

Foliage

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No. 7: Door County, Wisconsin

Wisconsin's best fall foliage can often be found in Door County. Leaves reach their peak of color between late September and mid-October, when visitors from around the country come to drive its tree-lined roads or hike its trails.

No. 6: Taos, New Mexico

There's no shortage of leaf peeping opportunities in and around Taos, starting with a drive along the High Road to Taos or the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway. The town makes an excellent base for autumn adventure as well, from biking along the West Rim Trail on the Rio Grande River or hiking Williams Lake Trail.

No. 5: Ozark Mountain Region, Arkansas

A variety of different tree species, including maple, hickory, sycamore and oak, paint the landscape of the Arkansas Ozarks in warm fall colors each September

and October. This hilly landscape attracts leaf peepers who want to get outdoors for an autumn hike in the mountains.

No. 4: Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Autumn is one of the most popular times to visit the Smoky Mountains, thanks in large part to the spectacular fall foliage and cool temperatures. Gatlinburg travelers have their choice of several aerial tramways and chair lifts for taking in a bird's-eye view of the landscape before or after a trip into Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

No. 3: Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania

The Pocono Mountains are ablaze with hues of red, orange and yellow come autumn, thanks to the area's 127 species of indigenous trees, plants and shrubs. Leaf peepers can hop in the car for a scenic cruise along Route 507 near Lake Wallenpaupack or climb aboard a fall foliage train.

No. 2: Upper Peninsula, Michigan

Just about the entire Upper Peninsula puts on a display of fall color that peaks during the last two weeks

of September and the first week of October. A favorite fall experience for leaf peepers is the drive along M-26 along the shores of Lake Roland and past the trees of Copper Country State Forest.

No. 1: White Mountains, New Hampshire

The annual display of fall color in the White Mountains of New Hampshire typically takes place each September and October, attracting millions of visitors from around the globe. One of the best places to take it all in is along the 34-mile Kancamagus Highway as it cuts through White Mountain National Forest.



A bridge over the Buffalo River in Arkansas shot in the peak of the Fall season. GETTY IMAGES

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BLUE ZONES PROJECT®

Journaling helps relieve stress and enhance well-being

By Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida and guest contribution with Lisa Gruenloh

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One of the Blue Zones Project Power 9® principles is Downshift. Following this principle can help reverse disease by finding a stress-relieving strategy that works for you.

For anyone with a pen and paper, journaling is one of the easiest and most effective ways to Downshift.

Lisa Gruenloh, a certified professional coach and lifelong journal writer, founded Purpose Journey® and Purpose Journal to help people activate their unique values, strengths and sense of purpose to live their best lives.

She says taking a quiet moment or two each day for reflective writing can lead to personal growth, deeper meaning and greater fulfillment.

"Journaling is so effective in helping us find clarity," she says. "It's a place to get all of our thoughts and feelings out of our head and onto the page so we can live more mindfully."

Thoughtful introspection also strengthens our capacity to relieve stress and cultivate resilience."

BENEFITS OF JOURNALING

1. Reduce stress and anxiety

Journaling is our own private outlet for identifying, processing and understanding our emotions. Life gets busy and we often are unaware of much of what we are thinking and feeling. That can impact our sense of inner peace.

"When journaling by hand, it really slows us down, because we think faster than we can write," Gruenloh, a certified emotional intelligence coach, says. "It's important to take a break from external stimuli and pay attention to what's happening on the inside."

Gruenloh said people tend to avoid emotional pain at all costs, which can lead to suffering. When we are not in touch with our thoughts, feelings and beliefs it is difficult to uncover the root causes of our stress and anxiety.

2. Increase our self-awareness

When we journal daily, we can see patterns in our thinking, feeling and behavior. This can reveal things about what we want to "be, do, experience and contribute," Gruenloh says.

"When you write down how you're spending your day, ask yourself if you're really living the life you want to have," Gruenloh said. "The ultimate purpose of journaling is to grow ourselves and enhance our life experience - and hopefully that of others."



As we get clear about who we want to be and how we want our lives to look and feel, a regular journaling practice can help us map out a vision with actionable steps. Then we can hold ourselves accountable to that vision and approach life from a higher perspective of purpose and meaning - more evidence-based indicators of well-being.



3. Harness our inner wisdom

Journaling is a great way to solve problems and navigate challenging circumstances.

When addressing a challenge, journal writing allows us to creatively consider a multitude of possibilities that align with our values and goals, she advises. If you're trying to make a decision you can outline options on paper with pros and cons to gain insight and clarity.

"These days we are inundated with complicated, often confusing, information and external opinions, making it all the more important to access the inner wisdom and intuitive knowing each of us possesses," Gruenloh says.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Gruenloh describes morning and evening as her "sacred bookends of the day" and the most important times for getting centered.

She recommends taking at least five minutes each morning to write down intentions for the day. It is helpful to consider questions such as "How can I make a difference today?" and "What character strengths do I want to activate to help deal with anxieties and be at my best?"

Journaling at night can focus on purposeful reflection and letting go of the day's disappointments with a sense of hope. This can lead to more restful sleep. Gruenloh says to think about gratitude, such as meaningful connections made with people that day or nice surprises, to end the day on a positive note.

Gruenloh also likes the idea of a "Five-Minute Free Flow" where you simply write, without lifting your pen, for five minutes. She says this can bring new ideas or thoughts to the surface because there was no agenda for the writing.

If you're looking for inspiration for your journal entry, find a

favorite quote and write about why that is meaningful to you.

Other types of journaling can include list making, letter writing, autobiographical writing, dream journaling and dialogues, among others.

Here are some tips to get started with journaling:

1. Commit to setting aside time for journaling
2. Be completely honest with yourself
3. Don't be concerned about your writing ability
4. Don't edit or censor your thoughts as they arise
5. Stay curious - write to discover rather than to report
6. Find ways to translate your insights into meaningful action

These and other journaling techniques and resources are available at Gruenloh's website www.purposejournal.com.

Blue Zones Project recently produced a series of videos with Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida that show how journaling can be incorporated into all Power 9® Principles. Access the videos at BlueZonesProjectSWFL.Eventbrite.com.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida's well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.