

Minnesota Fall Colors in the Brainerd Lakes Area

PILLSBURY STATE FOREST TOUR:

From Highway 371 and 210 intersection in Brainerd, go north approximately five miles to County Road 77 and travel west. County Road 77 takes you west to the south shore of Gull Lake. (For more attractions along the first portion of this route, refer to the first part of our [Gull Lake](#) tour.)

As you continue along the west side of Gull Lake, you notice the Pillsbury State forest, the oldest State forest in Minnesota. Not only is this forest a habitat for a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, it is also a residence for many horse riding trails, campsites, and picnic areas. Many of the alternate roads that lead into the Pillsbury State Forest also lead to hiking trails where you can stretch your legs while getting a closer look at the magnificent fall colors and maybe even glimpse some wildlife that is unique to the area.

Pillsbury Forest Road is the southern-most forest road along County Road 77. The Pillsbury Forest Road offers three separate intersections to minimum maintenance forest roads that take you deeper into the forest (some may be gated). Stump Lake is located about halfway between County Road 77 and Walter E. Stark Assembly Area and Horse Campground. For those who love Historic Sites, an 1886 Homestead is located along the horse trail that crosses the Pillsbury Forest Road on the northern end of Stump Lake. Shortly after reaching Walter E. Stark Assembly Area, Pillsbury Forest Road merges with 33rd Avenue, which will take you south and eventually lead back to Highway 210 near Pillager. (If you'd like to continue on your Fall Tour drive, you'll want to turn around and go back to County Road 77 instead of continuing on to 33rd Avenue.)

Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of Pillsbury Forest Road (if you're traveling along County Road 77), you'll see the intersection for Beauty Lake Forest Road. In addition to Beauty Lake, three other lakes are visible from Beauty Lake Road: Green Bass Lake, Dead Horse Lake, and Long Lake. Two minimum maintenance forest roads adjoin with Beauty Lake Road. One of these is referred to as Walkingstick Road, and leads to Shafer Lake and the Shafer Lake Day-Use Area. If you stay on Beauty Lake Forest Road, you will eventually meet up with County Road 1.

If you take County Road 1 north 0.8 miles, you will see Orchard Park Lane. Orchard Park Lane will around to the northwest edge of Rock Lake, where the Rock Lake Campground is found. Here, you'll also find a small hiking trail and a day-use area that includes a picnic area, swimming area, and boat access.

After enjoying a nice break at the Rock Lake Campground, head back to County Road 77 by backtracking Orchard Park Lane to County Road 1, South to Beauty Lake Forest Road and east to Country Road 77; or switch it up by, instead, taking County Road 1 north to County Road 15.

County Road 15 will take you East, past Shafer Lake. You'll meet up with Pinewood Drive shortly thereafter. Pinewood Drive will take you south to County Road 77, where you'll be able to continue your trek north around Gull Lake. You could, alternately, continue on County Road 15 straight East past Pinewood Drive to County Road 77, approximately 3 miles North of the intersection of (southern) Pinewood Drive and County Road 77.

Going East at the intersection of County Roads 77 and 15 will take you along West Gull Tower Road to Gull Lake. The Old-Growth Forest, a historic site, is located along West Gull Tower Road.

Once you reach County Road 77, you may continue East along the south end of Gull Lake to get back to Highway 371 or continue West to join up with the [Gull Lake](#) tour, which will take you along the North and East edges of Gull Lake, through Sherwood Forest and, eventually, back to Highway 371 in Nisswa, MN.

