SHENZHEN’S semi-permanent summer climate is nice, but some of us crave a real autumn experience complete with mountains decked out in full autumnal glory, golden leaves falling from trees, flying around like dancing butterflies, and covering walkways with a gilded carpet. China National Geography once traveled the country from Arxan in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to Jiuzhaigou Valley in Sichuan, crossing mountains, lakes, valleys, deserts, forests, wetlands, prairies, urban areas and countryside, with the sole purpose of identifying the most captivating autumn spots in China. Here we list some of them for you:

**Striking scenery at Lake Kanas**

September means the beginning of the golden season for Lake Kanas, which nestles deep in the forests and mountains of Altay near the very northern tip of Xinjiang.

The lake is 1,374 meters above sea level with the deepest point at 188.5 meters. In autumn, it presents a picturesque landscape of forests in a riot of colors with gold, red, blue and green, making for sights that excite the senses.

White birch, red pines and firs around the lake together with white snow adorning mountain tops all reflect on the serene lake surface, providing a rare angle for breathtaking photos. A blending of prairies, mountains, forests, plains, glaciers and wetlands make this sacred area a holy land for shutterbugs and nature aficionados.

In autumn, Lake Kanas presents a picturesque landscape of forests in a riot of colors with gold, red, blue and green hues.

**Golden Autumn in China (I)**

**Best fall foliage period in Beijing**

“In autumn, I must stay in Beijing. I don’t know what paradise looks like, but from my life experience, Beijing in autumn is paradise,” said celebrated Chinese writer Lao She in one of his books. Autumn is the best season for Beijing travel, not only because it has tenderly warm sunshine and brilliant blue skies, but also because of the gorgeous scenery. Without the disturbance of summer heat and winter frigidity, people can enjoy a most comfortable atmosphere in which to breathe in crisp air and enjoy all kinds of outdoor activities.

Climbing the Great Wall and feasting your eyes on the spectacular scenery of red leaves in Beijing’s mountainous areas are two must-dos when visiting the capitol in autumn. The Badaling section of the Great Wall, looking like a huge dragon crawling over peaks of rich colors, will definitely wow you.

Baiwangshan Forest Park, 3 kilometers north of the famous Summer Palace, also offers an excellent view of enchanting red leaves in autumn. Situated in Haidian District, this park occupies an area of more than 130 hectares, with some 95 percent covered by various plants and trees.

In autumn on the mountain is beautifully decorated with splendid red foliage. The common smoke tree is the main species, while the intoxicating red leaves on the torch trees resemble countless burning lanterns on the mountain.

**Temple Tales**

**Caishen, the god of wealth**

A statue of Caishen, the god of wealth, at the Tianhou Temple in Chian, Shenzhen. James Baquet

FROM time to time, one sees images of one of the more popular gods in today’s China: Caishen is the god of wealth. I first encountered him at the very first temple I found on my own, the Tianhou Temple in Chian, Shenzhen.

Usually seen holding a gold ingot properly called a taed (but informally called a shoe), he may take many forms, as Caishen is a generic term covering a variety of figures. His image is most popular at the Chinese New Year, when people invoke his help to ensure prosperity for the coming year. The “prosperity” function means he is often confused with the generous Mile Fo — the Laughing Buddha — among others.

As Zhao Gongming, an accomplished Taoist immortal, the Wealth God may be seen riding a black tiger and carrying a golden rod. (He could also have an iron rod that can turn iron into gold, a symbol of his power to create wealth.) This Zhao was a powerful man, who could control weather (affecting crops, a source of wealth), exterminate plagues and subdue evil spirits (both of which threaten wealth), and command a military force which would enforce his decrees.

Some people celebrate the fifth day of the first lunar month as his birthday. They offer him various foodstuffs — fish, meat, dumplings and fruit — as well as light incense and fire crackers. Some believe he is a Muslim, though, so a meat offering must not include pork. This may be a vestigial memory of the return of Admiral Zheng He’s treasure ships during the reign of the Ming Emperor Yong Le.

One source I read says that a new temple has been built to Caishen in Xian just in the last decade or so.