

VIP PICKWICK

FALL/HOLIDAY 2015

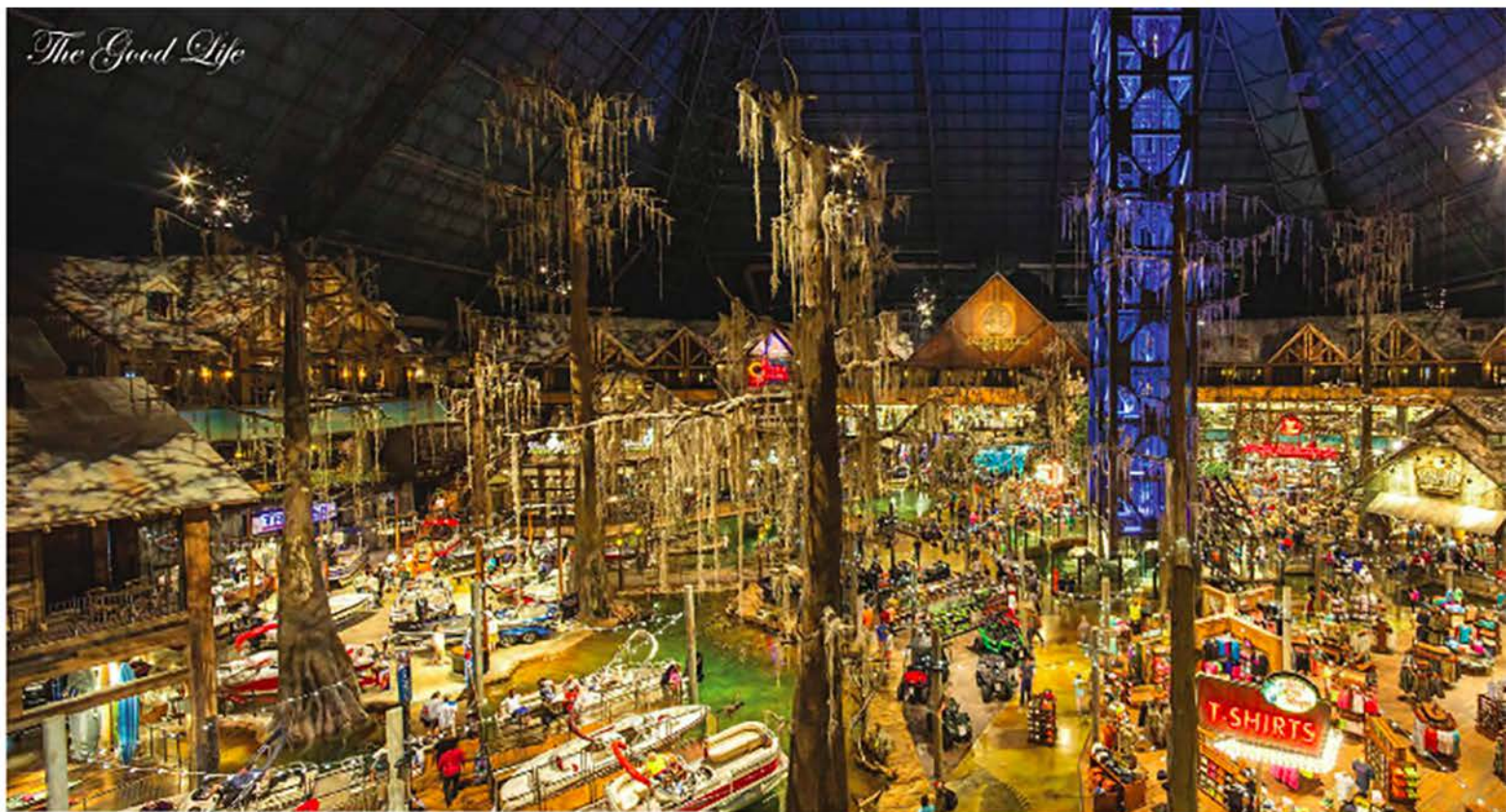
magazine

Sunset Symphony

Red, White & Boots
Star-Spangled Songwriters Event

Sports Hall of Fame
INDUCTION

MOON & MAGNOLIAS



BASS PRO SHOPS & BIG CYPRESS

In the Pyramid in Memphis A Sportsman's

Story by Lyda Kay Ferris, The Southern Lifestyles Lady. Photography courtesy of Murphy O'Brien Public Relations.

Where the Wolf River and the swamp waters of Arkansas and Tennessee meet at the Mississippi is a grand Pyramid, which for years sat empty and forlorn for far too long. As a recent guest at the Pyramid, which is experiencing a renaissance, I had flashback memories of attending a Memphis Symphony Ball three years ago. It was the first major social event held at the Pyramid. When my date dropped me off at the front entrance, camels and other exotic animals greeted me!

Fast forward through the many public meetings, delayed schedules, construction, road work, and major expenditures affiliated with the transformation of the Pyramid.

The doors of the Pyramid have opened again, this time to one of the largest retail projects in the world! Bass Pro Shops at The Pyramid is expected to bring millions of visitors to downtown Memphis. Hopefully they will add millions of dollars to the city coffers. Bass Pro is a game-changer!

On a recent weekend I visited the Bass Pro Shops and was an overnight guest in the Big

Cypress Lodge in the Pyramid. What an impressive destination!

From the moment I arrived until I left the following morning, I was treated like a queen! The staff throughout the facility, from the shops to the restaurants to the Big Cypress Lodge, could not have been more accommodating. I remember some of their names. Jeffrey, one of my pleasant bellmen, and Steven Shipp, a bartender at The Lookout, gave exceptional service. If you even look lost (which often I did in this huge facility), the employees sense it and immediately come to your rescue.

Your adventure starts the moment you enter the massive, one-of-a-kind outdoor experience. There are 22 million cubic feet under one roof!

History

Hats off to Johnny Morris, the founder of Bass Pro Shops and Big Cypress Lodge. In 2005 he went fishing on the Mississippi River with a couple of his fishing buddies: Bill Dance, the famous angler and TV show host, and Jack Em-

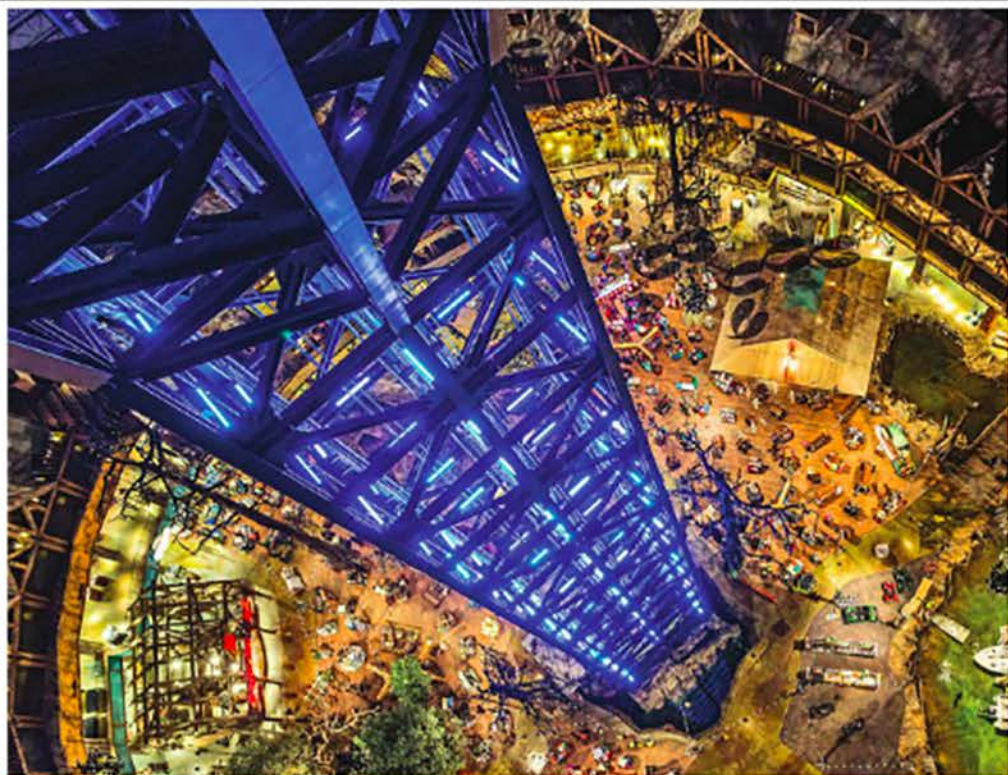
mitt, Bass Pro's first fishing manager. When they got near the Pyramid, Johnny looked up and told them that he would build a store inside the Memphis Pyramid if they caught a 30-pound catfish. Well, sure enough, with only about an hour left in the trip his buddy Jack got a bite from a monster catfish in the shadow of the Pyramid. Without much hesitation Johnny said, "It's a deal. We're gonna do it!"

Did they ever!

Bring the Outdoors In!

Rustic, wooden floors, massive antler-handled doors; and Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid remind you of other Bass Pro shops across the country, but when you emerge into the main chamber, that changes entirely.

Cypress trees stretch high overhead (I had to touch one to be sure it was not real), and Spanish moss drapes the boughs. Live fish swim in the gently flowing water under the wooden decking. There is an alligator pit and an aviary with live ducks plus a three-story waterfall.



LODGE Paradise



Ducks Unlimited Waterfowling Heritage Center

On the second floor The Bass Pro Shops partnered with Memphis-based Ducks Unlimited to create the Ducks Unlimited (DU) Waterfowling Heritage Center, an interactive wetland education museum, which features many of DU's collection of duck decoys, rare and vintage firearms, and one-of-a-kind artworks. Here visitors may learn more about the wildlife along the Mississippi Flyway and the importance of wetlands conservation.

Shopping

How about 535,000 square feet of space from Tracker boats to sporting gear and a tremendous variety of other merchandise! It was almost more than I could take in on one visit. There is truly something for everyone from the serious outdoor enthusiast to families looking to have fun. The wilderness-inspired retail and lifestyle space sprawls over the ground level and half of the second floor of the Pyramid.

I spent some time in the General Store, where I sampled their superb fudge, and I purchased some excellent Mississippi Cheese Straws and a bird suet feeder. Sportswear and attractive casual wear for the non-sportsman or woman are attractively displayed.

Adventures and Activities

Two of the activities include a 25-yard live fire pistol and archery ranges. In their Beretta Gallery you'll find premium firearms, top-quality hunting gear, stylish outdoor apparel, custom gun fitting, and unique personal and decorative accessories.

Coming soon: On the weekend of October 16 through the following weekend the World's Hunting and Waterfowl Expo featuring big-name entertainers and sporting events plus a duck calling contest will take place. Visit www.Big-Cypress.com for more information.

Dining

A friend and I peeped in Uncle Buck's Fishbowl & Grill, located on the ground floor.

They serve American favorites with a truly unique atmosphere and design as well as a centerpiece bar and 13-lane, ocean-themed bowling alley. The bar features a huge saltwater aquarium with beautiful tropic fish. Private event space is available for group rental.

The Trophy Room

Located off of Uncle Buck's Fishbowl & Grill, this one-of-a-kind billiards experience features a fireplace, luxurious dark wood paneling and a tournament table for the ultimate in gaming fun! This space is also available to book for private events.

Elevator to The Lookout

Don't miss the massive elevator, the largest of its kind in the country, with its elegant purplish glow. Ride this elevator to the top of The Pyramid and you will find glass observation decks and panoramic views of the Memphis skyline and the Mississippi River. Enjoy an appetizer and a drink in The Lookout, a full service bar featuring specialty drinks and indoor



and outdoor seating. My friend ordered a "Duck Blind Sunrise Cocktail" and I had the "Catfish Mary" (a spicy Bloody Mary). For appetizers (big enough for entrees) we sampled the Mile High Tacos of grilled catfish fingers with pineapple-avocado salsa, and Pyramid Sliders of venison, beef and American bison. We shared a chocolate martini dessert drink called "Stuck in the Mud."

A massive circular 10,000 gallon catfish aquarium commands the middle of the restaurant behind the bar.

Big Cypress Lodge

A private elevator whisked me upstairs to an intimate lobby, where I played a baby grand piano, a rare treat for me. I entered my Hospitality Suite, as it was called, to discover an elegant guest room. The interior décor reminds me of inns in Utah or Montana—very high-end Western with all of the modern amenities. A lovely gift basket filled with delicious goodies and homemade cookies from the hotel's bakery was a pleasant surprise.

I asked Lana McDonald, Hotel Manager, what sets her hotel apart from others "The first thing that is unique about this hotel is that it is the first and only hotel that is inside a Bass Pro shop," she said. "But it's also very unique because it is a wilderness hotel that is set in a downtown city."

There are 103 rustic-elegant and well appointed guest cabins and suites that bring the

spirit of the great outdoors to the Pyramid. The Treehouse Suites, Duck Cabins, Flyfishing Lodges, Junior Suites, Governor's Suite and Hospitality Suite overlook the Pyramid's vast cypress and wetlands expanse. All rooms feature interior or exterior views, elegant cabin-style décor and handcrafted furnishings, an electric fireplace, and a spa-like bathroom with jetted bathtub and separate glass-enclosed shower. Most rooms, including mine, a one-of-a-kind with its large seating area, offer French doors that open to a private screened-in porch with rocking chairs that overlook the ground level. Every room comes with a view—whether of Memphis and the surrounding landscape or of the exciting interior or wilderness world.

"We are very pleased with the success of the hotel, retail and dining outlets. Everything is going well," said McDonald. "Some weddings have been booked here in the near future."

McDonald's favorite view is on the 3rd floor of the lobby area standing at the rail overlooking the beautiful retail area. "You're centered in the middle and can turn back and see the lobby on the third floor," she said.

Meeting Facilities & Fitness Center

There are meeting rooms on the third floor. A board room, four conference rooms and a patio event space is ideal for groups, meetings and celebrations.

A fully-equipped state-of-the-art fitness

Stuck in the Mud

1 1/2 ounces Godiva Chocolate Liqueur
1/2 ounces Amaretto DiSaronno
1 1/2 ounces Coconut Milk

Pre-chill glass. Put all ingredients into a shaker and shake vigorously. Garnish glass with homemade (or store bought) chocolate sauce and toasted coconut.

Note: A perfect way to end an evening, this dessert drink was prepared for me by Steven Shipp, bartender at The Lookout.

center offers a premier workout experience complete with locker rooms and showers.

To quote Lana McDonald, the General Manger of the Big Cypress Lodge, "It's hard for people to imagine this place until you experience it. There's so much detail everywhere you look. It is sensory overwhelm! Take your time and take it in piece by piece."

What to Know

Bass Pro Shops & Big Cypress lodge
1 Bass Pro Drive
Memphis Pyramid, TN 38105
Hours: Mon-Sat: 8am-10pm; Sun: 8am-7pm
901.291.8200 (Bass Pro Shops),
901.620-4615 (Big Cypress Hotel)
www.basspro.com, www.big-cypress.com