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Big Cedar's new Ozarks National named Best New Public Golf Course in America

*Johnny Morris' vision for nature golf earns rave reviews
from highly-respected golf publication*



RIDGEDALE, Missouri (December 5, 2019) – *Golf Digest* has named the highly anticipated fourth course at [Big Cedar Lodge](#), Ozarks National, as the Best New Public Course in America in the publication's annual rankings list. Since opening to the public in April, Ozarks National has generated a groundswell of interest from guests and taken the golf industry by storm.



The course, designed by the renowned firm of Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore in partnership with noted conservationist Johnny Morris, is a dream-come-true for nature lovers and golfers of all skill levels, drawing rave reviews and taking its place as the latest offering in the blossoming golf destination resort.

The honor is particularly notable considering the elite field of other new celebrated courses, including the redesign of the No. 4 Course at the storied Pinehurst Resort & Country Club in North Carolina coming in second, and the South Course at the highly regarded Arcadia Bluffs Golf Club in Michigan ranking third.

“Our entire team put a tremendous amount of energy into [Ozarks National](#) and we are honored to be recognized as this year’s best new public course,” said Johnny Morris, noted conservationist and founder of Bass Pro Shops and Big Cedar Lodge. “It was so inspiring to work alongside Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, who share our passion for connecting people to nature through the game of golf and other outdoor recreation activities.”

One of the oldest and most respected publications in the sport, *Golf Digest* determines its highly coveted rankings based on a panel of more than 1,700 high-level golfers with handicaps under 10. Panelists praised the course, which they anonymously evaluated based on a list of criteria that included the range of shots, challenge level, layout variety and scenic beauty:

- *“Stunning views from nearly every hole, minimalist teeing areas, very large greens, most with collection areas, some with false fronts.”*
- *“I was totally blown away by Ozarks National...It was as good as any course anywhere.”*
- *“The setting is incredible and the commitment to a golf destination is eye-popping.”*
- *“As a Missourian, I’ve been waiting for one day to have a course that belongs in the discussion for the Top 100, and I think we may now have one.”*
- *“The course runs along the top of a ridge. We could see forever as we played.”*
- *“Nearly every hole gives a great view of the Ozark mountains, with skyline greens and nods to some Golden Age design principles.”*



Redefining Golf in the Ozarks

Morris joined forces with the Coore & Crenshaw firm to announce the Ozarks National project in 2015. Envisioned to redefine the perception of golf in the Ozarks, the new course serves as a gateway to the Ozarks National Forest, aligning with Johnny Morris' personal mission to inspire more people to connect with the great outdoors.

"This has been an incredible piece of land to work with and the vision behind the entire golf experience at Big Cedar Lodge fits perfectly into our approach to build natural golf courses that connect people to the local landscape," said Bill Coore, co-principal of Coore & Crenshaw, at the time of the announcement.

Ozarks National showcases golf in the manner in which it was intended, with nods to traditional Scottish-style golf. Measuring 7,036 yards from the back tees, the course represents the terrain of the Ozarks with incredible vistas and beautiful views. Designed to be environmentally friendly with conservation in mind, the 18-hole layout features challenging carries and a variety of visually appealing approach shots that are highlighted by native habitat.

The course also includes several signature creative features Morris is known for, such as a 400-foot wooden beam and plank bridge hand built by Amish craftsmen, which connects the tee box and fairway of the 13th hole that stands 60-feet above a flowing creek. The property used to be a dairy farm, with the "Stone House" greeting golfers at the midway point of their rounds. The house was built in the early 1900s, dating back to the farming days, and has never been moved.

"Believe me, when you get up on some of these plateaus, you can cast your eyes and see 40-50 miles," Crenshaw said at the time. "You can't do that in too many places in the United States. This is gorgeous. We want to showcase that beauty, and Johnny Morris has given us an unbelievable opportunity."

The beauty in the course came from the minimalist approach to the project, with Coore and Crenshaw making several visits with Morris to the site during construction, using the natural beauty of the land and letting the course conform to the property, not the other way around. When Ben Crenshaw came to visit for the official course opening early this year, his fondness for the final product was clear to see.

"Obviously when you look around, you have not only the holes that you're working on, but also the land around you, which for me is a big part of the atmosphere around you when you look off into the distance," Crenshaw said. "You know you're in the Ozarks, and now it was our job to compliment that, with the way that the holes fit together, and the directions they are going. We're very proud of the final piece here."

America's Next Great Golf Destination

The recognition adds to Big Cedar Lodge's list of growing resort and golf accolades. In September, *Golf Magazine* named Big Cedar Lodge, America's premier wilderness resort, as the No. 1 family golf resort in North America, as part of its Top 100 Resorts issue for 2019-2020. It was the most comprehensive review of elite destinations in North America, and the most expansive editorial project the publication has undertaken.

Soon, Morris and Tiger Woods will unveil Big Cedar's fifth golf course – [Payne's Valley](#), a 19-hole course built to showcase the region's natural beauty and to honor late, local golf legend Payne Stewart. It is the first public golf course in the U.S. by Woods and his firm, TGR Design. With Payne's Valley, Woods and Morris will offer a course where players of all skill levels will be able to enjoy the game with each other in the beautiful Ozark Mountain landscape with kid's tees located further down the fairways. The course will also feature a spectacular and breathtaking 19th hole affectionately known as Big Rock at Payne's Valley.

That course will join Ozarks National; Top of the Rock, a Jack Nicklaus-designed par-3 course in nearby Ridgedale, that features a seamless display of nature and golf at its finest, overlooking Table Rock Lake; the Buffalo Ridge Springs Course, designed by renowned architect Tom Fazio and bringing players in close contact with nature, native grasses and free-ranging North American bison from nearby Dogwood Canyon Nature Park; and the 13-hole Mountain Top course, designed by Gary Player and delivering unparalleled thrills for golfers passionate about nature and golf.

Currently, Morris and Big Cedar are working with Audubon to obtain Audubon Signature Sanctuary status, an environmental education and certification program for properties that follow comprehensive sustainable resource management principles. Johnny Morris achieved signature status with the Top of the Rock course 15 years ago, one of fewer than 100 courses in the world to earn the designation at the time. A resort-wide sanctuary status designation would be the only one of its kind to encompass all aspects of golf development and the greater development of Big Cedar Lodge.

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About Big Cedar Lodge

Located in the heart of Missouri's Ozark Mountains, [Big Cedar Lodge](#) is America's premier wilderness resort. A passion of Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, the 4,600-acre lakeside retreat connects families to the outdoors with a variety of nature-based experiences including fishing, boating, hiking, spa and wellness offerings, hosting 2.4 million guests annually. Signature attractions include Top of the Rock, home to world-class golf, dining, and entertainment; and Dogwood Canyon Nature Park, a 10,000-acre nonprofit wildlife nature park. Named "Number One Resort in the Midwest" by the readers of *Travel + Leisure*, the resort offers genuine Ozarks hospitality and a convenient location just south of Branson. Learn more at www.bigcedar.com.

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