


Fall Foliage Tour Lake County Ohio



Driving tour of Lake County's Natural Features sponsored by Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District and Lake County Visitor's Bureau.

Along the road

Stream Signs and Watersheds

This tour takes you through three different watersheds in Lake County. Along the drive, you may notice signs at stream crossings. These are a Lake SWCD project to help people become more familiar with their watershed. Each set of signs gives the stream name and identifies the watershed it belongs to.

The West Side tour features the Chagrin River, which starts near Aurora in Portage County and works its way northward through various landscapes before meeting Lake Erie in Eastlake. Portions of both the main branch and East Branch are State-designated Scenic Rivers.

On the East Side tour, you will start out where the Grand River empties into Lake Erie. The mouth of the Grand River is still a working port. The rest of the tour will take you upstream into the State-designated Wild River portion of the Grand River. The last stop is the mouth of the Arcola Creek watershed. This is a small watershed that is a functioning estuary. Not only does water flow down the stream, but depending on lake conditions, it also flows back up the stream channel. This influx of nutrients from the lake makes the marsh an important habitat for young aquatic animals.

Nurseries

Lake County is known for its nursery land. Unique local soil types are well-suited to these crops, and it is not unusual to see a field of arborvitae or small maple trees. There are over 100 licensed nurseries in the county, and they are concentrated in a belt that runs from Willoughby to Madison. These operations produce field-grown and container stock that is then shipped throughout Greater Cleveland and much of the country. Even though Lake County is the smallest county in the state, and much of it is urbanized, it always one of the highest-ranked counties in terms of total income from agriculture. Many of these nurseries are open to the public, and are worth a visit.

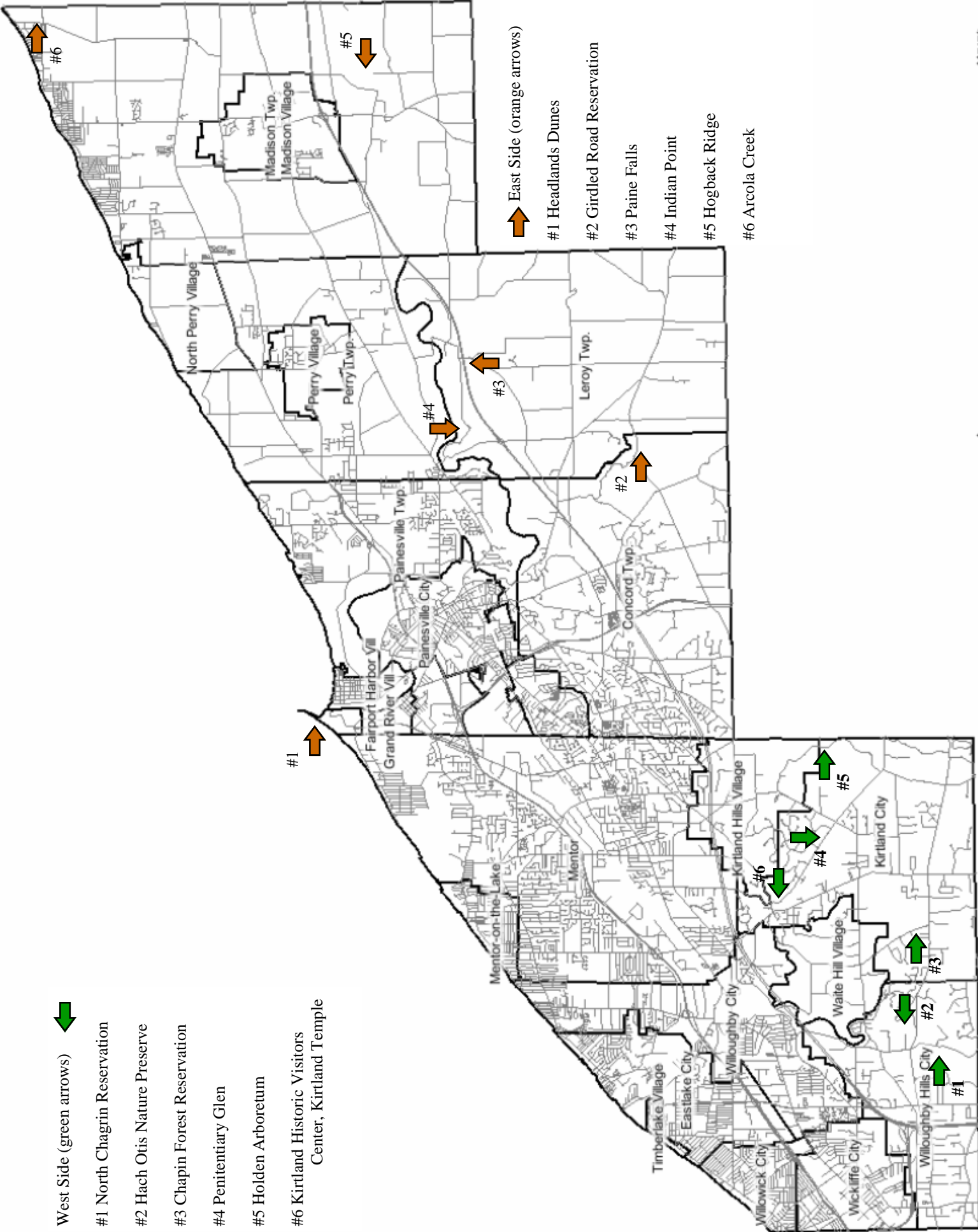
Wineries

Northeast Ohio has more wineries per square mile than any other region of the state. Over half of the wine grape acreage is clustered in the Grand River Valley near the shores of Lake Erie. This unique microclimate, tempered by lake breezes, allows local families to grow some of the best grapes in the nation. Look for fields of vines turning yellow in the autumn weather. Many of the wineries are open to the public and several also host small restaurants. An entire weekend could easily be spent just visiting the local wineries. You can continue your winery adventures throughout the year by participating in Lake Erie Wine and Vine Wine Trail events. For more information, go to www.ohiowines.org

Produce

Roadside produce stands abound throughout the county. This is the best way to get fresh, local products, from produce to apple cider to honey to preserves. Many of the farms are also open to tours, hayrides, and fall festivals, or you can pick your own produce.

Too much to see in a day? Make a weekend of it! Hotels and Bed and Breakfasts are throughout Lake County.



West Side (green arrows) ←

- #1 North Chagrin Reservation
- #2 Hach Otis Nature Preserve
- #3 Chapin Forest Reservation
- #4 Penitentiary Glen
- #5 Holden Arboretum
- #6 Kirtland Historic Visitors Center, Kirtland Temple

→ East Side (orange arrows)

- #1 Headlands Dunes
- #2 Girdled Road Reservation
- #3 Paine Falls
- #4 Indian Point
- #5 Hogback Ridge
- #6 Arcola Creek

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West Side

#1 North Chagrin Reservation, Cleveland Metroparks

North Chagrin Reservation has a combination of outdoor recreation areas and wildlife sanctuaries. The reservation includes a nature center and nature education building, as well as a number of trails and picnic areas. Sanctuary Marsh and Sunset Pond are both popular areas to observe waterfowl. An interesting feature of the reservation is Squire's Castle, built by F.B. Squire, one of the founders of Standard Oil Company. The castle is open for you to roam around freely.

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#2 Hach Otis State Nature Preserve

This 81-acre forested tract of land overlooks the beautiful Chagrin State Scenic River. The woods was originally donated to the Cleveland Bird Club (now the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland) by Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Hach, and by Harold T. Clard, a philanthropist who bought 56 acres of forest from Harrison G. Otis. Hach Otis was dedicated as a nature preserve in 1977. Wildlife sightings include pileated woodpeckers, great horned owls, barred owls, deer, and foxes. Walk along the North or South trails for scenic overlooks of the Chagrin River valley.

#3 Chapin Forest Reservation, Lake Metroparks

The 390 acres of Chapin Forest Reservation offer trails that wander through a mature woodland. The reservation is known for its distinctive rock formations as well as its majestic forests. The ledges of Sharon Conglomerate were formed about 300 million years ago, long before the glaciers came to Ohio. Take Lucky Stone trail to one of the best scenic overlooks in Lake County. On a clear day, you can see Lake Erie and the Cleveland skyline 18 miles away.

#4 Penitentiary Glen, Lake Metroparks

Relax and enjoy nearly 400 acres of field, forest, wetland, and gorge that provide homes for many beautiful plants and animals. Take advantage of the picnic area, stroll the trails, enjoy a spectacular view of the Penitentiary Glen Gorge from the deck as Stoney Brook continues to change it. Visit the gift shop or wildlife center.

#5 Holden Arboretum

Explore this 3,100 acre preserve of natural woodlands, horticultural collections, display gardens, ponds, fields, and ravines. Stroll the trails for a view of blazing fall colors. Seasonal attractions include the Butterfly Garden, the Prairie Garden, the Crabtree Collection, the Waterfowl Observation Blind, the Leaf Trail and the Native Areas Trail. There is an admission fee for this site.

#6 Kirtland Historic Visitor's Center and Kirtland Temple

See historical photos of the city, watch a short video about historic Kirtland, take a free guided tour, or stroll this quaint area on your own. Stop by the Kirtland Temple Visitor's Center to learn more about this historic structure, built by the Mormons in the 1830's. Take a free guided tour of all three floors of the temple, approximately 40 minutes.

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West Side Driving Directions

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Take Route 90 to the Route 91 exit and head south to Route 6, about 3/4 of a mile. Turn left onto Route 6 and continue east for about 1 mile. Turn right onto Route 174. Squire's Castle will be on the right about 1/2 mile south on Route 174. Look for the picnic area parking lot.

After Squire's Castle, turn left and head north on Route 174. Cross over Route 6 and take the next right onto Skyline Drive. Hach Otis State Nature Preserve will be at the end of this street.

Retrace your steps when leaving Hach Otis, by heading west on Skyline, and turning left onto 174. At Route 6, turn left and head east, over the Chagrin River, for about 2.5 miles to Hobart Road. Turn left on Hobart Road and follow it to Chapin Forest Reservation, which will be on your right.

After you visit Chapin Forest, head back to route 6 and turn left. Head east for about 3 miles to Sperry Road. Turn left on Sperry Road and take it about a mile to Kirtland-Chardon Road. Another left onto Kirtland-Chardon road will take you to Penitentiary Glen, about 1.5 miles on the left.

When leaving Penitentiary Glen, turn right onto Kirtland-Chardon Road and head back to Sperry Road. Turn left onto Sperry. The Holden Arboretum Visitors Center will be on your left in about 1.25 miles. There is an admission fee at Holden Arboretum.

For a scenic drive through the Arboretum, and along the East Branch of the Chagrin, turn left out of the arboretum parking lot. You will travel along the East Branch and cross over Pierson's Creek. Follow Sperry Road to the stop sign, turn right onto Booth Road. Take Booth Road to the end and turn left on to Baldwin Road. Follow Baldwin Road to Chillicothe Road and turn left. Continue straight onto Route 615. The East Branch is now on your left. Turn left onto Kirtland-Chardon Road to visit the Kirtland Historic District, which will be on the right.

Turn left out of the parking lot, and take Kirtland-Chardon road back to Route 615. Turn left on 615, then left again on Route 306. The Kirtland Temple and Visitor's Center will be on your right at the top of the hill.

To continue on to the East Side tour, take 306 north through Mentor to Route 2 and head east. Follow the East Side Driving Directions from there.

To return to I-90, also head north on Route 306

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East Side

#1 Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve

While not very large (25 acres) or heavily forested, this is not a site to be missed! Many of the plants growing here would normally be seen on the Atlantic coast. The beach grasses have all gone to seed, and roll gently in the breeze off the lake. This nature preserve is also getting bigger. The plants help to stabilize the sand dunes, and the breakwall protecting the harbor catches sand carried by lake currents. Take the time to walk out toward the lighthouse and view the mouth of the Grand River.

#2 Girdled Road Reservation, Lake Metroparks

A collection of rich forests, open fields, and lush wetlands awaits your arrival here. Many trails cross through this landscape, including a portion of the Buckeye Trail. The North Loop Trail traverses 1.3 miles of woodlands and is accessible to all. For those wanting a longer journey, there are numerous other trails that can take you clear across Aylworth Creek and to Route 608. Horses and mountain bikes are permitted in the southern part of the park. Be sure to read and follow all rules and regulations.

#3 Paine Falls, Lake Metroparks

Beautiful any time of year, Paine Falls is perhaps most spectacular in a blaze of fall colors. It is definitely worth the short walk to the overlook to see Paine Creek cascade over shelves of stone. At one time there was a small town clustered in this hollow, including a sawmill, tannery, iron forge, and an ashery. As forest resources became depleted, the residents moved on, leaving nature to reclaim the territory.

#4 Indian Point, Lake Metroparks

Seeley Road runs through this park, along Paine Creek and the Grand River. For the intrepid explorer in search of a higher vantage point, the Lookout Ridge Trail leaves from the upper parking lot and heads almost a mile into the woods. A series of steps takes you to the top of Indian Point. This was once the location of a Whittlesey Culture settlement and is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are several options for short walks down to the Grand River or Paine Creek.

#5 Hogback Ridge, Lake Metroparks

Take a step back in time at this stop. Early residents of Lake County crossed the Grand River here at a shallow ford, before bridges were in place. Old Emerson Road is now a trail in the park. Mill Creek flows into the Grand River near the western edge. These two valleys run parallel to each other, forming the feature for which the park was named. A half-mile loop trail takes you through the woods and there are short spurs to both the Grand River and Mill Creek.

#6 Arcola Creek, Lake Metroparks

This small stream in the extreme northeastern corner of Lake County is one of the few remaining estuaries on the south shores of Lake Erie. A short, level trail takes you to the mouth of the estuary, with an observation deck overlooking the marsh along the way. Arcola Creek is home to many rare plants, and is an important migratory bird habitat.

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East Side Driving Directions

Take Route 2 or I-90 to Route 44 north. Follow 44 north until it ends at Headlands Beach State Park. Enter the park and bear right, parking in the farthest lot to the east. There will be a trailhead sign for Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve.

Once you have had your fill of shifting sand and crashing waves, leave the park and head south on Route 44. South of I-90 and Auburn Road, turn left onto Girdled Road. Follow Girdled Road for about 5 miles. Girdled Road Reservation will be on your right.

Leave Girdled Road Reservation by turning right onto Girdled Road. It will join Route 86 in about 2 miles. Half a mile past that, turn left onto Brakeman Rd. Follow it north; at Leroy Center Rd., it will take a slight jog to the left and become Paine Rd. Continue north on Paine Rd to Paine Falls Metropark, which will be on your left.

Continue north on Paine Rd by turning left as you leave. You will pass under I-90, then turn left at the intersection. Seeley Rd is a gravel road that will take you along Paine Creek through Indian Point Metropark. There are several parking areas with different trails into the park.

Follow Seeley Rd. to its western end, and turn right onto Vrooman Rd. You will cross the bridge, and head up the hill. Turn right at the light, onto Route 84. Turn right again at the next intersection onto River Rd. This will take you along the northern bluff of the Grand River, clear to Route 528. Turn right onto Route 528 (Chardon-Madison Rd) and cross high above the Grand River. Take the next left onto Griswold Rd. and another left onto Emerson Rd. Emerson Rd. will end at Hogback Ridge Metropark.

Retrace your steps by heading south on Emerson Rd. and turning right on Griswold Rd. and right again on Route 528. Follow Route 528 through Madison to Route 20. Turn right onto Route 20 and follow it for about 2 miles to Dock Rd. Turn left onto Dock Rd. and follow it up to the lake. Arcola Creek Metropark will be on your right, a short walk to the lakeshore.

If you have a little more time to spend, you're already in wine country. Stop by one (or more) of the wineries that are located along the Grand River in Madison, Geneva, and Harpersfield. To return to the western end of the county, either follow Route 528 back to I-90, or follow Route 20 west to Route 2.

If you would like to start the West Side tour from this point, take I-90 West and follow the West Side directions.