

# Natural Ways to Enjoy Fall Foliage in Virginia

*~ Relax and reconnect with loved ones in the beauty of nature this fall in Virginia ~*

**RICHMOND, Va.** – From the Blue Ridge Mountains to dense piedmont forests to the tranquil coastal waters of the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia is the ideal place for people looking to step away from the stress of everyday life and relax and reconnect with loved ones and nature this fall. Virginia’s topography welcomes all types of outdoor recreation - from camping to hiking to water sports to mountain climbing. To help nature lovers truly connect with Virginia’s great outdoors this fall, here are a few active ways to enjoy fall foliage.

## **Celebrate 75 Years of Virginia Outdoor Treasures – Camp at Shenandoah National Park or Virginia State Parks**

Fall is a great time to camp in Virginia as mild temperatures make for great quality time making s’mores and telling stories by the camp fire. Two of Virginia’s outdoor treasures are celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries this year, and both offer ideal setups for camping.

[Virginia State Parks](#) offer perfect places to pitch a tent or “rough it” indoors at a cabin. Voted “America’s Best,” Virginia parks offer comfortable cabins, campsites and primitive backcountry spots for the rugged adventurer. Visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor recreation, including hiking and biking trails, lakes and waterways as well as a full menu of programs and classes. To celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year Virginia State Parks have special events scheduled across the state.

[Shenandoah National Park](#) is a Virginia treasure all year, but fall is especially spectacular in the Park. With 75 overlooks along the 105-mile Skyline Drive there is a breathtaking vista around every corner. The Park’s 200,000 protected acres offer a variety of activities including guided hikes, rock climbing and rappelling and horseback riding. There are also National Park Service programs, events and entertainment. Camping is permitted in the backcountry or at one of the Park’s four campgrounds. For those who prefer something less rustic there are also cabins and lodge facilities at Skyland Resort and Big Meadows Lodge. For its [75<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#), Shenandoah National Park is celebrating with special events, travel packages, deals, discounts and a scavenger hunt game that offers visitors a fun way to learn about the Park and the surrounding communities. Participants who answer all the questions correctly are eligible to win great prizes.

## **Take a Hike!**

Virginia is a hiker’s paradise, especially in the fall when temperatures are milder and the foliage is in color all around. From the Appalachian Trail to Shenandoah National Park to lesser-known trails in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and scenic State Parks, Virginia has a footpath for everyone. [The Appalachian Trail \(AT\)](#) is an epic 2,175-mile long public footpath along the East Coast and Virginia is home to 544 miles of the AT - more miles than any other state.

[Shenandoah National Park’s](#) nearly 500 miles of hiking trails offer places for trekkers to encounter gorgeous waterfalls, panoramic vistas and wildlife. Some popular hikes include the [Overall Run Falls](#), Old Rag and Stony Man. [Mount Rogers National Recreation Area](#) in Southwest Virginia is an outdoor mecca with 115,000 acres of mountain recreation including hiking trails, lakes, streams, historic sites and wildlife viewing. Put on hiking shoes and climb atop Mt. Rogers for a bird’s eye view from the highest point in Virginia at 5,729 feet.

## **Biking for Leaf Peepers**

From rugged mountainous terrain to calm coastal flatlands, Virginia has no shortage of cycling options with amazing scenery. Virginia has 838 miles of the U.S. Bicycle Route System – more than any other state – and Bicycle Routes 76 and 1 cross the state from east to west and north to south. Virginia’s rails-to-trails routes are perfect for scenic, peaceful pedaling as they are former railroad grades that have been converted into multi-use recreation trails. The [Virginia Creeper Trail](#) in southwest Virginia, the [James River Heritage Trail](#) in central Virginia are just a few of these scenic trails. Virginia also has some of the best [mountain biking](#) trails in the country. From to challenging 3,000 feet climb on the 32-mile [Southern Traverse ride](#) near Harrisonburg to the trails in downtown Richmond at the [James River Park System Loop](#), bikers can enjoy foliage and riverside views next to urban cityscapes.

## **Paddle through the Foliage**

Water lovers can’t go wrong in Virginia as paddling options are seemingly endless on a vast variety of idyllic rivers, small streams, tidal bays, quiet inlets and mountain lakes. [Smith Mountain Lake](#) stretches over 200,000 acres with a 500 mile shoreline and is nestled in the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains which makes for a beautiful scene in the fall. The lake is also known for outstanding fishing - particularly citation size striped bass. [Virginia’s Seaside Water Trail](#) is a 100-mile-long series of day-use paddling routes running between the [Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge](#) at Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island. Additional trail segments go through [Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge](#) and connect to Assateague National Seashore and the Assateague Canoe Trail.

[Lake Drummond](#) is a 3,100-acre lake located in the center of the [Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge](#) that offers a unique choice for paddling enthusiasts. With shallow waters stained amber with tannic acid, the lake is a thing of beauty as the reflections of extraordinary cypress trees and clouds appear so clearly in the water

## **Get Your Blood Pumping on a Fall Whitewater Adventure**

Experience the wet and wild ride of the Russell Fork at [Breaks Interstate Park](#) - the “Grand Canyon of the South.” [Russell Fork](#) is limited to weekends during the first four full weekends in October, when water is released from the John Flannagan Dam and Reservoir. It’s an intense class V+ roller coaster of big drops, including the infamous El Horrendo, one wild 75-foot stretch that is considered one of the most difficult in the East. After the exhilaration of this whitewater adventure, take time to relax and explore Breaks Interstate Park, where the beauty of unspoiled wilderness is all around.

## **Add Excitement to Fall Outdoor Activities on a Geocaching Treasure Hunt**

[Geocaching](#) employs the use of a GPS device to find a hidden container filled with a logbook, pencil and sometimes larger caches containing maps, books, toys and money. After finding the cache, geocachers write their name and the date in the logbook. Usually cache hunters will report their individual cache experiences on the Internet.

Love is at the heart of every Virginia vacation. Visit [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org) for more information. Or call 1-800-VISITVA for a free, *Virginia is for Lovers* travel guide.

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