

## Quick Facts about Fall

### WHY OUR FALL COLOR SEASON GOES ON AND ON AND ON

The Eastern Sierra's varied elevations – from approximately 5,000 to 10,000 feet (1,512 to 3,048 m) – mean the trees peak in color at different times. Bishop, Inyo County and southern Mono County usually turn color first, with Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, Bridgeport and northern Mono County peaking by mid-October.

### TREE SPECIES

Trees that change color in the Eastern Sierra include aspen, cottonwood and willow.

### LIKE CLOCKWORK

Ever wonder how Eastern Sierra leaves know to go from bright green to gold, orange, and russet as soon as the calendar hits mid-September? Their cue is actually from the change in air temperature and decreased daylight.

### TRUE COLORS

The reason we see fall colors is part of an annual cycle that begins in spring and summer, when green chlorophyll pigments are active in cells that make food for the tree to grow. It's during this time that leaves also contain lesser amounts of yellow, orange and red pigments that are masked by the chlorophyll. The occurrence of fall colors is actually the disappearance of green chlorophyll!

### COLOR INTENSITY

Intensity of leaf color is determined by the air's temperature and moisture. Warm, dry days and cool nights (under 45°F or 7°C) mean brilliant colors; rainy days and warm nights result in less intense coloration.

### COLOR PARADE

If you've ever wondered why some leaves turn deep crimson red, while others become so gold they seem to be lit from within like a lamp, here's your answer: They have pigments called xanthophylls (yellows), carotenoids (yellows, oranges and reds), and anthocyanin (red). Anthocyanin is the result of trapped plant sugar, produced by the leaf when days are sunny and nights are cold.

### CALIFORNIA BRILLIANCE

In addition to the Eastern Sierra, fall colors dazzle throughout the Golden State. The go-to source is [CaliforniaFallColor.com](http://CaliforniaFallColor.com).

## Fall Colors Astound

"The secret California dream... Just follow the scenic US Route 395 as it connects wonders."  
– *Lonely Planet's Top 10 US travel destinations for 2013*



"One of the USA's 5 Best Road Trips."  
– *USA Weekend (USA Today) Magazine, 2013*

"It'd be worth a trip to this corner of the Eastern Sierra for the flaming trees alone. But June Lake also has lakes, waterfalls, jagged peaks, and a little something for everyone."  
– *Sunset Magazine's Top 5 Fall Hikes, 2012*

"Blinding displays of yellow and orange."  
– *TravelandLeisure.com's America's Best Fall Color Drives, 2011*

"One of the Sierra's sublime experiences."  
– *GORP.com's Top Ten Fall Forests, 2010*



## Fly into Autumn...within an hour!

Flights between Los Angeles (LAX) and Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) are now available year-round. See how easy and affordable your next trip can be – log on to [www.AlaskaAir.com](http://www.AlaskaAir.com).

### NEED MORE INFO? Please contact us!

#### Bishop Chamber of Commerce

1-888-395-3952 [www.BishopVisitor.com](http://www.BishopVisitor.com)

#### County of Inyo

[www.TheOtherSideOfCalifornia.com](http://www.TheOtherSideOfCalifornia.com)

#### Mammoth Lakes Tourism

1-888-466-2666 [www.VisitMammoth.com](http://www.VisitMammoth.com)

#### Mono County Tourism and Film Commission

1-800-845-7922 [www.MonoCounty.org](http://www.MonoCounty.org)



Cover photo: South Lake © Tondie Garcia Padelesky  
Inside photo: Conway Summit © Moose Peterson

## CALIFORNIA'S EASTERN SIERRA

# FALL COLOR GUIDE & MAP



INYO AND MONO COUNTIES

## Annual Fall Events in Mono and Inyo Counties

### SEPTEMBER

#### Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair

Bishop, Labor Day weekend

#### Mammoth Bluegrass Festival

Mammoth Lakes, Labor Day weekend

#### Founder's Day Celebrations

Bridgeport, Labor Day weekend

#### Top of the Hill Classic Car Show

Tom's Place, Labor Day weekend

#### Millpond Music Festival

Bishop

#### Ambush at the Lake Fall Fishing Derby

Convict Lake Resort

#### High Sierra Fall Century Ride and Mammoth Kamikaze Bike Games

Mammoth Lakes

#### Hop 'n' Sage Harvest Festival

Mammoth Lakes

#### Tioga Pass Run

Lee Vining

#### Mark Twain Days

Lee Vining

#### Ghosts of the Sagebrush Tour

Lee Vining

#### Fly Fishing Faire

Mono County

#### Oktoberfest

Mammoth Lakes

### OCTOBER

#### Fall Colors Car Show

Bishop

#### Lone Pine Film Festival

Lone Pine

#### Deer Hunter BBQ

Walker / Coleville

#### June Lake Autumn Beer Festival

June Lake

#### Halloween Festivities

Mammoth Lakes, Tom's Place and June Lake's Heidelberg Inn

For more information on events, please visit websites listed on the back panel.

**Welcome to Fall: The Best in America's West** Our natural landscape in the Eastern Sierra, where rugged granite canyons are carved by rushing streams and framed by an azure sky, offers a spellbinding contrast of colors during autumn — golden, crimson and orange aspen and cottonwoods as far as the eye can see. The best time to see this spectacular array is generally mid-September to mid-October. When you know where to go to see the best fall colors and what activities are in store (using this guide), you're sure to agree with GORP.com's rating of the High Sierra as **No. 2 for Fall Colors in the U.S.A.** Continue reading for more about how our warm days and cool evenings are not only ideal for brilliant color —they're also wonderful for hiking, horseback riding, fishing, mountain biking and unwinding.

# CALIFORNIA'S EASTERN SIERRA FALL COLOR GUIDE

## 1 Big Pine Canyon

**Scenic drive:** Heading west on Glacier Lodge Road, the journey starts in scrub and sage, winding its way from the valley floor up Big Pine Creek until the road ends near the old Glacier Lodge (now re-built after a fire). Traveling from 4,000 to 8,000 feet (1,219 to 2,438 m) brings foliage steadily into view along the road. Aspen, cottonwood and willows hug the sides of the creek and canyon walls. **Hiking:** Hikers who choose to go farther up the canyon are rewarded with grand alpine scenery and views of the Palisade Glacier, the southernmost glacier in North America. **Resource/Contact:** Bishop Chamber of Commerce, 1-760-873-8405.

## 2 City of Bishop

**Scenic drive:** Take one of several roads that lead off US 395 eastward to the Owens River, where large stands of cottonwood grace the valley floor with brilliant gold. **Point of interest:** Travel just north of Bishop for a taste of Owens Valley history at the Laws Railroad Museum. **Resource/Contact:** Bishop Chamber of Commerce, 1-760-873-8405.

## 3 Bishop Creek

**Scenic drive:** The canyon along Bishop Creek climbs 6,000 feet (1,828 m) to access the rugged scenery of four high elevation lakes. Just 20 minutes from Bishop, Lake Sabrina, South Lake, North Lake and Intake II offer gorgeous views of surrounding 13,000' (3,962 m) peaks dusted with snow for even more contrasting beauty. **Popular activities:** Hike around Lake Sabrina, fish out of Lake Sabrina Boat Landing, or see it all from horseback with a professional pack outfit. **Resource/Contact:** Bishop Chamber of Commerce, 1-760-873-8405.

## 4 Buttermilk Country

**Scenic drive:** Along the way to the higher canyons via Highway 168 lies the Buttermilk Country, a beautiful place to soak up sun among giant boulders and rock formations. Dozens of unpaved roads zigzag throughout this world famous rock climbing destination, where stands of aspen cluster around streams. "The Buttermilks" were named during the 1800s when ranchers from the north brought their goat milk to sell to Bishop residents; the bumpy road turned their wares into buttermilk. **Resource/Contact:** Bishop Chamber of Commerce, 1-760-873-8405.

## 5 Round Valley

**Scenic drive:** Tour this ranching and agricultural area by car for awesome views of Wheeler Crest, Mt. Tom and Bishop Creek Canyon. Round Valley's huge cottonwoods and poplars hold their fall colors well into the season. Side trips include Pine Creek Canyon and Lower Rock Creek road, both located along fast-moving streams where hiking trails are available. **Resource/Contact:** Bishop Chamber of Commerce, 1-760-873-8405.

## 6 Lower Rock Creek

Lower Rock Creek is an action-packed canyon where mountain biking, hiking and road biking are popular activities along winding creekside trails. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 7 Rock Creek Canyon

**Scenic drive:** The nine-mile road (14.5 k) that slices through this glacier-carved canyon is lined by aspen stands, campgrounds, rustic lodges and footpaths, making it one of the best-loved autumn drives in California. **Hiking:** At the road's end, hikers trek past lake after lake along the popular Little Lakes Valley Trail. Pie in the Sky Café offers delicious après-hike treats. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 8 McGee Creek Canyon

Best observed on foot, the trailhead to the Beaver Pond follows McGee Creek which is lined with brilliant aspen groves. **Popular activities:** Trail rides and overnight pack trips are available with McGee Creek Pack Station. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 9 Convict Lake

Convict Lake's deep blue trout-filled waters are lined with aspens and shrubs making an off-photographed, postcard-perfect scene. The lake is easily accessible by car, and the gentle hiking trail that circles the lake's circumference provides one of fall's most popular excursions for families. **Popular activities:** Boats and kayaks are available at the marina and the pack station offers horseback riding. Enjoy delicious cuisine at the Restaurant at Convict Lake. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 10 Mammoth Lakes

During fall, Mammoth Lakes brims with glowing leaves. Here are some top spots - **Sherwin Creek/Mammoth Creek:** Check out natural solitude at the Sherwin Creek camping area and hiking trails, accessible by a dirt road off Sherwin Creek Road. **Mammoth Lakes Basin:** Relax in the setting of five renowned fishing lakes just minutes from the center of town. Various hiking trails allow for quick elevation gain over the basin. **Mammoth Scenic Loop:** A wonderful scenic drive with the option for an easy side trip to Inyo Craters. **Reds Meadow:** When you're in the mood for a full day excursion, Reds Meadow is a must-see with Devils Postpile National Monument, Rainbow Falls and the San Joaquin River. **Resource/Contact:** Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center, a designated California Welcome Center, 1-888-466-2666

## 11 June Lake Loop

**Scenic drive:** Beautiful all year round and especially in fall, the loop first passes the shores of June Lake and the town's charming main street. Gull Lake is followed by Silver Lake and Grant Lake. **Hiking:** Try the easy, family-friendly Gull Lake Trail; or the moderate Rush Creek Trail with incredible views; or the short, colorful hike to spectacular Parker Lake. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 12 Lee Vining Canyon

**Scenic drive:** Highway 120 is a dramatic, rugged canyon with the world-famous Tioga Pass and Yosemite National Park's east gateway at the top. **Hiking:** Ride the Saddlebag Lake Ferry to hike Twenty Lakes Basin trail; or visit the Tufa Reserve at Mono Lake, a sanctuary for millions of migrating birds. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 13 Lundy Canyon

**Scenic drive:** A scenic fall drive, Lundy Canyon ends at a popular hiking trail. **Hiking:** With a starting-off point in the midst of thick aspen grove, the trail climbs above Mill Creek to tiered sparkling lakes and the cascading Lundy Falls. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 14 Virginia Lakes

**Scenic drive:** The aspen-lined road follows Virginia Creek up the canyon, where the Virginia Lakes Basin includes eight lakes within two miles (3.2 k). **Hiking:** With options to connect to Green Creek, the trail offers lake-after-lake views, aspen-lined creeks and dramatic mountain vistas. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 15 Conway Summit

Easily viewed from US 395, Conway Summit in fall is a multi-layered canvas of autumn color. Located at 8,900 feet (2,713 m) between Bridgeport and Lee Vining, the Mono Lake vista is definitely worth a stop at the pull-out. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 20 Walker River Canyon

## 16 Bodie State Historic Park

Once the wildest town in the West, Bodie is now the West's largest unrestored ghost town. While there is some fall color in the outlying hills, the rich, "Wild West" history is where the real color is found! **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 17 Green Creek

**Scenic drive:** Just two miles (3.2 k) before the town of Bridgeport, Green Creek Road takes you approximately eight miles to the campground and hiking trailhead, where you'll enjoy views of beautiful meadows and canyon walls spattered with color. **Popular activities:** Visit the small, pretty fishing lake Dynamo Pond, which was originally built in the 1890s to serve as a water supply for a hydroelectric plant to provide electricity to Bodie. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 18 Twin Lakes

**Scenic drive:** Travel west of Bridgeport along Twin Lakes Road through expansive ranch lands. With views of the Sawtooth Ridge, the lakes' shimmering blue contrasts with bright aspens and cottonwood that line both shores. **Popular activities:** The Twin Lakes Recreation Area is home to facilities that host some of the best hiking, camping, fishing and boating in the High Sierra. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 19 Sonora Pass

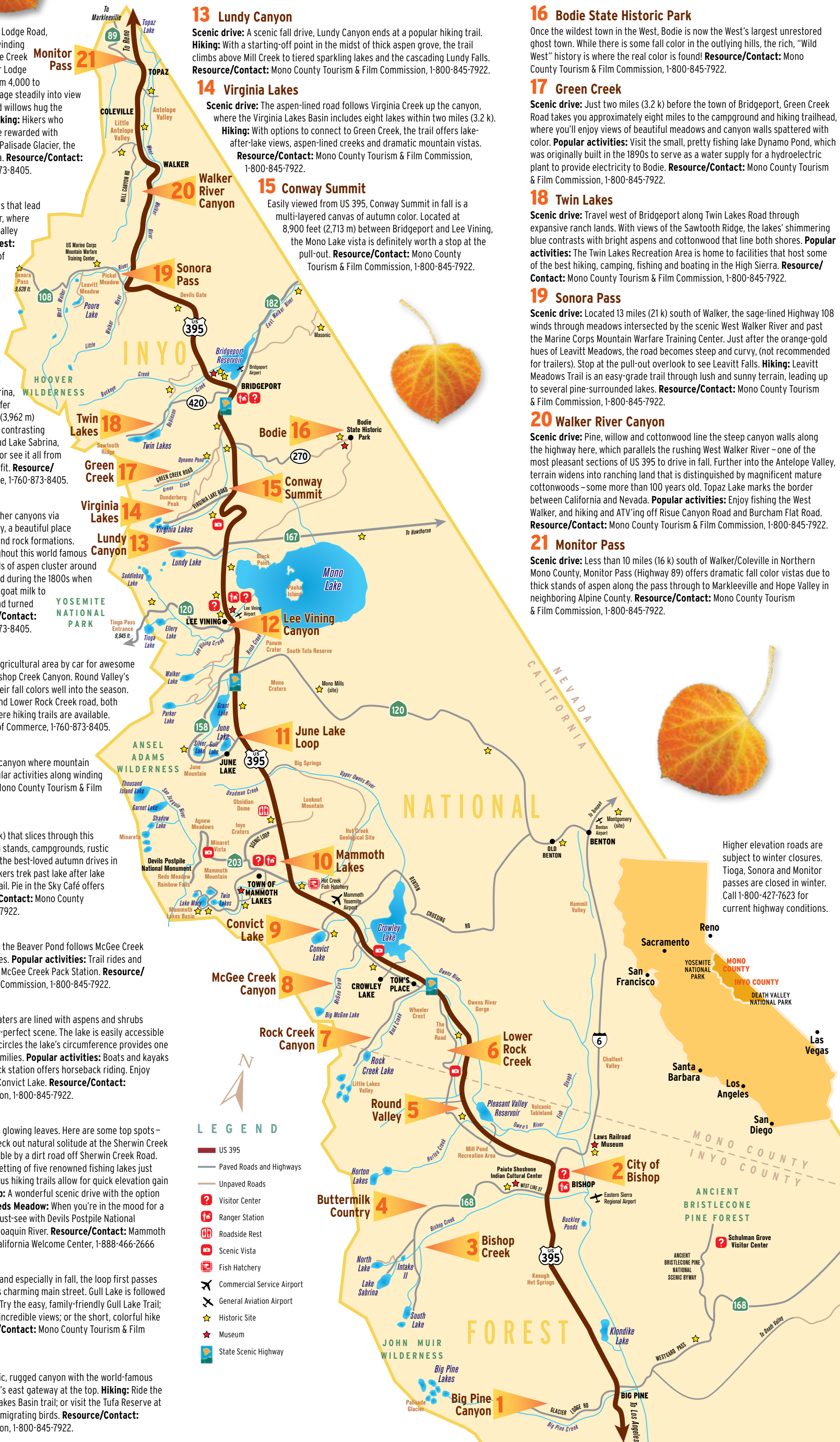
**Scenic drive:** Located 13 miles (21 k) south of Walker, the sage-lined Highway 108 winds through meadows intersected by the scenic West Walker River and past the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. Just after the orange-gold hues of Leavitt Meadows, the road becomes steep and curvy, (not recommended for trailers). Stop at the pull-out overlook to see Leavitt Falls. **Hiking:** Leavitt Meadows Trail is an easy-grade trail through lush and sunny terrain, leading up to several pine-surrounded lakes. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 20 Walker River Canyon

**Scenic drive:** Pine, willow and cottonwood line the steep canyon walls along the highway here, which parallels the rushing West Walker River - one of the most pleasant sections of US 395 to drive in fall. Further into the Antelope Valley, terrain widens into ranching land that is distinguished by magnificent mature cottonwoods - some more than 100 years old. Topaz Lake marks the border between California and Nevada. **Popular activities:** Enjoy fishing the West Walker, and hiking and ATV'ing off Risue Canyon Road and Burcham Flat Road. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.

## 21 Monitor Pass

**Scenic drive:** Less than 10 miles (16 k) south of Walker/Coleville in Northern Mono County, Monitor Pass (Highway 89) offers dramatic fall color vistas due to thick stands of aspen along the pass through to Markleeville and Hope Valley in neighboring Alpine County. **Resource/Contact:** Mono County Tourism & Film Commission, 1-800-845-7922.



Higher elevation roads are subject to winter closures. Tioga, Sonora and Monitor passes are closed in winter. Call 1-800-427-7623 for current highway conditions.

- LEGEND**
- US 395
  - Paved Roads and Highways
  - Unpaved Roads
  - Visitor Center
  - Ranger Station
  - Roadside Rest
  - Scenic Vista
  - Fish Hatchery
  - Commercial Service Airport
  - General Aviation Airport
  - Historic Site
  - Museum
  - State Scenic Highway