

Sumacs, sugar maples in splendor this week

By **TODD EPP**

For the Argus Leader

SISSETON — This weekend and next should be the best time to see the blazing reds, oranges, and yellows in the hollows near Sisseton.

Sumacs are about at their reddest. The sugar maples are red-orange. The ash and cottonwoods are changing to yellows and browns.

The Coteau des Prairies, or Hills of the Prairie, is an annual fall attraction near Sisseton in South Dakota's northeast corner because of the color in the tree leaves.

One place to start your color tour is at the Nicollet Tower and Interpretive Center, 3½ miles west of Sisseton on Highway 10. Here, you can climb a 7-foot observation tower and get a commanding view of Long Hollow below and to the north. The view is unique since you

normally see fall colors at ground level, not above.

After stopping at the tower, head to Sica Hollow State Park. If the weekend is good, expect a traffic jam at the parking area. While a mob of fellow leafers can diminish the experience, it's easy to park and get off alone for a hike.

The Trail of the Spirits is listed in the National Registry of Hiking Trails. It winds a half-mile through the floor of Sica Hollow on the south side of the coteau. Babbling streams and canopies of yellow-leaves will be your companions.

A more strenuous hike is the north Skyline Trail west of the parking lot. Here you'll climb up the side of a coteau, through the dense vegetation and past red sumac and plump, wild plums. Toward the crown of the coteau,

the forest gives way to native grasses and wildflowers. The view here is what woodland Indians or Dakota Indians saw centuries ago.

You might have to share the Skyline Trail with horses. At Knights Canyon, the next ridge north of Sica Hollow, you can go on a trail ride with Art Borgen, owner of Canyon Ranch Trail Rides. You would be experiencing the region much as French map maker and explorer Joseph Nicollet did in the 1830s. Most of the area never has been cultivated.

To conclude your trip, you might visit Windy Mound. Nicollet recorded its Dakota name, Ipahah, or "high hill." It is south of the state line near Veblen on Marshall County Road 5. When Nicollet came upon the 2,006-foot hill, it reminded him of the French Alps.



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A view from the Nicollet Tower shows the beautiful autumn colors in Long Hollow. The fall foliage is in the Coteau des Prairies or Hills of the Prairie near Sisseton.

