



Photo by Carl A. Stimac

ALL THE COLORS OF NORTHEAST OHIO

The top 10 things you should do there this fall. By Diane Rock

There is just something magical about fall road trips in Ohio. Apple orchards, covered bridges, the smell of concord grapes being harvested, picking the perfect pumpkin, and experiencing one of the many unique fall festivals, all while enjoying Ohio's spectacular fall foliage. Follow along as I share the top 10 things to do this fall in northeast Ohio.

1. VISIT A TREASURED PARK

Escape to one of northeast Ohio's treasured parks, Mill Creek Metro Parks. Located in Youngstown, this park is home to the spectacular Fellows Riverside Gardens, always free; a suspension bridge that takes a page out of "Cinderella"; Lanterman's Mill, one of the most historic landmarks in Mahoning County that still mills today; a lily pond where migrating birds can be found; and miles of trails to enjoy a walk through the canopy of trees.

2. GO APPLE PICKING AND CIDER TASTING

Would it really be fall without enjoying a fresh glass of apple cider or picking up apples at a local orchard? If you want to enjoy some of the best apples in the area, here are a few of my favorite Northeast Ohio apple



Photo by Kelsey Doherty



orchards: 1. Brant's in Ashtabula. Its apples are amazing and so are its grilled cheese sandwiches served with apple slices. 2. Patterson's Fruit Farm in Chesterland. Make sure you pick up its cider, some of the area's best. 3. Beckwith Orchards in Kent. Family-owned and operated since 1878. Not only does it sell apples and cider, but it also sells delicious pies. 4. White House Fruit Farm in Canfield. Bring your cooler. This fruit farm also is a market and sells not only fresh produce but also the most amazing donuts. Treat yourself to one of its blueberry donuts. You can thank me later. Don't forget to explore its gift shop and sunflower fields.

3. SAMPLE THE GRAPES

Fall sunsets over Lake Erie and miles of vineyards are what await you in the largest county in the state. With more than 30 wineries located in the county, Ashtabula is known as Ohio's Wine Country and is home to many award-winning wineries. Whether you are a wine drinker or not, watching the harvesting of the grapes in the fall is something to see. Some wineries even allow volunteers for those who want to immerse themselves in the experience.

4. FIND 19 COVERED BRIDGES

Rustic colors, fall foliage and backroads make the 19 covered bridge trail in Ashtabula County a perfect fall road trip. This year, you can download the Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Trail app and check

in along the trail. Each check-in gets you closer to the next prize level. Don't forget your camera.

5. EXPERIENCE A LOCAL FESTIVAL OR MARKET

Immerse yourself in one of the local festivals. In Portage County the German Family Society volunteers host their famous Oktoberfest (Sept. 9-11). This family-friendly event features real homemade German favorites, dancers and music. The skies over Ravenna get a little more colorful as the community celebrates its annual Ravenna Balloon A-Fair (Sept. 15-18). The Perch & Pilsner Festival (Sept. 9-10) in Conneaut celebrates all things Lake Erie perch. And in Geneva, the Grape Jamboree celebrates all things grape and wine (Sept. 24-25). Make sure you stay for the grape stomping. Some 130 exhibitors, along with entertainment, can be found on the grounds of Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens during its juried Ohio Mart (Oct. 6-9). The old copper kettles are fired-up and the aroma of cooking apples can be found at the Apple Butter Festival at Century Village Museum in Burton (Oct. 8-9).

6. PICK A PUMPKIN AND GET LOST

If you want to shop for the best pumpkins around and still allow time to get lost in a cornfield maze, Dussel Farm in Brimfield or Szlay's in Peninsula are good

Continued on page 12



Continued from page 11

stops. In late September and October, when the corn has all been picked, Dussel Farms invites guests to the farm to pick out a pumpkin and find their way out of its corn field maze. At Szalay's Farm & Market, not only can you find your perfect pumpkin, but on fall weekends you also can sample some of its freshly roasted corn on the cob. Your navigational skills will be tested in its three-acre corn maze.

7. TAKE A TRAIN RIDE THROUGH A NATIONAL PARK

Hop aboard the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad for one of its fall flyer excursions. View the park's beautiful fall foliage while riding the rails. Tickets go fast for these two-hour sightseeing excursions. The train hosts additional special fall events.

8. ENJOY A FALL FOLIAGE TOUR

Held the second full weekend in October, the Medina County Self-Driving Fall Foliage Tour highlights area agribusinesses, farms, special events and historical stops. It's a perfect way to enjoy a road trip through the county and explore the area's quaint towns.

9. EXPERIENCE STARRY FALL NIGHTS

Located in the Geauga County Park system is Observatory Park. What makes this park so special is that it has the permanent distinction as a Silver Tier Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association. It is only one of 104 in the world and

the only one in Ohio. On a clear fall night, the stars are breathtaking and many local astronomy enthusiasts can be found there ready to share their telescopes.

10. GO GHOST BUSTING

Would it really be fall without enjoying a few ghost stories? Tour the historic streets of Ashtabula Harbor while learning about the area's history and past residents on the Eerie Harbor Ghost Walk. Be guided inside the historical and haunted Kent Stage for ghost stories and electronic voice phenomena during the Kent Ghost Walk in Kent.

This fall I hope you find time to get in your car and enjoy Northeast Ohio's fall fun. Have additional questions? Visit MyOhioFun.com

Need travel planning assistance? Talk to your AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/Travel.

Diane Rock is an Ohio-based travel writer (MyOhioFun.com).