



Big Cedar Lodge voted the #1 Best Hotel for the Holidays by USA TODAY readers



RIDGEDALE, Mo. (Dec. 16, 2025) – Big Cedar Lodge, America's Premier Wilderness Resort, is honored and excited to announce it has been voted the **#1 Best Hotel for the Holidays** by USA TODAY readers.

This prestigious recognition in the national media outlet's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards celebrates the world class resort's legacy of creating magical holiday memories for the entire family, a place where guests of all ages return year after year to one of the most enchanting holiday

destinations in the world, and experience the wonder, warmth and nostalgia of the season.

“We are so honored and humbled to be recognized with this award, for providing the world-class hospitality and guest experiences that Big Cedar Lodge has become known for,” said Johnny Morris, noted conservationist and founder of Bass Pro Shops and Big Cedar Lodge. “We are so thankful for the dedication of our team members, who put so much effort into dreaming, designing, building and perfecting every detail of the holiday experience. They strive to provide genuine Ozarks hospitality so guests feel like they’ve stepped into a real-life Christmas story full of wonder, joy and the natural beauty of the Ozarks.”

This distinction marks the resort’s second national 10Best award this year. Earlier in 2025, USA TODAY readers voted Big Cedar Lodge the **#1 Golf Resort in the United States**, underscoring the property’s year-round excellence in recreation, hospitality and guest experience.



Holiday season transforms the Ozarks

In early November, the 4,600-acre rustic luxury resort unveils its annual transformation into a breathtaking Winter Wonderland. More than 4 million lights blanket the property, woven through towering pines, draped across

historic buildings, synchronized in animated displays, and reflected in the still waters of Table Rock Lake.

Every corner of the resort becomes part of the story, from twinkling woodland scenes glowing along the walking paths to larger-than-life illuminated displays that celebrate the magic and meaning of Christmas. Returning favorites include lighted archways, oversized ornaments, sparkling forest creatures and glowing nativity scenes that bring the story of the season to life.

There is an exciting new addition to the ice-skating rink this year, with real ice offering guests the classic holiday charm of gliding under the stars beside towering, decorated trees. Nearby, Big Cedar's new tubing hill sends guests racing down icy lanes with sweeping views of Table Rock Lake, a thrilling addition that already has become a family favorite.



Signature experiences that bring the season to life

Guests arriving “Home for the Holidays” can enjoy an extraordinary lineup of seasonal experiences, with new surprises and beloved traditions, including Enchanted Light Tours that wow and welcome visitors of all ages:

- **Holiday Tram Light Tour:** A guided open-air journey through shimmering tunnels of lights, glowing bridges, panoramic lake overlooks and festive scenes choreographed to music.
- **Private Sleigh Ride Light Tours:** Couples and families can cozy up under blankets and sip hot chocolate as they travel in a beautifully

decorated Santa sleigh pulled by a John Deere tractor - one of the resort's most intimate holiday offerings.

- **Self-Guided Drive-Through Light Tour:** Guests can experience the magic of the season from the comfort of their vehicle. Journey through dazzling displays that bring the story of Christmas to life with more twinkling lights than ever before!



Nature at Night on the Lost Canyon Cave & Nature Trail

This year's Nature at Night experience is more spectacular than ever. Guests drive their own golf cart along a 2.5-mile trail filled with dazzling lights, waterfalls and bridge crossings.

Among the most iconic elements are the glowing howling wolves, leaping reindeer and other animals that roam the Ozarks nestled among the cliffs and trees of the Lost Canyon Trail, an unforgettable blend of nature, artistry and holiday magic. Inside the cave, the one-of-a-kind Bat Bar welcomes guests with warm drinks, panoramic views of illuminated cavern walls and a breathtaking waterfall.



Festive workshops, dining experiences and traditions

Guests can fill their days with hands-on holiday fun and festive culinary events, including:

- **Breakfast with Santa at the Worman House**
- **Santa & Friends Brunch at the Grandview Conference Center**
- **Gingerbread Build-Off** for families and friendly competitors
- **Stocking Decorating**, complete with every craft material imaginable
- **Elves Winter Workshop**, where guests paint and fire custom keepsake ornaments
- **The 12 Days Scavenger Hunt**, sending families on a holiday adventure across the resort's most picturesque light displays
- **Elf Visits** are also available to tuck in the little ones with a bedtime story and sweet treat
- **Curated Dining** events offer seasonal tastings and perfect pairings for unforgettable culinary experiences

From cozy evenings by the fire to heartwarming family traditions, the entire season is designed for Big Cedar Lodge guests to make memories that last a lifetime.

Check out additional images by [clicking this link](#).

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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 7 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 conveniently located just 10 minutes from Branson. Learn more at www.bigcedar.com.

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