



THE WORLD'S GREATEST FALL COLOR SHOW GOES GREEN

Keeping it beautiful in Swain County, North Carolina. Kay Creighton looks out the window of her bed and breakfast, a restored 1920s farm house in the shadows of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. "Looks like it's going to be a pretty one," she observes, eyeing the red and gold colors that are beginning to tint the trees in her front yard. The early October air across Swain County, North Carolina, carries a little nip and a lot of anticipation. This Smoky Mountain enclave is 87% forest lands and the fall leaf season is nothing short of spectacular.

How Green is My Valley? Like a lot of the county's residents, Kay and co-owner Peggy Myles are concerned with protecting the natural wonders of the Smokies. "We employ green practices here at the Folkestone Inn," says Peggy. "We have recycling bins in the common rooms, use energy saving bulbs and encourage our guests to conserve water and reuse towels. The fall colors are a reminder that we have so much worth preserving here."

A vivid reminder indeed! The Southern Appalachians are blessed with an abundance of deciduous trees—especially the ones that go absolutely berserk with vibrant color—reddish sourwoods, blackgum, maples and dogwoods; golden persimmons, poplars, hickories and birch; rust colored oaks; and orange and purple ash. (If Van Gogh worked with a palette like this, he would have been a much cheerier guy.) It's no wonder travelers from around the world are utterly astounded when they come here for a fall visit.

The Mountain Color Show is Special. Whether you gaze from the valley to the mountain, or the other way around, you're getting a striking view that begs for a front cover on *National Geographic*. It's jaw-dropping gorgeous! The mountains also make the show last longer.

Come late September you'll catch the prelude of early color change on the mountaintops. Through the months of October and early November, you'll take in the bold movements of color rhythmically descending to the lower elevations. In late November, there's still a dazzling finale as the valleys are awash with reds, golds and browns.

Everything's Better in Color. If you're not sure what to do in all this beauty, the friendly locals have a few suggestions: take a hike on a quiet mountain trail or straddle a raft on the twisting, churning Nantahala River, best whitewater paddling in the East. There's great fishing in both streams and on beautiful Fontana Lake. Fall is also a great time for apple picking, biking and hayrides as well as exploring the cultures of mountain settlers and the Cherokee Indians whose sacred home is in the county.

They Even Recycle the Leaves. Like many folks who live close to the land, Kay and Peggy sense the great cycle of life—and the recycling. "We have our own organic garden," says Kay, "and what we don't grow ourselves we try to purchase at the local farmers' market." "And, of course," Peggy adds with a smile, "we even gather all these colorful leaves to make compost for our garden. We want there to be beautiful falls in Swain County long after we're gone."

For more information on touring the Smokies, contact the Swain County Chamber of Commerce, 210 Main Street, P.O. Box 509, Bryson City, NC 28713; chamber@greatsmokies.com; or 800.867.9246.