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Author: Lisa A. Beach

Fall into Fun Across the Country

With summer barely behind us, fall swings into full gear with Oktoberfests, corn mazes, state fairs, football games and more. Grab a glass of apple cider and get your calendar out to pencil in some fall fun in the next few weeks. Take your pick:

- Dude, try a ranch holiday this fall and learn to lasso, round up cattle or go rafting. Amidst stunning scenery you'll find dude ranches (offering a hands-on experience) and guest ranches (offering more family-oriented fun). Visit Conde Naste Traveler's online magazine (www.cntraveller.com) for top picks in Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Oregon, Arizona, and Idaho.
- Are you ready for some football? Pro football season officially kicked off September 8, so score some tickets and head to a stadium. If you can't attend a pro game, go to a college or high school game and cheer your head off.
- If you're a hockey fan, you're probably in serious withdrawal from last year's NHL lockout that cancelled the season. But NHL raises the curtain on its 2005-06 season on October 5, with all 30 clubs in action. Throw a "Welcome Back to the Ice" party for your hockey-loving friends to commemorate the busiest playing date in the NHL's 88-year history.
- For a truly a-maze-ing time, visit a cornfield mazes for an inexpensive, family-friendly day of outdoor fun. Depending on the maze, you might find your way out of the cornfield labyrinth with clues or treasure maps. And you'll often find add-on activities such as play areas, petting zoos, hay-rides, and more. To locate a maze near you, visit www.cornfieldmaze.com.
- Get back to nature by hiking through a pristine park. According to *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, some of the Top 10 national parks include Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (Wisconsin), Great Basin National Park (Nevada), Chaco Culture National Historical Park (New Mexico), Crater Lake National Park (Oregon) and Point Reyes National Seashore (California).
- Looking for a little more man-made excitement than the call of the wild? State fairs abound when the temperatures start to drop. If you crave cotton candy, Tilt-a-Whirl, blue-ribbon recipes and folk dancing, check out these state fairs: Alabama (Oct. 21-30), Arkansas (Oct. 7-16), Arizona (Oct. 13-30), Louisiana (Oct. 27- Nov. 6), Mississippi (Oct. 5-16), North Carolina (Oct. 14-23), South Carolina (Oct. 6-16) and Texas (Sept. 30-Oct. 23).
- On the cultural front, here's a sampling of festivals around the country: Kansas City Renaissance Festival (Sept. 3-Oct. 16, Bonner Springs, Kansas), Appalachian Heritage Festival (Sept. 30-Oct. 1, Shepherdstown, West Virginia), Apple Festival (Oct. 2, Queens County Farm Museum, Floral Park, NY), Glacier Jazz Stampede (Oct. 6-12, Kalispell, Montana), San Jose Oktoberfest (Oct. 7, San Jose, California), Ossahatchee Indian Festival and Pow Wow, (Oct. 14-16, Hamilton, Georgia), and Autumn Historic Folklife Festival (Oct. 15-16, Hannibal, Missouri). To locate a festival near you, go to www.festivals.com or aolsvc.digitalcity.com.