

Falling Hard: Where to See Fall Colors in Arizona

Written by Melissa Larsen

Tuesday, 07 August 2018 14:16 - Last Updated Tuesday, 04 September 2018 08:59



Arizona's got the cacti covered. But various spots throughout the state also give leaf-seekers the chance to spy the changing colors of fall. "Arizona is magnificent in the fall. There are areas of the state—such as Flagstaff, the White Mountains and the Catalinas—where the autumn color show rivals any place in America," says Director of the Arizona Office of Tourism, Debbie Johnson. So bundle up and buckle up this fall as you hit the road for these remarkable sights of the season.

Southern Arizona:



Located near Superior, in the Tonto National Forest, Boyce Thompson [Arboretum](#) is the state's oldest and largest botanical garden. It offers gorgeous late-season foliage and is home to pistachio hackberry, black walnut and Arizona sycamore trees.

- *Best time to go: late November/early December*



[Cave Creek Canyon](#) (a.k.a. the "Yosemite of Arizona") is found on the east side of the Chiricahua Mountains. The canyon is brimming with maples, sycamores and oaks. The Arizona Office of Tourism suggests these spots for spying fall colors: Vista Point, South Fork Cave Creek Road and Road 42 all the way up to the South Western Research Station.

- *Best time to go: last 10 days of October through first week of November*

Northern Arizona:

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The easy Canopy Trail and two-mile Verde River Greenway at [Dead Horse Ranch State Park](#), located in Cottonwood, both offer stellar leaf-viewing. There are also spectacular views along the Verde River and by the lagoons.

- *Best time to go: late October/early November*



[Flagstaff](#) is surrounded by North America's largest contiguous Ponderosa pine forest and offers a variety of options for soaking in seasonal colors: Wilson Meadow, Aspen Nature Loop and Bismark Lake, to name a few. The town's Arizona Snowbowl and its scenic skyride even provide views of mountain vistas, golden aspens and evergreen pine as far as the eye can see. [flagstaffarizona.org](#).

- *Best time to go: October*

Use the Leafometer on Flagstaff's Web site to track fall color changes



[Verde Canyon Railroad](#) basically does the work for you as you settle into comfy loveseats or bistro chairs during four-hour Fall Colors Tours. The train travels from the charming Clarkdale depot to the ghost ranch at Perkinsville and back as guests take in fall hues along the Verde River

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and sip seasonally inspired cocktails. verdecanyonrr.com.

- *Best time to go: Fall Colors Tours run October through November*



[White Mountains](#) provide one of the earliest glimpses of fall color in the state, due to their elevation of 11,000 feet. The charm-packed towns of Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside and Greer are speckled with Gambel Oaks and aspen, ripe for the viewing. A few leaf-viewing spots to bookmark per Arizona Office of Tourism: Sunrise Park Resort and Green's Peak Area (Forest Road 117 north of Hwy. 260).

- *Best time to go: last week of September through first three weeks of October*

To Learn More

Arizona Office of Tourism tourism.az.gov.