: **Cariboo Region**

When: September

It's a bit off the beaten path but the route along Highway 26 between Quesnel and Barkerville is a hotbed of 19th-century Gold Rush history with a backdrop of beautiful fall colours.

In 1862, Billy Barker's discovery of gold triggered a stampede to the goldfields of central British Columbia, an area known as the Cariboo Region. Between Barker's legendary strike and the end of the rush 34 years later, the local registry office recorded more than \$19 million worth of gold at \$16 per ounce, all coming out of the one creek and its associated gravels.

"Per linear foot, this frontage along Williams Creek is the richest single gold-plated creek in the world," says James Douglas, head of public programming with Barkerville Historic Town & Park, a National Historic Site and living history museum. "There's a reason they

call it the Cariboo Goldfields. It was literally, fields of gold."

Although technically a ghost town, Barkerville protects more than 130 period buildings – from the saloon to the Chinese "wash and dry" laundry. Most are the original Barkerville buildings, standing in their original locations. Interpretive staff members wear the dress of the time, walking the streets, manning the shops and playing their parts to the hilt.

At night they roll up the sidewalks and things largely close down in the period townsite. But the complex also has campgrounds that are open until the end of September. There's a choice of reservable and first-come-first-served sites, from no hookups to 30-amp service. Campgrounds have coin-operated showers, flush toilets and some sites are wheelchair accessible. Their unique promise is "we guarantee an available campsite or your next stay is free." 🍁

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#### FIND IT ONLINE

[landwithoutlimits.com](http://landwithoutlimits.com)  
[barkerville.ca/places-to-stay/#campgrounds](http://barkerville.ca/places-to-stay/#campgrounds)

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*Writer Josephine Matyas and writer/musician Craig Jones travel with their dog, Eleanor Rigby, in a Class B Roadtrek 210 Popular. Learn more at [www.travelswithrigby.com](http://www.travelswithrigby.com).*