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## “Fall Fun”

Family activities for the autumn season

By Kimberly Blaker

Summer may be known as the “outdoor season,” but autumn also offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor fun. Try some of these activities to keep your family’s spirits high through the fall season.

**Enjoy a color tour.** National parks and forests are the place to be in the fall. Contact your nearest National Park and find out the best time of the season for viewing fall colors as well as recommended routes for picturesque views.

**Host a campfire cookout.** If outdoor fires are permitted in your area, have the kids round up their neighborhood friends for a cookout. Hot dogs, marshmallows, and smores are the traditional way to top off the season. After eating, have everyone take turns telling stories around the fire. If you have little ones, check out library books with autumn themes to read to the youngsters.

**Go to a football game.** Gather your blankets and head to the stadium—any stadium. High school, college, and pro football games are great fun for kids and parents. Take

along a bag of popcorn and thermos of hot cocoa, then snuggle up and get ready to cheer on your team.

**Visit an apple orchard.** Take your kids apple picking and top off the day with cider and doughnuts, a hayride, and last-of-the-year picnic.

**Make a scarecrow.** What’s fall without a scarecrow to set on your front or back porch? “He” or “she” will be easy to make, just buy a couple bails of straw and then have each family member gather old clothes and hats. Stuff away using string to tie off the hands, feet, and head. (Don’t forget to snap a few photos of your kids with their new friend!)

**Walk in the woods.** As flies and mosquitoes begin to retreat, this is the perfect time of year for a walk in the woods. Your kids will enjoy a glimpse of the animals scurrying about gathering and preparing for the long, cold months ahead. Take binoculars for close up views. Contact state and local parks for wooded trails near you.

**Leaf fun.** Remember the times you had as a kid diving into the crisp fall leaves? Grab the rakes, have your youngsters pitch in, and pile up the leaves to jump in, build a fort, and even have a leaf fight.

**Find a festival.** Apple, pumpkin, fall harvest, and many more are found in cities all around featuring food, arts and crafts, kids’ games, pony and wagon rides, and more.

Contact your Chamber of Commerce or state travel bureau for a list of events.

**Visit a pumpkin patch.** Ahhh, the childhood joy of picking your pumpkins from a patch. After cleaning out the pumpkins, make roasted pumpkin seeds, a yummy treat that kids love. Rinse the seeds, pat them dry, and then coat with melted butter. Spread the seeds on a cookie sheet, sprinkle with salt, and bake at 350 until golden brown. Be sure and stir them occasionally.

**Bird migration watch.** As fall fills the air, many birds begin to head south.

Contact State and National parks or your Department of Natural Resources for recommended birding locations as well as bird festivals.

**Shift through a cornfield maze.** Making your way through a cornfield maze is the ultimate in fall fun. For maze listings, visit [www.cornfieldmaze.com/site\\_list.html](http://www.cornfieldmaze.com/site_list.html).

Also, keep your eyes peeled in the entertainment section of your newspaper.

**Plant perennials and bulbs.** Have your kids try out their green thumbs. After all, fall is the time of year for planting perennials and flower bulbs. Let them choose some of the plants from the gardening store, then give them the opportunity to help design the garden. A hand-painted rock or two adds color until the spring blossoms bloom.

**Take a railroad excursion.** With the colors of fall blazing under bright blue skies, a scenic railroad excursion is a sure bet. Check your local travel agency for excursions in your area or close by.

**Hold a pumpkin sale.** If you have little entrepreneurs, let them set up a pumpkin stand in your front yard. Find an orchard where pumpkins are cheap, then have your kids purchase a small stock to sell for a higher price. Hot cocoa, baked pumpkin seeds, or doughnuts make good commercial additions to the stand.

**Horseback rides.** Head to the stables and enjoy the fall colors on horseback. For horse rental listings by state visit <http://www.horserentals.com/index.html>, or look in the yellow pages under ‘stables’.

**Make a bird feeder or house.** Kids will enjoy the carpentry experience and marvel at watching birds make use of their creation. Many kits are available for making bird

feeders. To make one from scratch visit your library and checkout a book on how to build a birdhouse, or look for free instructions on the Internet.

**Parades and marching bands.** Contact your local college or high school for the date and location of its homecoming parade. Then head on over with a blanket and snacks and enjoy the colorful floats, majorettes, cheerleaders, and marching band. Also, don't forget the spectacular Thanksgiving Day parades.

Kimberly Blaker of Michigan is an author and writes for parenting and women's magazines across the U.S. and Canada.

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