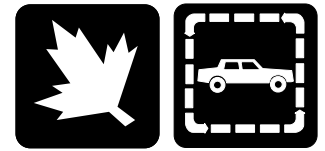


Fall Color Laurentian Ranger Dist.



SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST

LAURENTIAN RANGER DISTRICT

AURORA, MN



"Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns."

- George Eliot

Summer is over and our short spectacular season of fall is upon us. Autumn is a season of change, get out as often as you can and learn to enjoy all of its moods. We are often asked when peak fall color occurs, but seeking the peak of fall color is as futile as searching for the end of the rainbow. From the time that the first reds and yellows appear on the forest floor in the leaves of bush honeysuckle and sarsaparilla, through the red flame of the maples and the painfully bright yellows of birch, and on to the final rustle of color on the ground contrasting with the black webbing of twigs against a sky promising snow, fall is a continual show. Every day is a peak in its own right. Enjoy the day you get to spend in the woods rather than wondering if it was better yesterday, or will be better tomorrow.

Superior National Forest covers a lot of ground, and autumn progresses in a ragged wave down from the north. In general, the more north and the more inland from Lake Superior you are, the farther along the season will be. The progress of fall is far from even though. Hills, lakes, even uprooted trees can create small pocket microclimates that can be a week or more ahead or behind the surrounding woodlands. If you are coming from the south, you will be able to "fast forward" autumn as you drive north. Even better, you can temporarily reverse time and "rewind" the season as you head back south. Duluth to Grand Marais may be only two and a half hours apart, but they can be three weeks apart in terms of fall colors.

Let's go for a drive!

Enjoy the fall colors on one of our tour routes, but keep in mind some safety tips.

- ⓧ Stop only in areas with good visibility and where you can pull over and leave adequate passing space.
- ⓧ Watch for logging trucks.
- ⓧ Driving very slowly is fine for enjoying the leaves, but it can aggravate following cars into making poor decisions. Let them pass you by pulling over and stopping completely where there is good visibility. If there is no safe place to pull over, resume a safe faster pace until you can let them by.
- ⓧ If you are a following car, be patient.
- ⓧ Remember, winding gravel roads may have washboarding, loose gravel, and other hazards.
- ⓧ Deer and other wildlife are best viewed in the woods, not on your bumper. Slow down.
- ⓧ Be aware that hunting seasons are in progress, so wear bright colors in the woods, and watch for pedestrians on the roads.

**Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and I --
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference**

- Robert Frost



You may buy a Forest map at a Forest Service office if you are interested in exploring areas off the marked tour routes.

Superior National Forest - Fall Colors

1. From Virginia MN, take Highway 53/169 five miles north where the Highways split. Take 169 for 10 miles, turn off on County Highway 21 which will take you to Babbitt and on a scenic route to Ely.
2. For the more adventurous, stop at the Laurentian Divide Recreation Area 4 miles north of Virginia and walk the Physical Fitness Trail and the Lookout Mountain cross-country ski trails. These trails will take you through some of the most colorful maple stands in the area.
3. From Virginia, take Highway 53 north for 8 miles to County Road 131. Turn right for 1 mile then left on County Road 68 for 0.3 miles. Continue north on County Road 405 (UT 8116) to Forest Road 256 (gravel). Travel north on Forest Road 256 to Highway 1. You will pass the Pfeiffer Lake Campground and Picnic Area. Stop for a picnic lunch! This is a leisurely drive through a beautiful part of the Laurentian Ranger District. At Highway 1 you can turn right and go to Highway 169 or go left to Highway 53. Before you get to Highway 53 you will see County Road 381 to the south. Follow this gravel road. It turns into County Road 467 and leads you back to Highway 53.
4. Big Aspen Trail. Follow the directions for #3 and you will see the Big Aspen Trailhead. Walk, bike or ATV along the 20 miles of trails that loop up onto scenic ridges. Trail maps at each junction help you find your way.
5. The Superior National Forest Scenic Byway (also known as Forest Highway 11 or County 110) east of Hoyt Lakes is a great place to view the colors. It holds some hidden treasures if you can leave the paved road and travel the gravel roads.
 - a. Follow the Highway from Hoyt Lakes east and south. You will pass the Skibo Vista road. The vista was where an old fire lookout tower used to sit. It is certainly worth the trip to the top of the hill.
 - b. Keep going to the stop sign. Turn right on County Road 16. Forest Road 118 (Camp 26 Road) goes south from County 16. It is a one lane gravel road with turnouts. The road will eventually connect with Highway 4.
 - c. At the same stop sign turn left instead of right. (This is still Forest Highway 11 but also known as County Road 16.) Further down County 16 is Forest Road 416. This is also a one lane gravel road with turnouts. This dead end road gives you twice the view as you turn around and come back out to County 16.
6. Highway 135 from Aurora to Tower is fall color fantasy land with rolling hills of the Laurentian Divide.
7. Just east of Biwabik on County Road 138 is the Giant's Ridge Golf and Ski Resort. It will be worth your time to drive to this first-class golf and ski facility. In the fall they run the ski lifts so you can get a bird's-eye view of the beautiful maple ridges. If you continue on (road becomes gravel) it will take you to County Highway 21. Go left to Virginia or right to Highway 135.

Need more information?

on the web at:

www.fs.usda.gov/superior

Laurentian Ranger District

318 Forestry Road

Aurora, MN 55705

(218) 229-8800



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