

ACTIVITIES | FALL HIKING GUIDE

Your guide to various trails across the Dayton area

Enjoy the fall color show at locations throughout the region.

By **Debbie Juniewicz**
Contributing Writer

The sights and sounds of fall hiking are unmatched, as sun streams through a colorful canopy overhead and leaves crunch with each footstep.

“Fall is my absolute favorite time to hike,” said Jordan Hart, Five Rivers MetroParks outdoor recreation coordinator. “It’s a little cooler, so you’re not sweating as much, there are no bugs and you get to see everything in totally different colors.”

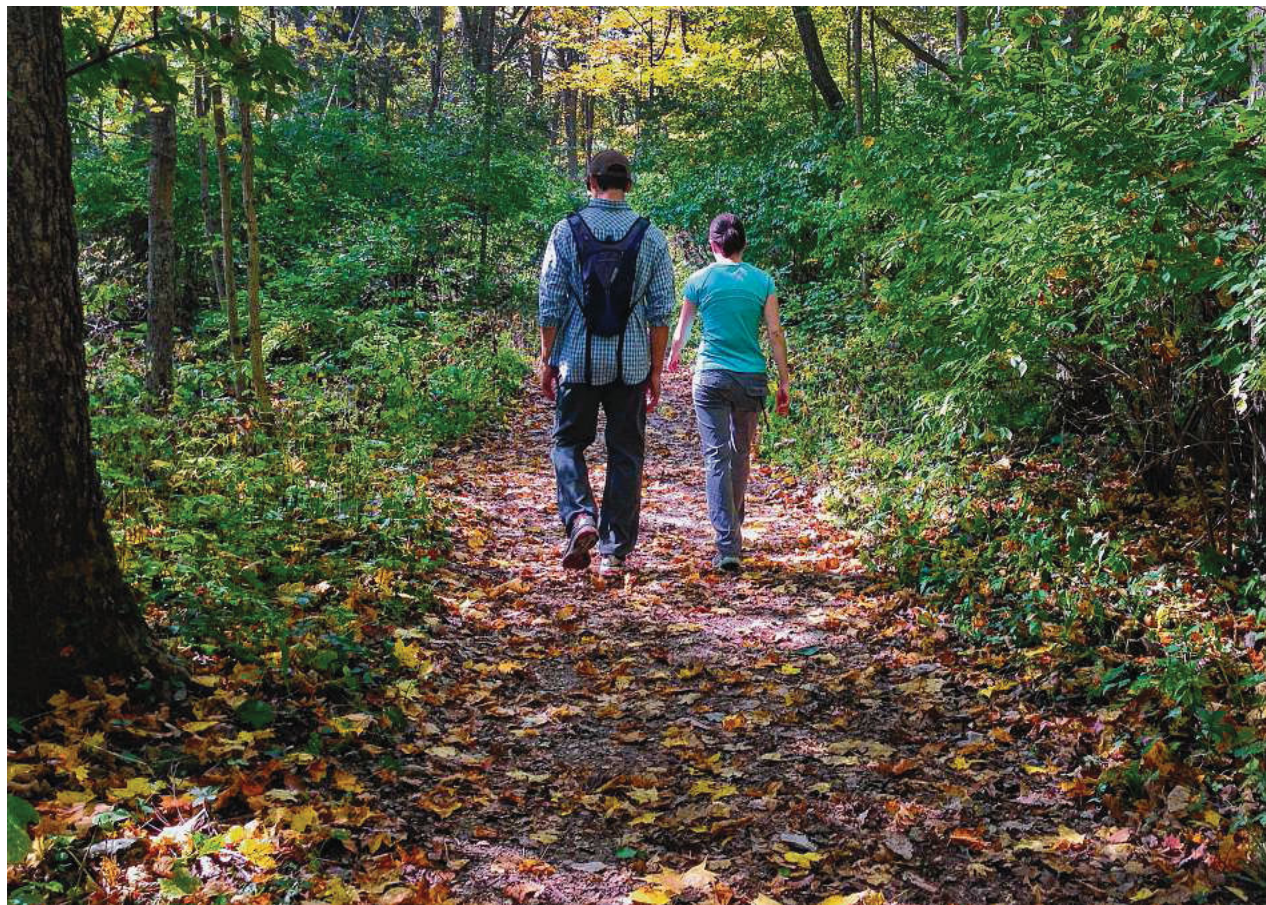
And there is no better time to hit the trails, as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources estimates that southern Ohio will experience its peak fall color between Oct. 24-31.

“Ohio comes to life with the arrival of fall,” ODNR director Mary Mertz said. “With cooler temperatures and incredible views, this time of year is perfect for exploring the natural beauty that can be seen and felt in our state parks, nature preserves and forests.”

Cooler temperatures and shorter days mean a few extra considerations before hitting the trails.

“You definitely want to think about being in layers and, with it getting darker earlier, taking a headlamp is a good idea if you’re going later in the day,” Hart said. “And the main thing is always letting some know where you’re going.”

Ready to lace up the hiking shoes but not sure where to go? MetroParks staff and



Amid peak fall color, hikers walk the Pittsburgh-Cincinnati Stagecoach Trail in John Bryan State Park that follows the course of the Little Miami River and is wide enough for two people. John Bryan near Yellow Springs is considered by many to be the most scenic state park in western Ohio. CONTRIBUTED

members of the Dayton Hikers weigh in on some of their favorite places to enjoy the fall color.

Germantown MetroPark, 7101 Conservancy Road, Germantown (main entrance)

Part of the Twin Valley Conservation Corridor, Germantown MetroPark is a favorite fall destination for many hikers.

“My favorite is Germantown MetroPark because the density of the woods creates draping canopies that feel like a warm hug,” said Chelsea Raterman, Five Rivers

MetroParks outdoor recreation specialist. “I imagine it’s like diving into a mug of apple cider.”

Outdoor Recreation Coordinator Derrick Keating feels similarly about the park that is about 20 minutes from Dayton.

“My favorite trail to hike during the fall is the Orange Trail at Germantown MetroPark,” Keating said. “It’s one that I use to go out and back, and it’s long enough to give me a few distinct, easily recognizable options for places to turn around and head back depending on how much time I have. I

enjoy going on fall Sundays before NFL games start and get a cool morning hike in before coming back home to settle in and rest.”

More info: www.metro-parks.org/places-to-go/germantown/

Twin Creek MetroPark, 9688 Eby Road, Germantown (high view)

With mature forests and breathtaking ravines, gorgeous views are plentiful at Twin Creek MetroPark. It’s a favorite fall hotspot for MetroParks outdoor recreation events specialist Angela Moore.

“Twin Creek MetroPark is my favorite because of the view of fall foliage as you hike down from the high view parking area,” Moore said. “Then you can continue to enjoy the trees along the wooded trails and Twin Creek.”

Hiking isn’t even a prerequisite to enjoy the colorful sights of the season.

“Sometimes I don’t really feel like hitting the trail for a hike to enjoy the fall colors but want to take them in, just the same, so I head to my favorite spot – the Highview Shelter area at Twin Creek MetroPark,”

Outdoor Recreation Specialist Kelly Kingery said. “It sits on top of the most beautiful view of the valley, and you have such a picturesque and wide expanse laid out before you. If you know where to look, you can see all the way over to Medlar Conservation Area – a seven-mile drive, but probably around five miles as the crow flies – five miles of the fall color palate in a swath of oak, maple, sycamore, beech and oh so many more trees and shrubs catching the sun and doing the chlorophyll exchange. Life is so busy sometimes. Sometimes it’s good to check out for a bit and just sit and enjoy not doing anything. Just be still. And this is a great place to do that and have a connection to the natural beauty that quietly surrounds each one of us every day, if we just slow down and take a moment to be still and notice.”

More info: www.metro-parks.org/places-to-go/twin-creek/

Sweet Arrow Reserve, 789 Little Sugarcreek Road, Bellbrook

With seven different trail loops, the largest park in the Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District is a fall favorite of Andy Niekamp of the Dayton Hikers.

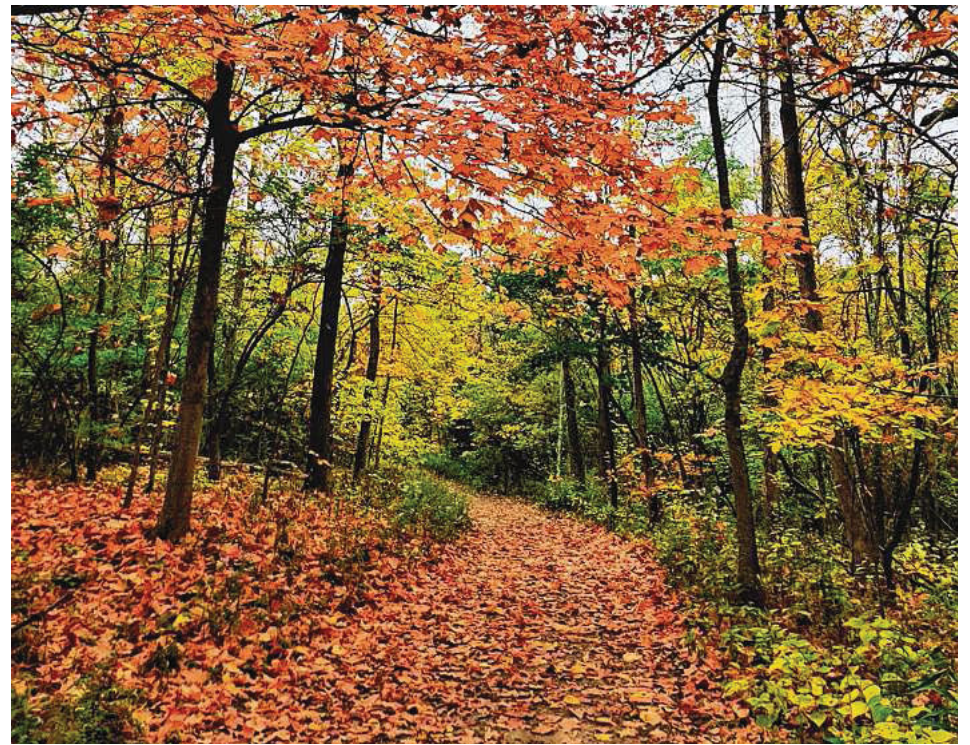
“Sweet Arrow Reserve in Bellbrook is the sweet spot for fall colors,” Niekamp said. “The easy trails offer excellent viewing options. For the best viewing, look for areas with a change in habitat or terrain. Observe the trees from the prairie, where your view is unobstructed, or hike along Little Sugar Creek. Consider leaf viewing early or later in the

Trails continued on 5

GO!



The Miami Valley will likely experience peak color the last week of October. PHOTO BY DEBBIE JUNIEWICZ



Sugarcreek MetroPark is a favorite fall destination. CONTRIBUTED

Trails

continued from 4

afternoon when the sun is lower in the sky. When the sun is lower, it illuminates trees and leaves from a side angle, making the colors more vibrant.”

More info: www.bell-brooksugarcreekparks.org/parks-and-facilities/parks/sweet-arrow-reserve

John Bryan State Park, 3790 State Route 370, Yellow Springs

John Bryan State Park’s breathtaking views and distinctive limestone gorge make it a desirable destination, but the park is especially meaningful to Dayton Hikers member Brit-tany Kensler.

“My partner and I got married at John Bryan State Park five years ago,” Kensler said. “We enjoy a hike there every year on our anniversary – Nov. 12. Usually, the last of the pretty leaves are falling, covering



State parks like Caesar Creek offer stunning seasonal views. CONTRIBUTED BY ROSEMARY D'ALOIA

the ground, and we’ll warm up at one of the shelter fireplaces after. Love our fall tradition.”

More info: <https://ohiodnr.gov/go-and-do/plan-a-visit/find-a-property/john-bryan-state-park>. www.glenhelen.org

But John Bryan isn’t the only Yellow Springs area park that shines during fall.



The boardwalk at Dull Woods in Clay Township offers ideal viewing of fall color. CONTRIBUTED

“Glen Helen Nature Preserve, John Bryan State Park and Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve – all the trails at these parks have beautiful fall color,” said Vicki Stalbird of the Dayton Hikers. “I hike all over the parks – Pittsburgh-Cincinnati Trail and North Rim Trail in John Bryan, Lower Gorge Trail by the river in



The crunch of leaves underfoot is a sure sign of fall. PHOTO BY DEBBIE JUNIEWICZ

Clifton Gorge, the fire road out to the pine forest in Glen Helen.”

Hike through the region – fall color roundup

Rich reds, vibrant yellows and brilliant oranges, the Miami Valley offers a dazzling array this time of year as fall color explodes in every direction.

Brookville

■ **Dull Woods**, 8199 Cole St. – “I like the Dull Woods conservation area off the Wolf Creek bikeway because of the mature oak trees and gorgeous yellow-leaved maples and spice bushes,” said Megan Rude, MetroParks conservation technician.

Englewood

■ **Englewood MetroPark**, 100 E. National Road (West Park) – “You get a beautiful view of the waterfalls as leaves start to change color and drop,” said Lauren Lemons, MetroParks marketing and public engagement specialist. “Additionally, the pumpkin ash and swamp forest boardwalk is really impressive, as there are so many different large species of trees, which make for really beautiful photos.”

Sugarcreek Township

■ **Morris Reserve**, 3151 Lower Bellbrook Road – “Morris Reserve is a hidden

gem that is never crowded,” said Stacey Goecke of the Dayton Hikers. Nearby **Sugarcreek MetroPark**, 4178 Conference Road, is also a popular fall locale. “The Osage Orange Tunnel is beautiful in the fall,” Rude said.

Vandalia

■ **Taylorsville MetroPark**, 2101 U.S. 40 (East Park) – “I would pick Taylorsville MetroPark’s Orange Trail for a hike that’s a little bit of a challenge and offers tree-lined view of the river, which is really pretty,” said Lauren Lemons, MetroParks marketing and public engagement specialist.

Waynesville

■ **Caesar Creek State Park**, 8570 E. State Route 73 – “Take the Caesar Creek State Park trail from the Visitor Center to Hopewell Lodge for beautiful views of the lake and the foliage,” said Rosemary D’Alaia of the Dayton Hikers.