Fall in Love With Franconia this Autumn

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Franconia Notch State Park is a popular place for outdoor recreation all year round. However, when the warm summer months come to a close, and the nights grow cooler as winter approaches, the forested slopes of the Notch truly put on a show. Fall in Franconia Notch is a spectacular time where bright colors paint the trees and visitors from all over the globe stop by to see the amazing sights. These wonderful colors stem from different chemical compounds inside leaves that absorb light and help the trees synthesize food. You can read more about this amazing chemistry in Ranger Trace's blog on fall foliage. Franconia Notch experiences a diverse range of these colors over the autumn season due to the many types of trees that grow in the Notch. Beeches, birches, maples, ashes, and aspens are just a sampling of the trees one can spot while taking a drive or hike through the Notch.

Colorful fall leaves on the forest floor, notably beech leaves and various types of maple leaves. Image credit: Amanda Chisholm

The transformation from the deep greens of summer to the collage of yellows, oranges, and reds of fall is almost magical. In late September and October, the beautiful foliage can be viewed from anywhere in the Notch. Certain trails like the strenuous Franconia Ridge Loop and the rocky Artists Bluff Trail are especially popular in the fall due to their amazing vistas, but there are many other places in the park that boast equally-enticing views! The Old Man Memorial Plaza, located off of Exit 34 B, overlooks Profile Lake and Cannon Mountain. The Plaza is accessible by a paved walking path leading down from the parking area.

View of the Old Man Memorial Plaza on September 3rd (left) and September 30th (right). Image credit: Amanda Chisholm

View of Mt. Flume from the memorial gazebo on the Roaring River Memorial Nature Trail in early October. Image credit: Amanda Chisholm

The south end of the Notch is home to even more autumn gems. The Roaring River Memorial Nature Trail is a 0.3 mile loop located at the bottom of the Flume Gorge parking lot. This is a great first hike for young nature adventurers, and includes its own interpretive brochure detailing some of the natural features along the way. On this quiet hike, one can get unique views of Mt. Liberty and Mt. Flume through the trees. Also located in the Flume Gorge area is the Mt. Pemigewasset Trail, a 5-mile hike up to an exceptional vista looking to the south of the Notch.

View from the summit of Mt. Pemigewasset in early October. Image credit: Amanda Chisholm

Fall is an amazing time in Franconia Notch State Park, and there are plenty of great hikes highlighting the park's natural beauty that suit a variety of accessibility needs and adventure levels. As this is a very popular time to visit, please remember Leave No Trace Principal 7: Be Considerate of Others. Time out in nature is better when everyone recreates responsibly!

The Discover the Power of Parks Program is a collaboration between the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Division of Parks and Recreation, Student Conservation Association's New Hampshire Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps, and Volunteer NH.