

EASTERN SIERRA FALL COLOR DESTINATIONS

PEAK TIMES FOR BRILLIANT COLORS:

- LATE SEPTEMBER
- LATE SEPTEMBER TO EARLY OCTOBER
- FIRST TO THIRD WEEK IN OCTOBER
- EARLY NOVEMBER

1 MONITOR PASS

Scenic drive: About 12 miles (16 km) north of Walker/Coleville, Monitor Pass/SR 89 offers lovely fall color vistas due to stands of aspen along the pass and through Hope Valley in neighboring Alpine County. **Tip:** The colors around nearby Topaz Lake at the California/Nevada border are beautiful later in the season. The fishing is great, too!

2 LOBDELL LAKE

Scenic drive: For adventurous leaf peepers with 4WD and good off-road driving skills, the dirt road from Walker/Bridgeport to Lobdell Lake offers wonderful autumn vistas. **Tip:** Not passable after rain or snow. Pick up a Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest map before you go.

3 WALKER RIVER CANYON

Scenic drive: Pine, willow, aspens and cottonwood grace the Antelope Valley and Walker River Canyon, which turn color later in the season. **Tip:** The Mountain Gate Park just south of Walker has a fishing platform and is a great rest-stop.

4 SONORA PASS

Scenic drive: Half-way between Bridgeport and Walker, SR 108 winds through sage-filled meadows intersected by the *Wild & Scenic* West Walker River. Above the orange-gold hues of Leavitt Meadows, the road becomes steep, with sharp curves up to the pass (not recommended for long trailers). **Tip:** On the east side of the pass, stop at the pull-out overlook to view roaring Leavitt Falls.

5 TWIN LAKES - BRIDGEPORT

Scenic drive: With expansive ranch lands, views of the Sawtooth Ridge, and the lakes' brilliant aspens and cottonwood — well, this is why the "Sunday Drive" was invented! **Tip:** The Twin Lakes Recreation Area is home to some of the best hiking, camping, fishing and boating in the Sierra.

6 GREEN CREEK

Scenic drive and hike: Two miles (3.2 km) south of the town of Bridgeport, Green Creek Road is about an 8-mile drive to thick aspen groves, a campground and the Green Creek trail to Green Lake, East and West lakes. **Tip:** While not a fall color destination, don't miss a visit to nearby Bodie State Historic Park, the largest unrestored ghost town in the West.

7 CONWAY SUMMIT

Scenic drive: Easily viewed from US 395, Conway Summit in fall is a multi-layered canvas of autumn color. **Tip:** Just south of the 8,900' (2,713 m) pass, the Mono Lake Vista pull-out is another scenic photo op.

8 VIRGINIA LAKES

Scenic drive: At the top of Conway Summit, the five-mile Virginia Lakes Road glows with thick aspen groves on both sides. **Tip:** Anglers! Big and Little Virginia lakes are well-stocked with rainbow trout.

9 LUNDY CANYON

Scenic drive: A scenic fall drive, Lundy Canyon Road ends at a popular hiking trail, where the view of Lundy Falls surrounded with colorful aspens appears within the first mile. **Tip:** Hikers should arrive early to find parking. Do not park on vegetation.

10 LEE VINING CANYON

Scenic drive: Follow SR 120 West toward Tioga Pass (Yosemite National Park's east entrance) for dramatic views of Lee Vining Canyon graced with aspen groves. Note: Tioga Pass is closed in winter due to snow. **Tip:** Visit the South Tufa Recreation Area at Mono Lake, a sanctuary for millions of migrating birds.

11 SAGEHEN SUMMIT

Scenic drive: South off SR 120 East, Sagehen Meadows Road is a wide, well-graded dirt road surrounded by dense aspen groves that usually turn deep orange and crimson. **Tip:** Beyond Sagehen Meadows viewpoint, the dirt road network requires an Inyo National Forest Map and a 4WD vehicle.

12 JUNE LAKE LOOP

Scenic drive: Especially amazing in fall, "The Loop" (SR 158) is the quintessential autumn drive — featuring tumbling waterfalls, four glistening lakes, Rush Creek and a charming alpine village. **Tip:** Hike the family-friendly Gull Lake Trail or the colorful trail to beautiful Parker Lake.

13 MAMMOTH LAKES

During fall, Mammoth Lakes brims with glowing leaves. Here are some top fall color spots — **Sherwin Creek/Mammoth Creek:** Find natural solitude at the Sherwin Creek camping area and hiking trails, accessible by a dirt road off Sherwin Creek Road. **Mammoth Lakes Basin:** Relax in the setting of five renowned fishing lakes just minutes from the center of town. Various hiking trails allow for quick elevation gain over the basin. **Mammoth Scenic Loop:** A wonderful scenic drive with the option for an easy side trip to Inyo Craters. **Reds Meadow:** Take a full day excursion to Reds Meadow, Devils Postpile National Monument, Rainbow Falls, and the San Joaquin River. **Tip:** For supercharged sightseeing around the Mammoth Lakes region, book a side-by-side tour with Mammoth Off-Road Adventures.

14 CONVICT LAKE

Easily accessible by car, this vivid blue lake is a perfect contrast to bright gold aspens. The hiking trail around Convict Lake provides a great fall color excursion for families. **Tip:** Convict Lake Resort has overnight cabin rentals, boats for rent, horseback rides and an excellent restaurant.

15 MCGEE CREEK CANYON

Scenic hike: A steady 3-mile climb, the trail to the beaver pond winds along McGee Creek and through brilliant aspen groves. **Tip:** Horseback riding trips are available with McGee Creek Pack Station.

16 ROCK CREEK CANYON

Scenic drive: The nine-mile road (14.5 km) that slices through this glacier-carved canyon is lined with aspen stands, rustic lodges, campgrounds, trails and Rock Creek itself — making it a gorgeous autumn drive. **Tip:** The Little Lakes Valley Trail at the end of Rock Creek Road is popular for good reason; hikers should arrive early for parking.

17 LOWER ROCK CREEK

Scenic hike: Just south of Tom's Place, the multi-use trailhead begins at the top of Lower Rock Creek Road. The first and highest section of the trail offers the best display of creekside aspen groves. **Tip:** Mountain bikers, hikers and anglers all share this trail.

18 ROUND VALLEY

Scenic drive: Tour this historic ranching area by car for awesome views of Wheeler Crest, Mt. Tom and Bishop Creek Canyon. Round Valley's huge cottonwoods and poplars hold their fall colors late into the season. **Tip:** Good hiking trails are available in Pine Creek Canyon and Lower Rock Creek Canyon.

19 BUTTERMILK RECREATION AREA

Scenic drive: 7 miles west of downtown Bishop via SR 168, you'll find the road to Buttermilk Recreation Area. It's a beautiful place to soak up sun among giant boulders and rock formations. Dozens of dirt roads zigzag throughout this world-famous rock climbing destination, where stands of aspen cluster around mountain streams.

20 BISHOP CREEK CANYON

Scenic drive: Just 20 minutes from Bishop, Lake Sabrina, South Lake, and North Lake offer gorgeous views of 13,000' peaks dusted with snow for contrasting beauty. **Tip:** Check out the waterfall across the road from Bishop Creek Lodge.

21 CITY OF BISHOP

Scenic drive: Head east from US 395 toward the Owens River, where large stands of cottonwood grace the valley floor with brilliant gold. **Tip:** Visit the Bishop City Park for a morning stroll or afternoon picnic. It's an arboretum with colorful trees and a picture perfect pond that's home to mallard ducks and rainbow trout.

22 BIG PINE CANYON

Scenic drive: Head west on Glacier Lodge Road, winding upward from 4,000 feet to road's end at 8,000 feet near the old Glacier Lodge. Aspen, cottonwood and willows hug the sides of the creek and canyon walls. **Tip:** Hike farther up the canyon for grand alpine scenery and views of the Palisade Glacier, the southernmost glacier in North America.

23 ONION VALLEY

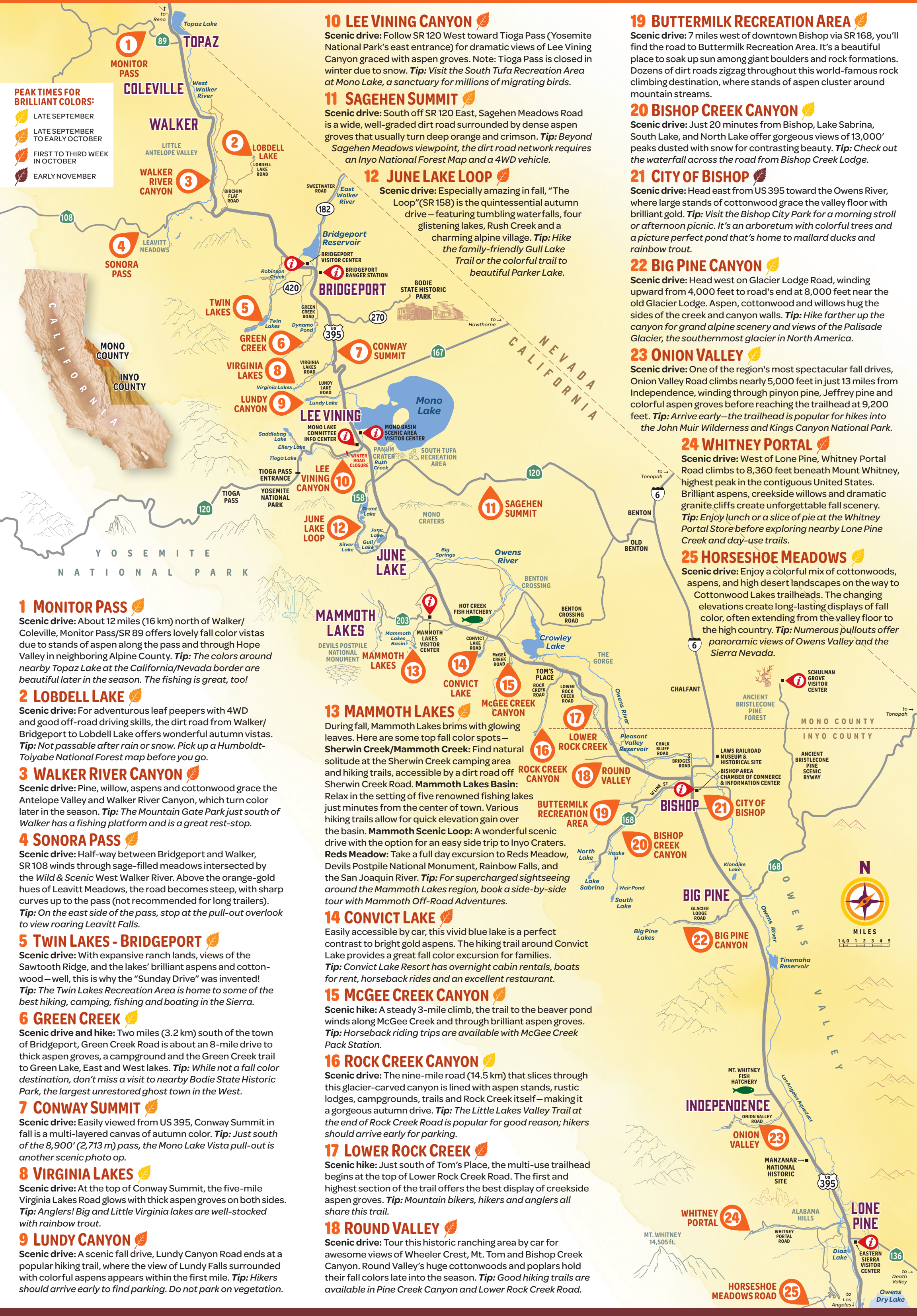
Scenic drive: One of the region's most spectacular fall drives, Onion Valley Road climbs nearly 5,000 feet in just 13 miles from Independence, winding through pinyon pine, Jeffrey pine and colorful aspen groves before reaching the trailhead at 9,200 feet. **Tip:** Arrive early—the trailhead is popular for hikes into the John Muir Wilderness and Kings Canyon National Park.

24 WHITNEY PORTAL

Scenic drive: West of Lone Pine, Whitney Portal Road climbs to 8,360 feet beneath Mount Whitney, highest peak in the contiguous United States. Brilliant aspens, creekside willows and dramatic granite cliffs create unforgettable fall scenery. **Tip:** Enjoy lunch or a slice of pie at the Whitney Portal Store before exploring nearby Lone Pine Creek and day-use trails.

25 HORSESHOE MEADOWS

Scenic drive: Enjoy a colorful mix of cottonwoods, aspens, and high desert landscapes on the way to Cottonwood Lakes trailheads. The changing elevations create long-lasting displays of fall color, often extending from the valley floor to the high country. **Tip:** Numerous pullouts offer panoramic views of Owens Valley and the Sierra Nevada.



WELCOME TO AUTUMN IN THE EASTERN SIERRA

Welcome to brilliance! The fall season is yet another reason why US Highway 395 is designated a Scenic Byway by the State of California. The 395 corridor through the Eastern Sierra offers jaw-dropping views right from the windshield and should be on all iconic road trip bucket lists, especially during autumn. The best time to see the spectacular array of color is typically mid-September through late October.

Savor the drive, pull over often, park, and explore —
and prepare to be astonished!

TAKE YOUR SWEET TIME!

You'll need multiple days to experience everything there is to see and do — and photograph — in the fall season here in the Eastern Sierra. A spellbinding contrast of colors makes a brilliant backdrop for classic Sunday drives, hikes, fishing, kayaking, cycling, ATVing, horseback riding, festivals and events, and so much more. Plan to spend a few days to combine fall color spots with nearby must-see attractions:

#4 Sonora Pass

#5 Twin Lakes - Bridgeport

#6 Green Creek Fall Color

#7 Conway Summit

#8 Virginia Lakes

PLUS DON'T MISS: Bodie ghost town, Mono County Museum, fall horseback riding with Leavitt Meadows Pack Station, Little Antelope Pack Station, Virginia Lakes Pack Outfit, and more.

#9 Lundy Canyon

#10 Lee Vining Canyon

#11 Sagehen Summit

#12 June Lake Loop

PLUS DON'T MISS: Mono Lake South Tufa, Tioga Pass Road, Yosemite National Park.

#13 Mammoth Lakes

#14 Convict Lake Fall Color

#15 McGee Creek Canyon Fall Color

PLUS DON'T MISS: Mammoth Lakes Basin, Devils Postpile National Monument and Rainbow Falls.

#16 Rock Creek Fall Color

#19 Buttermilk Recreation Area

#20 Bishop Creek Canyon

#22 Big Pine Canyon

PLUS DON'T MISS: Laws Railroad Museum, Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone Cultural Center, Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, Alabama Hills, Death Valley National Park, and Manzanar National Historic Site.

5 FALL TIPS

FOR RECREATING RESPONSIBLY

PLAN AHEAD

Check weather, roads, and maps before you go. Weather can shift, cell service can be limited and restrooms may be scarce.

PARK SMART

Use designated spots only. Avoid parking on plants or soft shoulders to protect fragile aspen roots. Aspens grow in shallow soils, and repeated pressure from vehicles can damage their roots for years to come.

TREAD LIGHTLY

Brush off boots and gear to prevent the spread of invasive species. Stay on trails and know proper trail etiquette. Never carve into aspens — their paper-thin bark makes them especially vulnerable, and even small cuts can introduce harmful disease.

STAY AWARE

Drive safely, pull over only in safe areas, and never stop or stand in the road. Even quiet country roads see fast-moving traffic — protect yourself and be courteous to others.

PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

Carry out all trash — even food scraps. With more visitors during peak color season, even small litter can add up quickly and can harm wildlife. Bonus points for picking up extra litter!



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FALL COLOR FACTS

WHY OUR FALL COLOR SEASON GOES ON AND ON AND ON

The Eastern Sierra's varied elevations — from around 5,000 to 10,000 feet (1,512 to 3,048 meters) — cause the trees to peak in color at different times. See the colored leaves in the descriptions of destinations on the reverse side for peak times to view the most brilliant colors:



LATE SEPTEMBER



LATE SEPTEMBER TO EARLY OCTOBER



FIRST TO THIRD WEEK IN OCTOBER



EARLY NOVEMBER

TREE SPECIES

Trees that change color in the Eastern Sierra include aspen, cottonwood and willow.

LIKE CLOCKWORK

Ever wonder how Eastern Sierra leaves know to go from bright green to gold, orange and russet as soon as the calendar hits mid-September? Their cue is actually from the change in air temperature and decreased daylight.

TRUE COLORS

The reason we see fall colors is part of an annual cycle that begins in spring and summer, when green chlorophyll pigments are active in cells that make food for the tree to grow. It's during this time that leaves also contain lesser amounts of yellow, orange and red pigments masked by the chlorophyll. The occurrence of fall colors is actually the disappearance of green chlorophyll!

COLOR INTENSITY

Intensity of leaf color is determined by air temperature and moisture. Warm, dry days and cool nights (under 45°F or 7°C) cause brilliant colors; rainy days and warm nights result in less intense coloration.

COLOR PARADE

If you've ever wondered why some leaves turn deep crimson red while others become so golden they seem to be lit from within like a lamp, here's your answer: Leaves have pigments called xanthophylls (yellows), carotenoids (yellows, oranges and reds), and anthocyanin (red). Anthocyanin is the result of trapped plant sugar produced by the leaf when days are sunny and nights are cold.

FIND OUT WHEN TO GO NOW!

DETAILED FALL COLOR REPORTS

CALIFORNIA FallColor.com



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FALL FESTIVALS & EVENTS

To find out what's happening throughout the Eastern Sierra this autumn, check out the *un-be-leaf-able* number of events and festivals:

BishopVisitor.com/events

InyoCountyVisitor.com/events

VisitMammoth.com/events

MonoCounty.org/things-to-do/events



For information on lodging, dining, activities,
and more, please contact:



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MonoCounty.org



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INYO AND MONO COUNTIES
CALIFORNIA