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TALES FROM THE RIVERBANK

AN AUTUMN ESCAPE

PLUS ——— SAM TAYLOR-JOHNSON TALKS TASTE, MAGICAL MUSHROOMS, AN ECONOMIST'S GUIDE TO ZÜRICH, THE OTHER WHITE HOUSE

FOLIAGE ON THE FJORDS IN NORWAY

The fjords along Norway's west coast put on one of northern Europe's great foliage shows. Swaths of birch turn yellow and gold, starting in late September; cliffs, inlets, waterfalls and pine forests provide the high-drama contrast. An easy(ish) port of entry is Ålesund, about a three-hour journey to Geirangerfjord, the fjord that probably takes the medal for Norway's Most Papped. Ålesund is one of the more frequented stop-offs on the expedition-cruise circuits here, full of art nouveau flourishes and cosy cafés. Any excursion into the surrounding fjords and valleys – cycling, hiking, on a tender or in a car – will inevitably bear out something scenic; even the 144m climb to the lookout at Aksla, in Ålesund itself.

STAY: Storfjord Hotel, inland from Ålesund, brings the full flush of autumn goodness: an ideal location between pristine forest and coast's edge; a long roster of outdoor activities, from its own extensive hiking paths to foraging, kayaking, fishing and private fjord cruises; and delicious timber-walled rooms with large fireplaces and views.

From NK4,090 (about £347), [storfjordhotel.no](#)

A BLACK FOREST FEAST

To find Germany's most prolific displays you'll need to head, somewhat counterintuitively, south: Bavaria's Black Forest takes the kudos for having the finest foliage, made more striking by the setting: mountains, lakes, the evergreen forests that cast the autumnal hues into bold relief. This being Germany, there's clever infrastructure specific to leveraging the experience: the *Baumwipfelpfad* is an elevated trail that meanders through treetops and culminates in a space age-y 44m-tall observation tower, from which all the colour can be admired from on high. A more conventional stroll is the one in Baden-Baden, the spa capital of the Black Forest, along the Lichtentaler Allee: 2.3km of path on the west bank of the River Oos, planted with around 300 types of trees, almost all of which – maples, sycamores, chestnuts, ginkgos – go off in mid-October.

STAY: Brenners Park has been Baden-Baden's bucket-list splurge for generations of health enthusiasts who come for its hot springs. A recent two-year renovation brought every space back to gleaming perfection – including the 5,000sq m medi-spa. From €600, [oetkerhotels.com](#)

A YANKEE DOODLE FALL

New England is virtually synonymous with "leaf-peeping", America's ritualistic enjoyment of autumn-colour shows. I must declare an interest in counselling a leisurely drive through Vermont and New Hampshire; these northernmost states were my university stomping grounds, and of the

two I'm going to plump for Vermont as the ne plus ultra of blazing-hued autumn bliss. Mid-October is when the state's central and southern hills and valleys are at their peak; the preponderance of sugar and red maples all but guarantees a major show. Drive north on Route 7, through the lovely college town of Middlebury, then cut across the Green Mountains to Interstate 89 and meander down to Hancock – the platonic ideal of a New England town, complete with white steepled church and leafy common.

STAY: The Inn at Hancock is a classic clapboard-on-the-common B&B, with a high-design twist: the new owners are partial to a toile de Jouy and a bit of lacquer chinoiserie. The three-room restaurant serves more formal fare (there's a dress code); Pink's Lounge is more casual.

From \$502, [innathancock.com](#)

JAPAN'S TEMPLES OF TECHNICOLOUR

Kyoto's fall-foliage USPs are its twin surfeits of maple trees and temples. The former morph reliably each late October-early November into a Pantone chart's worth of reds and oranges (with ginkgos to cut through nicely with their bright-yellow leaves). The latter provide the ideal contemplative venues in which to admire them. Tōfuku-ji is famous worldwide for Tsutenkyo Bridge, which spans a small valley lined with maples that traverses the temple grounds. Others to not miss are Kiyomizu-dera (arguably the city's most famous, and recognised, temple complex), and Kōdaiji, which from late October to mid-December runs an evening illumination show that casts the colour changes in brilliant light (as do a handful of others across town). Slightly more off the beaten track:

Hakuryū-en, a private garden opened in 1963 by retail magnate Shoichi Aono near Ninose station on the Eizan Railway (tickets need to be booked in advance).

STAY: The Imperial Hotel, Kyoto opened last March in the fully restored Yasaka Kaikan, a landmarked *geiko* (geisha) theatre and community space built in 1936. The 55 rooms and suites marry elements of ryokan and private-home living. From ¥164,500 (about £780), [imperialhotel.jp](#) ■HTSI

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STORFJORD HOTEL
ÅLESUND



THE INN
AT HANCOCK,
NEW HAMPSHIRE

NEW ENGLAND
IS VIRTUALLY
SYNONYMOUS WITH
"LEAF-PEEPING"



TRAVEL NEWS

FALL INTO PLACE

The greatest autumn (leaf) shows on earth

WORDS BY MARIA SHOLLENBARGER

IMPERIAL
HOTEL,
KYOTO



BRENNERS
PARK
BADEN-BADEN