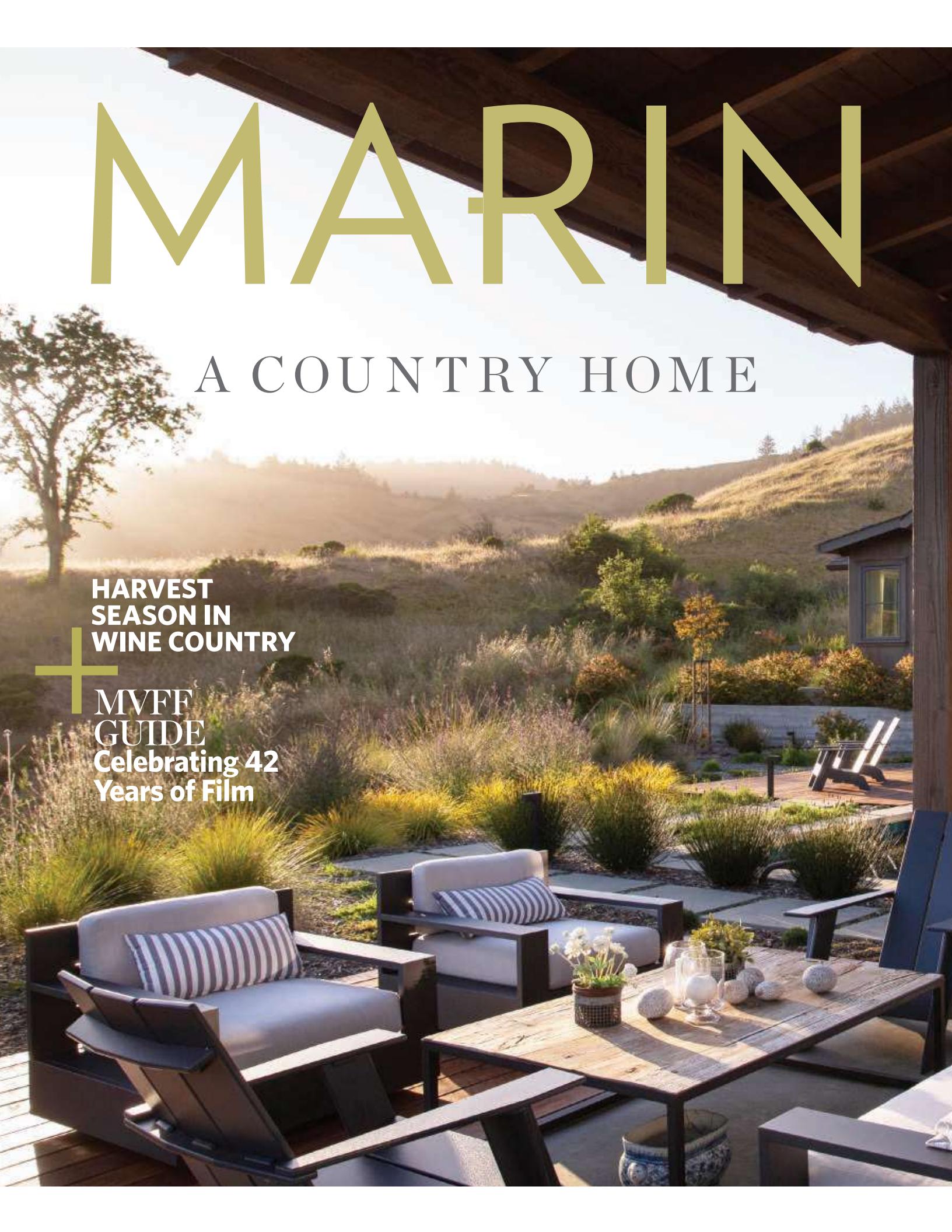


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A Journey of Colors

Three destinations where you can see fall leaves at their brilliant best.

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We love to stroll through Manhattan's Central Park this time of year when it has undergone a romantic transformation courtesy of Mother Nature: a bright-hued palette of leaves on the trees, a snap of cold in the air. Fall definitely brings a distinctive beauty, and an East Coast road trip reveals even more of autumn's glory. The region is bursting with color waiting to dazzle. Chart a course to see foliage in three varied landscapes, each guaranteed to take one's breath away:

- ① Harvest season in New England
- ② Autumn in the Adirondacks
- ③ Coastal bliss in Rhode Island

1 Harvest Season in New England

Joy comes alive as you head onto New York State's tree-lined Taconic State Parkway. Here the different trees change color in their own unique ways. Nature's drawn-out show isn't a speedy one; instead, leaves transition over several weeks, with golds arriving first, then reds, then hues of orange.

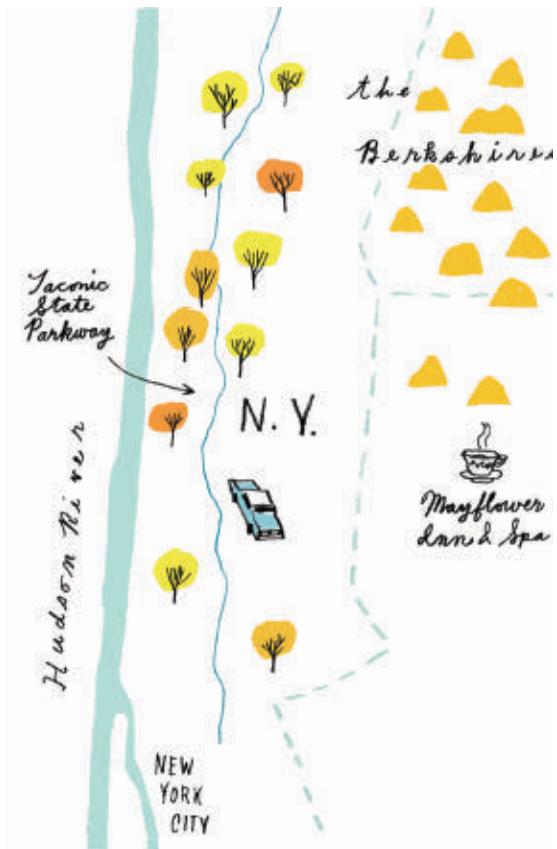
Cut east toward Connecticut and the terrain edges the Berkshires, changing to undulating hills and farmland. Drive through the idyllic Washington, Connecticut, countryside and you're in yet another New England fall tableau, with crisp breezes and trees bursting with orange, sienna and ocher tones. Eyeing the signs for yoga classes in Waldingfield Farm Barn and readings at the Hickory Stick Bookshop, you can almost hear the *Gilmore Girls* theme song — yes, this area inspired the setting of the television show.

Rolling up to the Mayflower Inn & Spa, part of the Auberge Collection, feels like coming home to an English country house. Steaming apple cider in hand, you face your biggest decision — will it be the library's fireplace for an afternoon of reading, or the parlor for board games? Then there are those tantalizing fall colors, beckoning from outdoors.

It's little wonder hiking is a favorite pursuit on the Mayflower's 58-acre property, where discoveries include the well-groomed Shakespeare garden, poet's garden, chef's garden and labyrinth. Along leaf-strewn paths are three historic guest cottages and Spa House, all designed to make the most of the woodsy panoramas. One leaving an indelible mark on memories: a cathedral of trees shading Blue Heron Pond.

Guests can get a taste of the region with libations at the on-property Tap Room, followed by a multicourse refined meal in the Mayflower Dining Room, where the Berkshire heritage pork chop with lollipop kale reflects the season.

Post-dinner, creature comforts await in the sleeping quarters upstairs, all accessed by real keys. The Grace Suites have their own dining room, living room with fireplace (of course) and bedroom with king-size four-poster bed. An in-room pastime not to miss: peering at the harvest moon from a private window seat before bed.



From top: The Mayflower Inn & Spa; Mayflower's Grace Suite.





2 Autumn in the Adirondacks

The Adirondacks' northern location makes for an early, and long, leaf season, with an abundance of diverse color (caused by elevation variations). Getting there involves traversing sleepy back roads canopyed by tree boughs ablaze in oranges, yellows, reds and browns.

Depart Manhattan crossing the George Washington Bridge to Palisades Interstate Parkway, with cliff-top views over the Hudson giving teasing glimpses of what's ahead: foliage just turning gold. No need to drive fast, especially with picturesque Bear Mountain State Park, the Hudson Valley and the Catskills (home to the legend of Rip Van Winkle) offering their fall-color kaleidoscopes.

Still to come: the award-winning Adirondack Northway, where the steel arches of the Kosciuszko Bridge mark the crossing over the Mohawk River into Saratoga County. The landscape evokes the settings in James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*.

Within an hour, the Lake George Region appears on the edge of the Adirondack Park, an area designated "forever wild" by the New York State Constitution. As if building to a crescendo, the colors gradually intensify.

The North Fork of the Boquet River and later the Ausable River suggest a sojourn for hiking or trout fishing. As you get closer to the Adirondack High Peaks Region, the state's tallest mountain, 5,344-foot Mount Marcy, awash in autumn color, comes into view.

Round a curve on Route 73 and a surprise appears — the 70- and 90-meter Olympic ski jumps at Mount Van Hoevenberg, reminders of two Winter Olympics held at Lake Placid. From here you pass storybook ponds, lakes and forests en route to the village of Saranac Lake.

Suddenly, a gate appears in the forest — the property entrance of The Point, the former Adirondack Great Camp of William Avery Rockefeller II (co-founder of Standard Oil). As vivid foliage goes, it doesn't get much more perfect than The Point: the lake here is the epitome of fall splendor.

The drive ends at a log mansion graced by yellow mums and cheery orange pumpkins. Despite its vast 75 acres, small and intimate best



From top: The Point; William Avery Rockefeller's bedroom.

describes the Relais & Châteaux property's 11 accommodations spread among four log "cabins" with dreamy lake views.

Stretching one's legs along the property's hiking trails is a must. Then again, Saranac Lake itself cries out for canoeing or, better yet, taking a classic 33-foot mahogany Hacker-Craft speedboat out for a spin amid watery reflections of miles of trees.

Later, a walk along a flagstone path to a Saranac Lake lookout is a must. A lean-to with cushions and blankets offers respite from the elements. Leaves drift hypnotically from trees as if subliminally suggesting a nap, and don't be

surprised to see snowflakes join the gentle descent.

At twilight, cocktail hour gets underway at The Point's main lodge. Around the fireplace, guests in black tie break the ice by recounting the details of their day. Soon it's time to gather around the dining room table, an experience that feels like traveling back to a time when conversation was an art and friendships were forged over an elegant meal.

Before long, the siren song of sleep lures guests to the lumberjack elegance of their rooms, perhaps for a nightcap in front of a crackling wood fire. The amber whiskey hints at hues to be encountered on drives ahead.

3 Coastal Bliss in Rhode Island

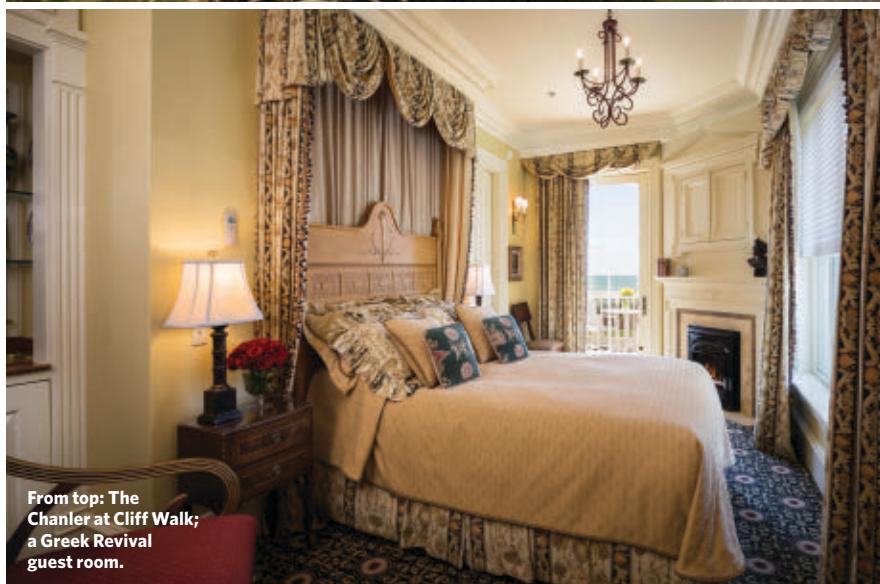
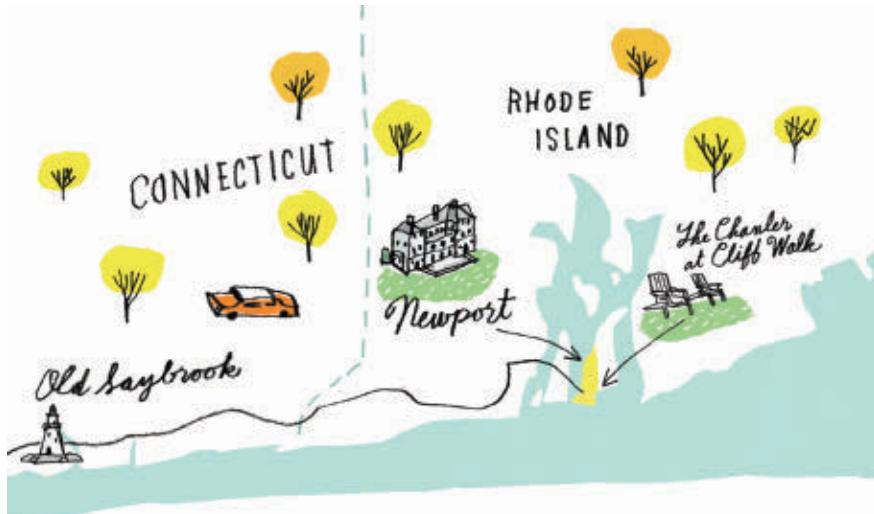
Head down State Route 9 and the drive becomes a coastal one, passing Connecticut's Middletown and Old Saybrook. Salt-tinged air comes with forest aromas throughout the densely wooded Connecticut River Valley. More leaf-peeping lies ahead on Interstate 95, across Narragansett Bay and over the Verrazano and Claiborne Pell bridges, before you arrive at the fall foliage mecca of Newport. Yes, making Rhode Island the final road-trip destination is perfect timing — with the region's temperate climate, leaves change later in the season.

Seaside Newport is known for its dramatic coast, opulent "summer cottages" aka mansions, and walnut, ash and Japanese cherry trees dotting the landscape in shades of yellow, orange and red. Trekking Cliff Walk, a 3.5-mile National Recreation Trail, is an excellent way to take in this grandeur. Unsurpassed views of Newport's architecture, shoreline and colorful fall flora abound.

Along the way is one of the aforementioned "cottages": The Chanler at Cliff Walk. Situated atop a rocky precipice, the 1873 French Victorian-style mansion is nestled on five well-manicured acres overlooking Easton's Bay. The sophisticated living room evokes the Gilded Age with its refined artwork and grand staircase. As for the Chanler's accommodations, each has its own theme reflecting different periods of history, from English Tudor to Greek Revival to French Provincial.

Sitting around a firepit on the lawn and watching sailboats navigate the tides is a worthy way to spend time. Exploring the area, though, is a must. Poke around The Chanler's grounds to be rewarded by the discovery of a hidden garden hugged by autumn-colored trees. Continue into quaint downtown Newport, where cobblestone streets are lined with boutiques, galleries and specialty shops. A lazy walk back to The Chanler finds leaves dancing across sidewalks, a chill in the air and smoke curling from chimneys.

More hues await at Cara, the Chanler's fine dining restaurant. Here, floor-to-ceiling windows showcase fall colors bestowed by the setting sun. As items from Executive Chef Matt Voskuil's six-course menu begin arriving, it's necessary to raise a glass both to the chef and to the beauty of the season.



From top: The Chanler at Cliff Walk; a Greek Revival guest room.