

# TRAVEL

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## Autumn rhythms

Find yours on two off-the-path fall getaways

By Brian Schott and Stacey Szewczyk

CALM AND COLORFUL A quiet fall day in the town of Meredith, New Hampshire

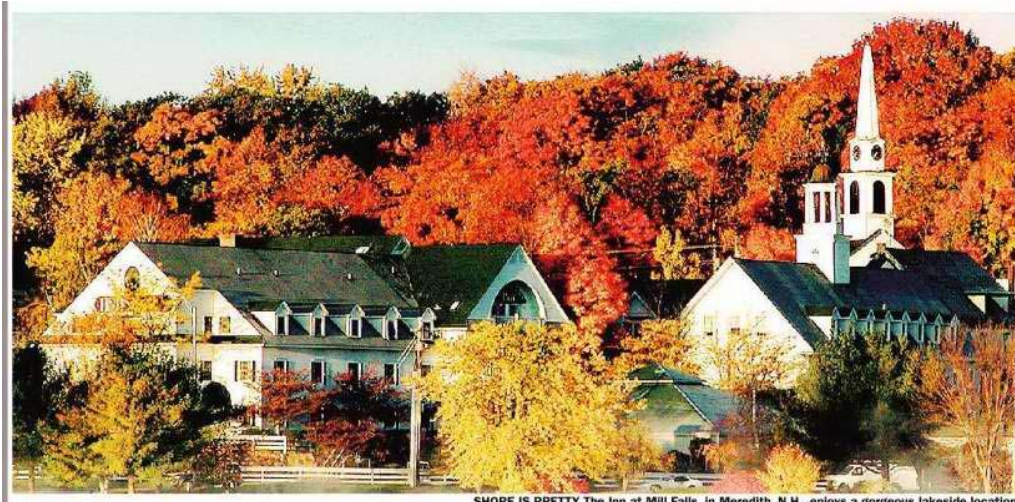
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## TURN OVER A NEW LEAF IN MEREDITH, NH

By Brian Schott

When autumn's hues begin to spill across the rolling hills and deep valleys of New Hampshire's White Mountains (about the first weekend of October), consider the quaint, lakeside village of Meredith as a charming town from which to base your quest for color. Like the leaves, Meredith has transformed itself over time. The town once used the power of water for industry, but now uses water to draw tourists to the bucolic shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, the largest in New Hampshire.

"Meredith is old and dreamy," says Amanda Downs, who works at the Village Perk coffeehouse downtown. "The town codes keep everything white and beautiful. It's gorgeous. It's the place you think of when you think of the perfect town." As if that's not enough of a rave, up-scale lodging options will appeal to travelers from the city (300 miles, six hours away) with a range of prices (\$129-\$279/night). An old linen mill that specialized in toweling made from imported flax in the 1800s is now the fashionable Inn and Spa at Mill Falls, one of four lakeside hotels owned by Hampshire Hospitality Holdings. Next to the hotel, you'll find more than 17 shops at the four-floor marketplace, selling everything from rustic furniture and art and crafts to Ben & Jerry's and pizza.



SHORE IS PRETTY The Inn at Mill Falls, in Meredith, N.H., enjoys a storzuous lakeside location.

Last season, Church Landing was born when the same company purchased and lavishly renovated the waterfront Catholic Church into a classic New England shoreline hotel, retaining some of the original architecture. In the high summer season, a wait of an hour or more is standard fare for a table at the Lakehouse Grille inside the hotel. But in autumn the scene is more relaxed and there's more elbow room for a romantic after-dinner stroll along the waterfront boardwalk lined with boats.

Good food abounds in Meredith. The locals flock to George's Diner for break fast, and Sunshine and Pa's offers an equally tasty wakeup meal. The new Village Perk has wireless Internet access, as well as great coffee and sandwiches. If you are exiting the highway near dinnertime, try Rossi's for authentic Italian

## THE MAIN EVENTS

Just a few blocks from the waterfront, the handsome wooden storefronts of Main St. house antique shops and boutiques, as well as quiet eateries. Mame's is hidden just blocks from the downtown, and tourists often miss it, but it's the best meal in town. Lago's at the Bay Point Inn offers waterfront dining, with either indoor window seats or outdoor umbrella seating when the weather is warm.

Traveling north into the Mount Washington Valley, you'll find almost endless roads for access to the vibrant hills. There are also local options, like a quiet hike in the Hamlin-Eames Recreation and Conservation Area in Meredith with easy access to the forest and miles of The well-maintained hiking trails climb their way up into alpine areas where the trees are sparse and there are treetop views from the perch of steep ledges. If you give yourself a half-day or more, have a quiet fall picnic beneath the cedars on the deserted shore of Wickwas Lake.

North of town, the famous Kancamagus Highway is just one hour away and winds through some of the most thickly wooded forests in the region, in full blush with the sharp tints of autumn. You can also drive to Franconia Notch, where the "Old Man of the Mountain" used to look over the valley next to Cannon Mountain before a rockslide tore his craggy face off.

At the center of your leaf-peeping adventure is Lake Winnepesaukee. The lake spans 72 miles at the longest stretch, with 282 miles shoreline. Springs feed the 44,000 acres of sweet, clean water, which is dotted with 274 islands. The Ossipee Mountains, the Belknap Mountains and the Sandwich Range surround the lake and become painted in reds and oranges, reflecting their color in the shimmering waters. A ride on the 225-foot-long M.S. Mount Washington tour boat ("The Mount" as locals call it) is a unique, leisurely way to take in the colors of fall and gain perspective on the vast waters. The fiery leaves contrast the deep blue waters of the lake and on a clear day, you can see the top of the real Mount Washington, the highest peak in the northeast.

The massive boat has a capacity of 1,250 passengers and makes daily departures for half-day trips from Meredith. Evening dinner cruises depart Friday through Sunday from Weirs Beach, just 15 minutes up the road.

If you are looking for that new place to unlock the colors of fall, Meredith might just be the key.

For more info on Meredith, call 1-877-279-6121 or visit [www.meredithcc.org](http://www.meredithcc.org).