

Southern Living®

The Soul of Summer

The
Perfect
Lazy
Lunch

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One of the resort's rustic log cabins

CHECK IN

Big Cedar Lodge

A nature lover's paradise in the heart of Missouri's Ozark Mountains

TUCKED BENEATH towering pines in the Ozark Mountains, Big Cedar Lodge sits on land that was once accessible only by horseback. So it should come as no surprise that the resort, the brainchild of Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, is a haven for anyone who loves the outdoors. From WaveRunners and trail rides to wooden boats and horse-drawn carriages, the resort offers adventure and tranquility in equal measure.

The Look & Feel
About 10 miles from the tourist-packed sprawl of Branson, Missouri, the secluded Big Cedar Lodge resort trades in mountain charm.



Cedar-plank salmon from Osage Restaurant

BIG CEDAR LODGE

612 Devil's Pool Road, Ridgedale, Missouri. Rooms from \$99; bigcedar.com



Chapel of the Ozarks at Top of the Rock

Adirondack-style hunting lodges and rustic yet luxe log cabins blend into the wooded hollow—800 idyllic acres teeming with trickling rivers, fishing ponds, and hiking trails. And with a roster of activities ranging from bonfires and board games to fishing and horseshoes, it's

like you're at summer camp all year long.

The Service

The attentive and friendly staff strives to ensure your stay is comfortable. Shuttles ferry guests around the massive property from one activity to the next. And every night at turndown, you can expect to enjoy fresh *pepparkakor*—traditional Swedish spice cookies made with ginger and molasses.

The Sleeping Quarters

Rooms are spread across the property in three ridge-side lodges, eight knotty-pine cottages, and



LEFT: Aboard the 45-foot *Lady Liberty* luxury yacht



Hole No. 9 on Big Cedar's golf course, designed by Jack Nicklaus



The Devil's Pool Bridge over Table Rock Lake

around 80 rustic log cabins. We especially like the cabins (from \$185), featuring exposed logs, wood-burning fireplaces on a wall of river rocks, and luxurious down feather beds. For a room with a view, book one of the cabins along the south edge of the 50,000-acre Table Rock Lake. Order a Backyard Basket, which includes all the meat you need (chicken, burgers,

steaks, or hotdogs) to spend an evening grilling on your deck overlooking the water.

The Food & Drink

Options abound, such as Truman Coffee & Café (a Tudor-style cottage with sop-worthy biscuits and gravy), Buzzard Bar (burgers, barbecue, and bar bites), and Devil's Pool Restaurant (home-style Southern cookin'). But for rustic American fare with

BOTTOM: COURTESY PRIMLAND

nearly 360-degree views of the Ozark Mountains, visit Osage Restaurant at Top of the Rock. We recommend the braised short ribs on a bed of jalapeño cheese grits with maple-thyme roasted carrots.

The Extras

Across the Big Cedar resort, it's all about the great outdoors. At Bent Hook Marina & Market, take to the lake with rented

BOTTOM: COURTESY PURSELL FARMS

WaveRunners and wakeboards or cast out with a guide to learn angling techniques. Glide across the lake on *Goin' Jessi*, a vintage-style wooden Chris-Craft named for Waylon Jennings' wife, or climb aboard Big Cedar's 45-foot yacht, *Lady Liberty*, for a sunset cruise. And at Cedar Mountain Stables, wagon rides culminate with campfire sing-alongs and s'mores. 🍷

OTHER HOTELS WE LOVE

TWO MORE RUSTIC, OUTDOORSY FAVORITES

Primland

A quiet luxury resort on 12,000 acres in Virginia's pristine Blue Ridge Mountains. Rooms from \$295; primland.com



Pursell Farms

A pastoral community of cabins and cottages on a three-generations-old farm and golf course in Alabama. Rooms from \$203; pursellfarms.com

