



Staying at the Memphis Pyramid: A Family Vacation to Remember

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"Make sure you look outside in about three minutes," the waiter told us. Look outside? We could already see the gorgeous nighttime view of Memphis, Tennessee, and the Mississippi River through the panoramic windows that surrounded the restaurant.

Then the lights on the bridge began to change color. My daughters, ages 4 and 8, could only stare, mesmerized by the magic.

Mesmerized is the perfect word to describe how my daughters reacted to all of the sights of the Big Cypress Lodge and the Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid in Memphis.

Every step we took had them exclaiming in awe -- from the 28-story-tall elevator in the center of the pyramid, to the live animals that call the pyramid home, to the decor in our guest room and the captivating view from the top.



A pyramid right in the middle of Memphis

The pyramid, originally built in 1991 as a 32-story-high sports arena, is impressive the moment you see it from the freeway. But it's the inside that really gets your attention – an indoor wilderness with 100-foot-tall cypress trees, ponds, fish, alligators, ducks, and waterfalls that offers the perfect place to relax and recharge.

Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops, had a vision of turning the unused arena into a world-class shopping destination and lodge while fishing in its shadow in 2005. His vision became reality when the Pyramid reopened as a Bass Pro Shops megastore in 2015, complete with a lodge, archery range, bowling alley, and the Sky High Ride, the tallest free-standing elevator in North America.



A hunting lodge feeling ... inside a pyramid

After exploring the first floor, my kids were anxious to see our room (we stayed in a double queen room with an inside view). They thought it was so cool that our hotel room was actually located inside the store above where customers shopped. Big Cypress Lodge is nestled on the second and third floors of the pyramid with 103 cabin-inspired guest rooms. Don't let the word cabin fool you -- these rooms are spacious and packed with amenities, including an electric fireplace, a big screen TV, and snacks.

My 8-year-old explains it best:

Hands down, the best part of our room was the balcony. Featuring a screened-in view of the Bass Pro Shops below, it offered both privacy and relaxation. What surprised me most about the balcony was how serene it made me feel. The bright lights and merchandise told me a store was below, but the sound of the waterfalls and the ducks made it seem more like I was out in the woods. For a soul that longs for the outdoors in the winter, but doesn't like to go out in the cold, it was just right.



You can recharge alone in your room, or you can visit with other travelers in the hotel lobby, which looks and feels like a hunting lodge. You'll find games there for kids to play, a piano, rocking chairs to enjoy the view of the store below, and a bar. I was impressed with how many families spent time hanging out there instead of in their rooms in the evenings.

The lodge also features a fitness center and a spa. It's also great for meetings with a boardroom, conference rooms, and a huge patio area.

Magic from top to bottom

In the center of the pyramid is the country's tallest free-standing elevator. This 300-foot-tall, 28-story glass elevator takes you up to the Lookout Restaurant and two glass observation decks, where you get the panoramic views that captivated my daughters' attention.

The restaurant at the top is open for lunch and dinner. We enjoyed an early evening dinner and saw the sun set as we ate. The BBQ Jumbo Shrimp and Grits and Catfish plate was delicious, but it was the Gooey Butter Cake with ice cream for dessert that left everyone truly satisfied.

My 4-year-old's favorite part of the trip? The underwater-themed bowling alley, located in Uncle Buck's Fishbowl and Grill. She danced in a circle every time she knocked down any pins. She especially liked the shark that "spit out" our bowling balls. The attention to detail in the decor makes you feel like you are exploring what remains of a sunken ship as fish and sea animals swim around you.



We had so much fun exploring the pyramid that we didn't even leave the building! But Big Cypress Lodge is near many popular sites in Memphis and offers a shuttle for guests. Nearby attractions include the Beale Street Historic District, Sun Studio, Elvis Presley's Graceland, and the National Civil Rights Museum.

I didn't even realize until I got home just how much I needed an easy mini-vacation with my kids and husband. We were only there for a couple of days, but I returned home feeling energized. I think my husband and daughters agreed -- all three of them are already asking when we can go back!