BREAKING OUT



A photographer captures the fall color show in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. File

Asheville No. 1 spot for leaf peepers

Lower elevations reaching peak color

By Casey Blake
ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Carolina leaf lovers in search of the nation's best fall foliage won't have to look far this year. Apparently, it's right here in Asheville.

TripAdvisor.com, a travel site parented by Expedia.com, recently named Asheville as the No. 1 place to see fall foliage. The top 10 list is based on a TripAdvisor survey of more than 2,300 travelers.

Calling Asheville's scenery "spectacular" for views found along drives such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, the city beat out second-place Boston of New England foliage fame. In third place was nearby Gatlinburg, Tenn., just over the Great Smoky Mountains from Western North Carolina.

Although leaf color at elevations of 6,000 feet or higher reached its peak earlier this month, Catherine Morton of Grandfather Mountain said leaf peepers at lower elevations are just getting the big show.

"It's always a mystery until the temperatures get cooler exactly how brilliant the color will be," Morton said. "Either way, it's always a miracle."

Along with the leaves, cool mountain weather and Asheville-area events bring plenty of fall color, Morton said. "The cider stands, events and cool temperatures ... certainly make it feel like fall."