## GolfChicago Travel 2019

## Big Cedar Leaves You Breathless

ocated deep within the Ozark Mountains of Missouri lies an unexpected destination that just might be the next big thing in golf. Big Cedar Lodge is a premier wilderness resort, stretching along the shores of Table Rock Lake, that has long been hailed as a world-class resort.

Inspired by a commitment to conservation, Johnny Morris, the founder of Bass Pro Shops, created Big Cedar Lodge to encourage visitors and their families to connect with the great outdoors. Within moments of entering the property, it is easy to see that nature was the muse behind the resort's design. A winding entry road takes you deep within the lush hills of the Ozarks, calling you to slow down and take in the beauty that surrounds, as the road travels over trickling water crossings and showcases stunning vistas. As you take your last turn, the scene opens to reveal the hidden oasis: secluded cabins tucked into the hillside, Adirondack

in the second

style lodges that blend seamlessly into their wooded backdrop, a charming chapel reminiscent of your grandparent's country church and a collection of restaurants and activities that are thoughtfully placed to not disrupt of the natural splendor of the land.

The captivating setting is only the beginning of what makes this luxury, rustic retreat so inviting. The amenities and attractions at Big Cedar Lodge have been artfully designed to ignite an excitement for nature within guests of all types. Every restaurant uses the beautiful lake views as its backdrop and every attraction incorporates natural elements, like birch trees that line the entry of the resort's 18,000 square-foot spa. Once you've settled into your room for the evening, you will enjoy natural touches like the crackle of a real wood-burning fireplace in your cabin and rustic décor. Some of the premier accommodations offer custom details like a glass floor with a

trickling stream below or an outdoor shower that, while private, showcases views of the lake.

But what does all of this have to do with golf? Founder Johnny Morris, along with some of the most legendary names in golf, have spared no detail in creating a multi-course destination at Big Cedar Lodge that masterfully incorporates the spectacular Ozark Mountain beauty into four (soon to be five) distinctive courses.

The first course, Top of the Rock, is a Jack Nicklaus design and holds the honor of being the first par 3 course to be included in an official PGA Tour sanctioned event, hosting the Bass Pro Shops Legends of Golf from 2014 to 2019. This world-class golf facility is positioned high in the Ozark Mountains and overlooks breathtaking views of Table Rock Lake. Each of the carefully crafted nine holes showcase unique elements including an island green on the sixth hole. The Arnold

Palmer-designed driving range features 10 fully-lit target greens ranging from 55 to 285 yards. While at the driving range you will be surrounded by views of the "Cathedral of Nature," a canyon with towering rock formations that was unearthed after a sinkhole opened in 2015, revealing a true natural wonder.

Overlooking the driving range are multiple restaurants and attractions including Arnie's Barn, a 150-year-old barn relocated from Arnold Palmer's hometown that now serves as a restaurant and pro shop. A round of golf at Top of the Rock includes an experience you truly can't get anywhere else. Each golfer receives a pass for the Lost Canyon Cave and Nature Trail where you will take your golf cart through a stunning nature trail complete with waterfalls, scenic overlooks and even a drive-thru cave with cave bar.

Buffalo Ridge is an 18-hole, Tom Fazio designed course that is intended to bring you in close contact with nature.



Native prairie grasses line the course, and as you play, you will travel over many streams via Amish-built bridges and take in views of waterfalls, lakes and caves. Notably, the championship course gets its namesake from the free-ranging North American bison that roam the ridge. This serene, par-71 course has been rated the No. 1 course in Missouri by *Golf Magazine* and holds a *Golf Digest* rating of 4.5 stars out of 5.

For the Mountain Top course, Morris teamed up with World Golf Hall of Fame legend Gary Player to create a 13-hole, par-3 short course that delivers an unparalleled experience for golfers. Sharing a similar passion for nature and golf, and through a joint pioneering spirit, the two created a renowned golf experience for all skill levels. Holes range from 66 to 221 yards, giving players the opportunity to hit a variety of shots using several different clubs. The course routes through some of the most dramatic and unforgettable views in the Ozarks. Thousands of hours of painstaking pick and shovel excavations revealed 300-million-yearold limestone formations, creating an over-the-top experience for golfers. Before or after the round, you won't want to miss stopping by the Mountain Top Grill and Clubhouse for a drink as you take in the hilltop views from the building's floor to ceiling windows.

Continuing the theme of nature-inspired courses with incredible views, Ozarks National is a breathtaking, 18-hole championship course designed by renowned architect duo Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw. The course measures 7,036 yards from the back tees and features challenging carries and a variety of visually appealing approach shots that are highlighted by the native habitat. The walkable design is intended to highlight incredible views of rolling ridges and the Ozark Mountain landscape. One of the course's most interesting features includes a 400-foot



wooden beam and plank bridge, which connects the tee box and fairway of the 13th hole and stands 60 feet above a flowing creek.

Rounding out Big Cedar's collection of bucket list-worthy courses is Payne's Valley, the first public access course designed by 81-time PGA Tour winner Tiger Woods. Set to open in 2020, Payne's Valley pays tribute to Ozarks native and World Golf Hall of Fame member Payne Stewart. The championship course offers a style of play that will allow golfers of all skill levels to fall in love with the game as well as the beauty of the region. Payne's Valley will showcase some truly oneof-kind features like a dramatic bridge gliding over the water on hole No. 5 and the bet-settling hole 19 known as "The Big Rock."

Beyond the game of golf, Big Cedar is home to countless restaurants and attractions. Two marinas, a 10,000-acre nature park, expansive shooting facility, world-class spa, natural history museum and a 50,000 square-foot activity center are just a few of the activities to keep you entertained when you're not on the links. Dining options span from homestyle cooking to Mexican cuisine with an Ozarks flair, and each restaurant features, you guessed it, spectacular views.

There is no denying that Johnny Morris has created something truly special at Big Cedar Lodge. Whether you are a nature enthusiast or you prefer the modern comforts of home, Big Cedar Lodge will leave you feeling pampered while you marvel at the beauty of Mother Nature. For the golfer, both novice and experienced, this is a destination you simply have to see to believe, and now getting to Big Cedar is easier than ever before. New, direct flights through Frontier Airlines allow you to fly direct to Big Cedar through the Branson airport. Start planning your stay and play getaway to America's Next Great Golf Destination today.