

Fall fun

10 activities to help you enjoy the new season

By Lisa Evans

Just because the weather is cooler doesn't mean it's time to hibernate indoors — yet. With its vibrant colours and crisp cool air, the fall season in Canada offers plenty of opportunities to connect with nature and explore some of the country's best activities. Whether you're looking for great food, festivals or fauna, the fall season has it all. Here are 10 fantastic autumn activities.

1 Visit farmers' markets. Expand your palate with the fall's harvest. From sweet potatoes to radishes, winter squash and fall fresh fruits such as apples and cranberries, some of Canada's most flavourful produce is available in the fall. Farmers' markets are a great place to go to learn about these delicious harvest foods directly from the people who grow them. Farmers are always keen to share their favourite ways of preparing the fruits of their labours. Try your hand at preparing seasonal favourites such as butternut squash soup, apple pie or pumpkin bread.



2 Tour a pumpkin patch. A pumpkin patch is a great place to spend an afternoon with your family. Throughout the month of October, you can pick your own pumpkin to carve as a jack-o-lantern for Halloween, or simply to eat (pumpkin pie and roasted pumpkin seeds are Canadian seasonal favourites). Pumpkin patches often offer hay rides and other activities for the young ones in the family.

3 Participate in haunted festivities. On Oct. 31, children dress up in costumes and visit neighbourhood houses shouting "trick-or-treat" in exchange for candy. The tradition dates back to Celtic beliefs that spirits could cross over into the world of the living on this night. While dressing up in costumes was thought to scare off the spirits who had wandered back into the world of the living, in later centuries, people began dressing up as ghosts and demons and performed antics in exchange for food and drink, a custom thought to have evolved into the trick-or-treating we know of today.

Halloween isn't the only celebration that connects us to the otherworld this time of year. If you live in a city with a large Mexican population, you may want to seek out Day of the Dead festivities. Mexicans believe the souls of our dearly departed return to earth on Nov. 1 and 2 to visit loved ones. Witness the making of spectacular altars to honour the dead and taste the traditional bread *pan de muertos* (bread of the dead).

4 Hike along some of Canada's best trails. Fall is nature's playground. From late September to late October, hiking trails are lined with colourful leaves in pumpkin oranges, candy apple reds and golden yellows. And the weather is not too hot for a strenuous climb.

5 Rake the leaves. As trees shed their leaves, the ground becomes littered in a patchwork of colour. Raking the leaves in your own backyard can be a fun chore to do as a family. Kids will love to make a large leaf pile and take turns jumping in.

6 Visit an apple orchard. There's nothing more delicious than biting into a fresh, crisp apple. Take the family on a trip to the apple orchard and enjoy picking your own fruit. Try a glass of warm apple cider after as a reward for all your hard work. Many orchards offer activities for kids including hay rides and face painting.

7 Hit the stage. Fall is the start of theatre season in cities across the country. Check out the many playbills, dance productions and symphony schedules in your city. Many theatre companies offer discounts in the fall for those who purchase multiple tickets for the season.

8 Host a Thanksgiving dinner. Thanksgiving (which falls on Monday, Oct. 13 this year) offers an opportunity to share all that you're grateful for. The annual holiday celebrates the harvest and other blessings of the past year and is a great time to gather with friends and family to remember all that you're thankful for. Enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving feast of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and gravy, or make the meal unique by hosting a potluck, asking friends to bring their favourite dishes.

9 Celebrate Oktoberfest with beer and sausages. This German fall festival attracts more than six million spectators worldwide. The largest Oktoberfest in Canada is in Kitchener, Waterloo, located about 100 kilometres west of Toronto. While the no. 1 draw to Oktoberfest is beer, the festival offers a glimpse into all that makes German heritage great including dancing, Bavarian costumes and great food.

10 Enjoy the end of whale watching season. If you live on the east or west coast of Canada, you may want to wave goodbye to the whales as they migrate into the ocean. Whale watching season runs until the end of October. Listen for cries of "there she blows!" as spectators spot whales shooting water into the crisp blue sky. 🌟