

## **Fall Colors in the Tetons**

Grand Teton National Park is a wonderful place to visit any time of year, but fall is especially magical for a number of reasons. Beautiful fall colors, wildlife, and few crowds make for a wonderful and relaxing time of year. Visitors often want to know when the fall occurs and when the peak for fall colors happens. In general, fall in the Tetons lasts from the beginning of September until about mid-October. But like all natural events, fall too depends on local climatic conditions. The amount of rainfall and the nighttime temperatures both play important roles in determining fall colors. While no one can accurately predict exact “peaks” of fall colors, in the Tetons, the third week has historically been about the peak week for fall colors. And of course, some years are better than others are! No matter when you come in the fall, the park holds many wonders to explore.

The Teton Range has large stands of deciduous trees whose leaves blaze mostly yellow and orange (and occasionally red) shades in the fall. Cottonwoods line the banks of the Snake River and other creeks in the area. Aspens are found on hillsides and scattered throughout the park’s moist areas. Numerous species of willows, as well as other shrubs, transform lake and canyon trails into yellow and red carpets in the fall.

Fall is also an important time for the deer species, whose annual rut (breeding season) takes place during this time. Male elk actively bugle to signal their dominance and attract females, an eerie sound that pierces early evenings. You may even witness a sparring match between two dominant male elk — truly an incredible sight to behold. The bull moose in the park are also actively searching for females as well and may at times spar for dominance too. Bears are actively searching for the berries and any other food source they can find, as they only have a few short weeks left to gain the additional fat they will need to survive hibernation. Since so much wildlife is active (and often aggressive) in the fall, please enjoy viewing them from your car, or a safe distance away (25 yards at least for most wildlife, and 100 yards for bears).