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The Ultimate Fall Hiking Bucket List

LEAF LOVERS WELCOME

There's something special about getting outdoors and hiking this time of year. The air is crisp, the bugs are (mostly) gone, and the trees show off their fiery red, yellow, and orange leaves. Whether you're a seasoned trekker or just looking to enjoy leaf-peeping and fresh air, fall is the ultimate season to hit the trails. And the U.S. is brimming with stunning places to do just that.

ASPEN, COLORADO

Come September, the mountainsides come alive with beautiful golden aspen leaves, hence the name! Hikes like the Cathedral Lake Trail or Maroon Bells Scenic Loop offer beautiful views of alpine lakes with gorgeous foliage and snow-dusted peaks. Just be sure to bring layers — mountain weather can be moody!

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE

If you want coastal charm mixed with fall colors, Acadia National Park delivers. Right along Maine's gorgeous coastline, this park is full of color and stunning ocean views — a rare combination!

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS, TENNESSEE AND NORTH CAROLINA

The Smoky Mountains are a fall favorite known for their endless ridgelines and misty valleys. Mid-to-late October is peak foliage season, especially along trails like Alum Cave or Clingmans Dome.



COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE, OREGON

If you're looking for some of the most gorgeous waterfalls you've ever seen, the Columbia River Gorge is the spot! Trails like Multnomah Falls or Eagle Creek offer pretty fall colors, mossy cliffs, and cascading waterfalls.

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK, VIRGINIA

Just a short drive from Washington, D.C., Shenandoah National Park is a hidden gem for fall hiking. The Dark Hollow Falls Trail offers a challenging climb with stunning views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. For something gentler, the Stony Man Trail is perfect for families and still offers breathtaking scenery. With over 500 miles of trails, Shenandoah is a fall favorite on the East Coast.



Trenches and Treasures A Legacy Unearthed

If one word could sum up what the next three months will mean for many of our lives, it would be "family."

In addition to kicking off another holiday season (if you count Halloween), October is National Family History Month. As a history buff, I've always been interested in where my ancestors came from and how they helped shape my family today. What were they like? What did they go through in life? What would it be like to talk to them? Would I get along with them? These are just a few of the questions that drive my curiosity.

Despite my focus on history, I have very few family heirlooms. My mother has an old wardrobe from the 1800s that belonged to my great-grandmother, and we have a few old photographs. Fortunately, a recent addition to this collection sheds extraordinary light on the Mottley family's time in one of our nation's most critical eras.

The American Civil War has always held a particular fascination for me. I grew up in Hanover County, Virginia, where it seems that every corner was a battlefield during the war. My old neighborhood was part of the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek. Evidence of this time in history is still very tangible, and I distinctly remember playing in the trenches as a kid.

Recently, I Googled "Mottley" and "Civil War" just to see what would pop up. Instantly, a fascinating artifact popped up: a powder horn (an animal horn used to hold gunpowder) owned by "J. L. Mottley." I initially didn't recognize "J.L.," but I noted that the last name contained two t's, which indicated that he may have been related to me.

Reading the caption that accompanied the photo, I realized that "J.L." was John Lewis Mottley, my great-great-grandfather's brother. J.L. was a farmer drafted to fight for the Confederacy under

General George Pickett. Fortunately, he survived the conflict. The last battle he fought was actually the Battle of Sailer's Creek, which was near his own farm in Amelia County, Virginia.

I immediately emailed the seller. It turned out he lived in my hometown of Richmond. That weekend, I met with him, confirmed the item's authenticity, and bought it on the spot. It now sits in my office.

When I first discovered John Lewis's powder horn online, I found it curious that such an accessory would have been used during the Civil War, when more sophisticated weaponry was surely available. When I met with the dealer, he explained that soldiers drafted to serve during the Civil War often used whatever firearms they had at home. This fact speaks volumes about how our ancestors typically made the most of whatever limited means they had at their disposal.

Another interesting fact: John Lewis is buried just five spaces away from my father at our family burial ground, the John Lewis Mottley Family Cemetery in Amelia County.

Discovering and procuring John Lewis's powder horn was a pleasant surprise, and I loved having the opportunity to add greater color and context to what I had already known about my family history. I'll be sure to keep my eyes open for more treasures down the line.

This month, take some time to learn more about your past generations and how your ancestors may have impacted the greater world. You may be amazed by how extraordinary their lives truly were.

—Kevin Mottley



"Dr. Robert Cobbs Mottley and John Lewis Mottley, Their Descendants and Ancestral Background" by Bessie M. Mottley (1966)



Empty Nest, Fresh Start

SMART HOUSING MOVES FOR YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

Fall is a season of fresh starts for teenagers and young adults as they begin college or take a new job. But it brings different challenges for many parents, who may feel abandoned and forgotten in an empty house.

A well-known clinical psychologist once said that your child's life will be filled with fresh experiences, and it's good if yours is, too! Figuring out what to do with all that space is a promising place to begin. Of course, there is no one right answer, but here are some factors to consider as you determine your best path forward.

LIFESTYLE

The letting-go stage often stirs deeper questions of personal identity for parents. How do you see your life as an empty-nester changing? Do you cherish the comfort and familiarity of your current home and community and enjoy having peace, quiet, and extra space to welcome guests? Or have you been yearning for the freedom to travel without the responsibility of maintaining your house? If so, moving to a smaller home or remodeling your current one may best serve your needs.



HEALTH

No one wants to think about potential declines in their health, but laying the groundwork now to meet changing needs can avert untold hassles and expenses in the future. Is your current home easy to navigate? Is it free of stairs, narrow hallways, or small bathrooms? If such obstacles would make it difficult for you to live there as you grow older, renovating your home or moving to an age-appropriate residence may be wise.

FINANCES

Any decision about keeping, remodeling, or moving out of your present home involves financial tradeoffs. Staying in place allows you to build more equity in your home, but it bypasses the opportunity to cash out and invest the money elsewhere. Remodeling or updating your home imposes upfront costs but could increase its future value. And while trading down to a smaller home may reduce your utility, insurance, tax, and mortgage payments, it also may impose other unforeseen costs, such as homeowners' association fees.

As these tradeoffs show, every empty-nester's dreams and circumstances are different. Only you can decide the right moves for you!

HURT, HOPE, AND HEALING

A MOMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

This is the time of year when holidays and special events start filling our calendars, but one day in particular has the power to change how you feel about yourself and the world around you.

World Mental Health Day, which is celebrated annually on Oct. 10, is a time worthy of more attention. No matter who we are or how we live, we all deserve the gift of mental peace and clarity.

I represent people who've suffered catastrophic injuries and/or have been in horrific accidents. Whether their conditions manifest as anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, or depression, I frequently encounter and represent folks who are suffering from some sort of mental injury. In some cases, traumatic brain injuries exacerbate their mental health struggles.

I wouldn't be human if there weren't times when working with these clients and hearing their stories over the years really pierced and stung me. Ultimately, my responsibility as an attorney is to be a source of positivity and encouragement to help find peace and justice after what they've endured. In my work, developing a good bedside manner is just as crucial as studying legal documents. My professional life has taught me patience, good listening skills, empathy, and flexibility. I'm grateful to have the daily opportunity to refine these crafts in and out of the office.

Of course, I do all I can to focus on *my* mental health as well. Above all, I strive to leave work at the office. My home is my sanctuary, so I try not to allow work to creep into my thoughts and activities when I'm there. Naturally, it's sometimes easier said than done, but I've found that going for a long walk (in my case, about 4 miles) usually does the trick. When my feet hit my usual



walking path and my blood starts flowing, it's almost impossible to focus on whatever problem has been on my mind before I left the house. Best of all, when my mind returns to that problem once I'm back home, I'm mentally and physically refreshed enough to think, **"This isn't a problem after all. You've got this; you'll be fine."**

This World Mental Health Day, consider ways to improve your outlook. And remember, no matter how hard things get, there's always a way forward and people who are available and ready to help you.

—Kevin Mottley



Spirits and Saints

The Surprising History of Halloween

Many people know how to celebrate Halloween traditionally every year, but the *why* behind the spookiest day of the year has roots in facts more fascinating than any horror-themed fiction.

Recently, I researched the roots of modern-day Halloween, and what I discovered was more colorful than even the costumes I'll be seeing on the other side of my front door in a few days. For one thing, the holiday dates back more than *two millennia*. Back then, people in northern France, the United Kingdom, and Ireland marked Nov. 1 as the start of the year. This date was chosen to coincide with the end of the harvest season and the beginning of wintertime.

Many celebrants added a touch of spirituality to the mix. They believed that on the preceding day, Oct. 31, the dead could temporarily return to the living world as ghosts. In anticipation of resurrected spirits walking among them, the living adorned costumes to protect themselves from any bad vibes associated with their ghoulish guests. This meeting between the living and the dead became known as Samhain.

Interestingly, belief in God, not ghosts, eventually led Samhain to evolve into the holiday we enjoy today. In the 8th century, a cultural shift toward Christianity prompted Pope Gregory III to designate Nov. 1 as All Saints' Day to encourage people to pay tribute to significant religious leaders. Because Oct. 31 was the day before this newly established holy day (or "hallow day," as people knew it in those days), it became known as All Hallows' Eve, a phrase later shortened to Halloween in most people's vocabulary.

So, there you have it: the history of Halloween in a nutshell (perhaps more appropriately, in a case of candy corn). Have fun this year ... and remember that not *all* ghosts you encounter will be in costume.

—Kevin Mottley

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Lentil and Sweet Potato Stew

This delicious dish will keep your family warm, full, and happy as the weather cools down.

- INGREDIENTS** *Inspired by EatYourselfSkinny.com*
- 1 onion, diced
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1 tbsp olive oil
 - 2 cups green lentils, rinsed
 - 1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed
 - 6 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 1/2 tsp turmeric
 - 1/4 tsp cumin
 - 1/2 tsp black pepper
 - 1/2 tsp salt
 - Fresh parsley
- DIRECTIONS**
1. In a large pot over medium heat, sauté onion and garlic in olive oil for about 3 minutes.
 2. Add all other ingredients except for salt and parsley.
 3. Turn the heat to high until it is boiling, then reduce it to low and simmer uncovered for 20–30 minutes, or until the lentils are cooked through.
 4. Remove pot from heat and stir in salt. Top with parsley and enjoy!