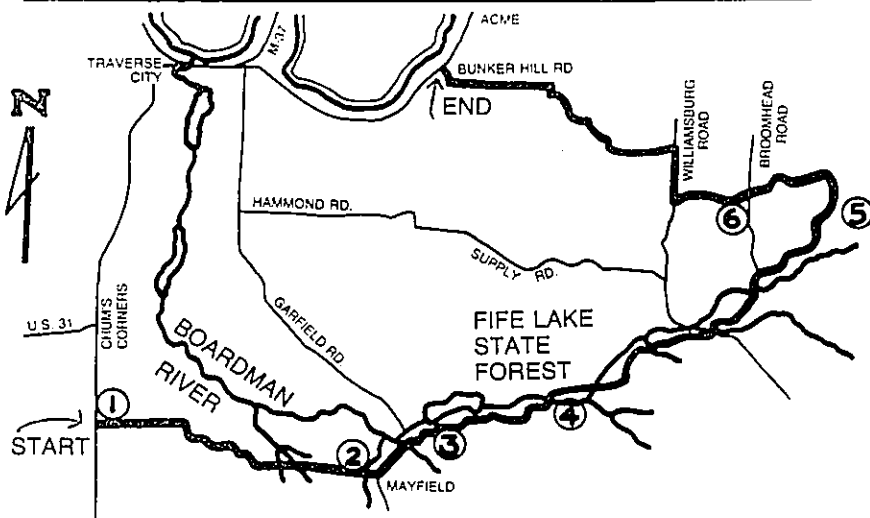


FALL COLOR TOUR



STOPS ON SCENIC DRIVE

1. Information Signs
2. Site of former Mayfield Mill
3. Brown's Dam Campground
4. Scheck's Place Campground
5. Pit Lake
6. Forest Inventory Plot

Trails can lead to colorful vistas

UNDERWOOD FARM MARKET

OPEN 9-6 DAILY



2½ miles out Center Road on Old Mission Peninsula from Traverse City, then right on McKinley Road. Phone (616) 947-8799.

By GORDON CHARLES
Record Eagle outdoor editor

Done any "two-tracking" lately? If not, you're really missing something because right now, at the height of hardwood color, the Grand Traverse Region has beauty that can't be beat.

All of us have at least a little bit of explorer in our make-up, yet we may not be quite adventuresome enough to don a backpack and go striding off into the unknown of the great north woods. Just about anyone, though, can get into the family car and go exploring some of the many miles of trail roads in this area.

State and national forest lands can be found in all directions from Traverse City. Many of these now-wild lands were once farmed by early settlers who soon found the soil was too poor to produce even average crops. In time, the plowed fields were deserted and became sand blows. Tax delinquent property frequently reverted to state ownership.

Much of the land was replanted with trees, while some areas just grew up naturally, producing a mixture of cover on the land. Brilliant autumn coloration of the maples, oaks, aspens and others is actually due to the poor soil quality. A wild tree, transplanted to richer soil or fertilized, will produce rather drab color when fall arrives.

While there is plenty to see in the way of autumn color along the major highways, it is the two-track explorers who discover the real bonanza of beauty. The same sandy soil which is responsible for the breathtaking fall color also makes for good trail roads that dry out quickly after hard rains. In a few places a motorist

may encounter mud holes but by using common sense, there is no need to fear getting stuck.

The smart driver will, however, be prepared in the event of such a happening because it can occur. Any two-tracker with forethought will have a jack in the car, along with a couple pieces of old, rough carpet. These can be laid down under wheels which might be stuck, after being jacked up, and will provide enough traction to escape. If such aid is lacking, poking brush under the tires will often be sufficient.

Real two-trackers, who often drive where others fear to venture, usually have winches on the front of their vehicles. Getting stuck is a rarity for them since they can winch themselves out of trouble.

For the newcomer to two-tracking, though, sticking to the marked trails is a good idea. There are many color tours laid out through some of the most colorful autumn vistas. Maps are available at the offices of the Department of Natural Resources, and often at chambers of commerce and motels. Inquiries will turn up more than you will probably have time to explore.

One of the most popular fall drives begins in Traverse City. Follow US-31 and M-37 south about eight miles or so to the Blair Townhall, near the Fairgrounds. Turn east there and continue on the marked trail which will ultimately take you to Mayfield and the Boardman River Valley, on up to the Williamsburg area, then back via Acme to your beginning point. It is a trip of slightly over 33 miles, just right for slow driving with plenty of opportunity to view the beauties of autumn.