

Autumn Season

Fall, also known as autumn, is one of the four seasons in Iowa. It is from September through November. It is the transition from summer to winter. This will have shorter days and nights. One of the best indicators of autumn is the color change in tree leaves; they range from yellow to red to brown. During this time, animals begin to prepare for winter; they will grow thicker fur or store food for the upcoming winter.



Are you Ready for an Adventure?

Use the activities and supplies in this backpack to explore Otter Creek Lake & Park with your group. This backpack includes materials for up to 4 people in your group. When you're done, return the supplies and the backpack and clean up any activities you completed. Remember, the best way to keep our park clean is by leaving no trace!

Then, make plans to visit another park in one of Iowa's 99 counties! Can you visit them all? Get the full list at www.traveliowa.com/99parks.

Autumn Season Park-Pack Supplies:

- **Scavenger Hunt /Autumn Crossword Puzzle**
 - ✓ Pens
 - ✓ Activity sheets
- **Hiking Activities**
- **Crafts**
 - ✓ Paper
 - ✓ Crayons
 - ✓ Plastic spoon
 - ✓ Rubber band
 - ✓ Pom-poms
- **Recommended readings:**
 - ✓ *Antlers forever*
 - ✓ *Flecher and the falling leaves*
 - ✓ *The Audubon's Field Guide to North America Trees*
 - ✓ *Guide to Common Trees & Shrubs of Iowa*
 - ✓ *We're Going on a Leaf Hunt*
 - ✓ Tama Co. brochure

Caution

All activities included in this Park-Pack should be done under the supervision of an adult. To have an incredible nature adventure, don't forget to wear sunscreen and insect repellent. Check the forecast and make an emergency plan if necessary. Dress appropriately for the weather, especially during winter and summer, and do not put yourself (willingly) in any dangerous situation. Last, but not least, always respect our parks; one of the best ways to do so is by leaving no trace and picking up after yourself; also, don't forget to have lots of fun!

Beware



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Wild or yellow parsnip is a wild invasive plant from Europe/Asia. It contains a chemical in sap/juice (found in seeds, stems, leaves, and flowers). When exposed to sunlight, contact with the skin could cause localized skin burns and blisters.



Tut Underwood/SC Public Radio

Poison ivy contains an oil called urushiol, which some people might be allergic to. Touching any part of the plant can cause red, swollen skin, blisters, and severe itching. A saying to help identify this plant is "leaves of three, let it be."

AUTUMN SENSORY SCAVENGER HUNT

LISTEN FOR



LOOK FOR



FEEL



FEEL SAND

LOOK FOR PILE OF
LEAVES



FIND
ANIMAL
TRACKS



LOOK FOR TREE WITH
LEAST LEAVES



LOOK FOR AN
INSECT



FIND PLANT
WITH
DRIED
SEEDS



FIND A ROTTEN LOG

FIND A THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND
SQUIRREL



VISIT THE NATURE CENTER,
COME SEE THE EXHIBIT
ROOM!

PRACTICE LEAF/TREE MATCHING

1. Take a nice walk around Otter Creek Lake & Park look at the different trees, some have changed in color and some others such as pines and spruce trees have stayed the same.
2. Collect leaves that have fallen from trees and try to find their matching tree!
3. To help with tree identification use Guide to *Common Trees & Shrubs of Iowa*. This is included in your Park-Pack or online.

PRACTICE LEAF SORTING

1. As you walk around Otter Creek Lake & Park collect leaves that have fallen from trees.
2. When you stop for a rest, sort your collection.
 - Shape
 - Color
 - Size
 - Tree type

LEAF RUBBINGS

1. From previously gathered dry leaves, place them on a flat surface.
2. Place a sheet blank piece of paper on top of the leaf until you can see its shape.
3. Hold in place and color over the leaves.
4. Variations:
 - Make collages on a single sheet of paper using a variety of leaves and colors.
 - Create people or animals by arranging leaves in the desired shape (example in this folder).

NATURE LAUNCHER

Materials: pom-pom (or acorns), plastic spoon, sticks (2), rubber band or hair tie

1. **Find** two sticks, each 8-12 inches long. One stick must have a straight appearance and at least ½ inch thick. The other should be about 1 inch thick.
2. **Use** the rubber band to connect the end of the spoon to the straight stick. The spoon should be facing up.
3. **Wedge** the thicker stick between the straight stick and the spoon.
4. **To launch:**
 - Place one hand on the straight stick to steady the launcher. Place pom-pom (or acorn) on the spoon.
 - With one finger push the spoon down and let go to launch.
 - Why do pom-poms launch farther away than acorns? What adjustments can you make to your launcher to increase the distance the acorn flies?
5. **Safety tip:**
 - Adults should help support, create, and carefully supervise launchers.

HIKE A TRAIL

- **I spy-** One person chooses an object and gives clues until others guess the object.
- **I'm going on trip and bringing...** the first player answers, "Apple," the next player says, "I'm going on a trip and bringing an apple and binoculars." The next player must add something beginning with "C" and so on through the alphabet. The answers will probably get sillier as you go.
- **"How many"** questions- How many birds can we see? How many squirrels? How many streams have we crossed? How many steps until the log up ahead? How many ponds are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park? How many trails are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park?
- **Tree Huggers-**This activity is like musical chairs but with built-in tree identification. One person serves as the "Tree Master." As you're hiking the Tree Master calls out the name of a tree (oak, for example). Everyone then runs and hugs an oak tree. The last one to run and hug an oak tree is out. Continue until only one person remains. The last person will be the new Tree Master.