

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES

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Served With A Side of Luxury*

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MERRIMENT IN MISSOURI

*Johnny Morris' Sportsman's Paradise Delivers
Magnificent Surroundings and Midwestern Hospitality
Served With A Side of Luxury*

By: Carrie Bell





Bass Pro Shops founder/CEO Johnny Morris may have begun building his empire selling lures out of his dad's Missouri liquor store, but when the idea to open a fishing camp as an incentive for customers and employees led him to a sprawling piece of Ozark wilderness 30 years ago; the tackle tycoon began thinking about luxury in addition to lures and lines. The result, Big Cedar Lodge – an award-winning resort and the accidental hotelier's dream come to life.

A four-season masterpiece perched above Table Rock Lake just 15 minutes Branson, the 4,600-acre lodge encompasses places to stay, play and eat as well as three chapels, a nature park, spa, and a museum boasting the largest private collection of native American artifacts. In designing his dream retreat, Morris stuck with what worked at his shops – that is, giving passion and imagination the lead while appealing to his base of fishing enthusiasts and achieving wow factor through outdoors-themed decor, grand water features (the winding road to reception forces drivers to playfully ford two



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shallow “riverbeds”), craftsman-esque chandeliers and a whole truckload of taxidermy. It is a place that is simultaneously sylvan and sybaritic, equal parts titillating and tranquil. Given the idyllic wonderland it is today, it’s difficult to imagine that the paradise Morris created was once wild land whose main attractions included a ‘haunted’ (according to local legend) swimming hole known as Devil’s Pool and a bevy of abandoned – albeit historic – buildings overrun by unruly vegetation.

Be it big-city staples like almond milk lattes and green juice at the adorable Truman Café, the first public golf course designed by Tiger Woods (coming in 2019) or a line of craft moonshine; Morris is constantly brainstorming ways to delight guests with their lake-cation. Case in point Fun Mountain, one of the resort’s newest attractions designed to deliver indoor entertainment for kids of all ages through 50,000 square feet of bowling, arcade, laser tag, climbing walls, ropes course, billiards and bumper cars.



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Guests to Big Cedar may choose from a handful of accommodation types including log cabins, refined rustic cottages or well-appointed rooms offering anything from vintage Adirondack-style to swanky ridge-top luxury. Lodge accommodations feature upscale elements like stained-glass windows, soaking tubs, beamed ceilings and wood-burning stone hearths while some standalone units feature decks with grills and full kitchens. Other options include the original 1920's caretaker's cottage with its wet bar, movie screen and shower with waterfall edge, a Spa Cottage where you can meditate on a glass floor hovering above the stream below or the piece de resistance - a two-story, Civil War era cabin reassembled by Amish craftsmen to create an oasis that seems to float at the highest point in the county.

As to dining options, whether you're craving killer cornbread topped with lardons, Ozark specialties like smoked trout or prime rib, Mexican in a 150-year-old barn or dishes that put a luxurious





takes on comfort food (seafood pot pie for the win); Big Cedar visitors are in no danger of leaving hungry. After dinner uncork a fine vintage, sip some whiskey or savor a cigar at Top Of The Rock's cellar or settle in for an evening of Cowboy Clay's crooning at Buzzard Bar.

Topping it off is Big Cedar Lodge's 18,000 square-foot spa where a full array of massages, facials and other covetable treatments can be found within a sprawling space that includes a candlelit rock grotto featuring both an ice room and heated pool with underwater jetted lounges.

Appealing though it may be from the inside, Big Cedar Lodge truly shines when you head outside. With its panoply of alfresco activities, it's as if the bait billionaire has transformed Missouri from the 'Show Me State' into the 'Show-Me A Good Time' State. There's beach volleyball, basketball, waterskiing and lake activities including paddle boarding, four different shooting disciplines (at the Outdoor Academy & Amphitheater which is also home to the occasional concerts or rodeo), giant





lawn games, hiking, barre and spinning classes. Golf, including the mini variety, is available on multiple courses all of which play brilliantly off the area's unique geography and an additional, 13-hole option from Gary Player is expected to open later this year. Guests can celebrate the great outdoors with picnics, bonfires, nature walks and stargazing sessions or take a trip to Dogwood Canyon Nature Park where horseback riding, Segway tours, biking, and a menagerie of elk, longhorns, and bison await. And of course, fishing - the sport that started it all - is available with a plethora of options that allow anglers to cast from shore, from a boat, with a professional, or even with a bow. Indeed, whether you want peace and quiet or a piece of the action, Big Cedar Lodge brings the best of Missouri to life. ➔

Located in Riddgedale, Missouri in the heart of the Ozarks; Big Cedar Lodge is serviced by Branson's commercial airports as well as a smattering of regional airports able to accommodate private craft. For more details including reservation information, please visit www.bigcedar.com