



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## BEST KEPT SECRET: FALL FOLIAGE IN OUR BACKYARD

PATTY RITCHIE October 11, 2011

If you have ever taken a boat ride along the shores of Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River's Thousand Islands section this time of year, you understand why people from around the world travel to upstate New York to see the grand show that Mother Nature offers each fall.

While the Adirondack Mountains get the lion's share of attention as the place to watch fall foliage, our own region's Tug Hill Plateau and our majestic river and lake offer a lesser known, but just as majestic view of the changing of the seasons.

Those of us who have enjoyed an October boat cruise on the St. Lawrence River or Lake Ontario have discovered that Northern and Central New York's best kept tourist secret each fall is our own autumn display of colorful foliage that is unrivaled anywhere else in the world.

From Waddington to Oswego, you'll find the trees near peak with 70 percent color change, featuring bright yellow, orange and red leaves. In the St. Lawrence Valley, the color change is at midpoint with yellows and orange shades just beginning to be joined by reds.

You can track the colors and plan your trip on-line by visiting I Love New York's Fall Foliage Report for weekly updates to help you track the changing of the colors across the state.

While our summer season serves as our peak tourist time in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, fall offers visitors breath taking views, less crowded accommodations and off peak prices compared to the better known mountainous regions of the state whose prices rise as the colors change.

With over \$433 million generated by tourism across the three county region, an Oxford Economics study estimates almost 8,000 jobs in the three counties are dependent on our tourism industry.

Jefferson County benefits to the tune of a \$217 million a year tourism industry that provides 4,000 jobs.

St. Lawrence County enjoys \$106 million generated by its tourism industry that supports 1,799 jobs.

Oswego County's 700 tourism dependent businesses depend on \$106 million in visitor spending that supports 2,467 jobs.

Together, tourism represents almost half a billion dollars of our regional economy. Without those visitors shopping at our stores, staying at our hotels, eating at our restaurants and checking out our fishing spots, wineries, state parks and camping areas, the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center study estimated unemployment could rise by 20 percent.

So hop in your car and give yourself a treat by enjoying the spectacular show Mother Nature has created to signal the end of summer and the arrival of fall at its most colorful.