

BEST OF THE WEST 20+14: OUR GREATEST RIVERS AND GEAR

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

COWBOYS INDIANS

MAY/JUNE 2014

Liam Neeson

Gets His Outlaw On
In Seth MacFarlane's
Latest Comedy

Summer In Aspen

Mississippi Rodeo

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BEST OF THE WEST

WATERWAYS OF THE WEST

20 + 14

RIVER ESSENTIALS

WESTERN RIVERS

Just follow the river. In the annals of Western history, has there been a more fateful, all-purpose imperative?

Of course we've followed. For direction, sustenance, adventure, and a million pithy metaphors associated with fly-fishing alone.

Rivers are the greatest roads the West has ever known—and, yes, that includes train tracks and the Butterfield Overland mail route. We could've managed (and did for a long time) without I-80 and Route 66, but not without those primal waterways.

BIG CEDAR LODGE, OASIS IN THE OZARKS

EDITOR'S PICK



Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris has created an oasis in the Ozarks a stone's throw from where he grew up selling homemade bait in the back of his father's liquor store. And he'll be the first to admit that turning the property into a four-star resort has been a labor of love for both him and his wife, Jeanie—whom Morris credits with finding the off-the-beaten-track location in the first place.

The story begins in the 1920s, when a business entrepreneur and a railroad executive decided to buy 300 forested acres in the Ozark Mountains south of Branson, Missouri. There they built a couple of lavish vacation homes overlooking the Long Creek tributary of the White River. Over the years, the property changed hands several times before it was purchased in 1947 by a hotel operator, who added a swimming pool, stable, and lodge, and marketed the place as Devil's Pool Ranch Resort.

A decade later, the White River was dammed to form Table

Rock Lake. But despite the added attraction of the new body of water, the property would again founder. Until one day in 1987 when Jeanie was perusing the For Sale section of the *Springfield News-Leader* and a small listing for a 62-unit motel caught her eye.

It was the beginning of a grand adventure that would culminate in the development of an 800-acre luxury vacation resort that includes three lodges, 81 cabins, five pools, a golf course, a dinner yacht, and a sandy beach with an Airstream ice cream parlor—all set on one of the best bass fishing lakes in the country. Bring the family and settle in for a week of swimming, fishing, and stand-up paddle board yoga, or head to nearby Branson for plenty of entertainment options. Either way, the gorgeously appointed accommodations—designed with input from Jeanie and daughter Julie Manna—will make you want to do what June Carter Cash did when she got to Big Cedar Lodge: Move right in and stay a good long while. —Kathy Wise

TRAIL GUIDE

Gear up in Springfield:

Chances are if you're headed to Big Cedar Lodge, you'll either fly into or drive through Springfield, Missouri. So be sure to stop at PFI Western Store, the exclusive home

of BootDaddy boots and a Westernwear shopping paradise, stocked with everything from tack to toppers. www.pfiwestern.com

Ten minutes away at the flagship Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, you'll get lost

in 500,000 square feet of the latest gear and more. Visit one of the two in-store museums: the NRA National Sporting Arms Museum and the Archery Hall of Fame & Museum. www.basspro.com

★ "Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature"

See a show in Branson:

There's a reason it's called the Live Music Capital of the World. Catch The Texas Tenors at The Starlite Theatre or the half-dozen harmonizing brothers of Six at the Mickey Gilley Theatre. www.bransonshows.com

Shop Branson Landing:

This pedestrian waterfront development stretches more than a mile along Lake Taneycomo, anchored by a Bass Pro Shop and Belk department store. www.bransonlanding.com

Take a tour at College of the Ozarks:

You can't miss the catchy signs that graphically pronounce this small liberal

arts college "Hard Work U." And they mean it. The private college requires every full-time student to work on campus in return for free tuition. Take a self-guided tour of the working water-wheel mill, fruitcake and jelly kitchen, and weaving studio, and then have lunch at the student-run restaurant at The Keeter Center, which serves some of the best food in town. www.cofo.edu, www.keetercenter.edu

Visit Dogwood Canyon Nature Park:

You can walk, bike, horseback ride, and take a tram through this 10,000-acre preserve. Don't forget to pack your fishing pole and fish for rainbow trout in the miles of crystal-clear, spring-fed streams. www.dogwoodcanyon.org
