

# *Flocking to Greener Pastures*



By Amy Conry Davis

Photography courtesy of Old Waverly Golf Club and Prairie Wildlife

West Point, Mississippi, offers award-winning outdoor recreation at the Old Waverly Golf Club and Prairie Wildlife.



Fishing in front of Bryan Lodge.



Coffee on the Front Porch

The small town of West Point, Mississippi, might not be the first destination that comes to mind for a weekend getaway, but plenty of hunters and golfers would likely disagree. Tucked away on rural back roads, in a community of roughly 13,000 people, two destinations are drawing visitors from around the world: Old Waverly Golf Club and Prairie Wildlife. The first is a world-class golf resort. The latter, a “conservation-driven” hunting estate. Both grew from enterprising ideas of members of the Bryan family, a name that has been in the area since the late 1800s. From farmland to first-rate recreation, both destinations making their mark on Mississippi, and its visitors, year after year.

Old Waverly has been a West Point institution for the past 31 years. It was founded in 1988 by George Bryan and named (with a different spelling) after nearby historic Waverley Mansion. Bryan, who had a passion for golf, partnered with a group of local businessmen to turn 360 acres into a recreational destination that would rival any like it in the area. With the talented guidance of designers Jerry Pate and Bob Cupp, the property was artfully crafted into a spectacular 18-hole course, clubhouse, lake, and luxurious mix of condos, cottages, and villas.

Over the last decades, it has managed to maintain and exceed expectations, which for a small-town operation is no simple feat. Amateur and professional tournaments have been played on its greens and accolades like “Best Golf Resort, Southeast” (Golf Digest) continue to bolster its reputation. Rosemary Prisock, director of membership and marketing, explains the significance of such accomplishments in an industry as competitive as the sporting world.

“We’ve hosted three national championships in our 30 years and that’s really unheard of. In the golf world, we’re still kind of a baby. There are a lot of clubs that have been around for over 100 years. It’s a very big deal,” says Prisock.

In keeping with ever-changing times, Old Waverly continues to improve and innovate. The evidence of this is their recent collaboration with Toxey Haas, owner and CEO of another local institution, Mossy Oak. In 2016, the Mossy Oak Golf Club opened up across the street from Old Waverly. This time, Gil Hanse, the creative force behind Brazil’s 2016 Olympic Course, was at the helm of

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Kathys Hill Pavillion

the design. While Old Waverly is a classic, more traditional course, Mossy Oak went with “nature’s golf.” This links-style design follows natural contours in the terrain and incorporates habitat preservation into the layout. Though the clubs are two different entities in their own right, the partnership is a complementary one and creates a perfect pairing for a golf outing.

“It makes it kind of fun for the people who come here to play golf. They can play Mossy Oak one day and Old Waverly the next and get two totally different courses...golfers really appreciate that,” says Prisock.

While Mossy Oak is completely open to the public, Old Waverly is semi-private and does require a membership. However, “Stay and Play” packages are available at either club and can be tailored to fit a variety of needs. Green fees vary according to weekday or weekend usage but, including carts, a round of golf at Old Waverly runs about \$200. In addition to the upscale lodging (cottage rooms start around \$200 a night), guests have complete access to other on-site amenities such as the pool, fitness center, dining facilities, and tennis court.



Skeet Shooting

## HUNTING AT PRAIRIE WILDLIFE

A few short miles down the road, Prairie Wildlife is busy building a name for itself in the state and across the country. As a full-service hunting lodge, they offer everything from high-end clothing to gun fitting, even trained bird dogs. It’s only been on the scene for nine years but is already gaining popularity as a premier hunting destination. Started by Jimmy Bryan (George’s first cousin), this multi-functional facility comprises 6,300 acres of land, a main lodge, a restaurant, and various accommodations. Custom packages run the gamut but a half day unlimited hunt, with a meal, is \$650 and a full day unlimited bird hunt with lodging and meals is \$1350 per person.

Wildlife abounds on the property but the focus is wing shooting, especially quail. Guided hunts are led on foot, by horse, or wagon, and varied shooting venues make for an interesting and challenging experience. It’s also home to the state’s only sanctioned helice-shooting course so guests can hone their target skills, day or night. Bennie Atkinson, who’s worked as Estate

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USGA Photo #18 veiw from clubhouse

Manager for three years, admits how valuable a treasure it is for a town such as West Point.

“I’ve hunted all over the place, even guided hunts, but I never even knew this was here. It’s the best-kept secret in the world,” says Atkinson.

The main impetus for creating this estate was, and remains, conservation. Working in close partnership with biologists from Mississippi State University, Prairie Wildlife’s aim is to restore the land back to how it looked two hundred years ago. Through research, data collection, controlled burning, and steady hard work, they’re painstakingly accomplishing their goal of a more natural and balanced environment.

“Everything we’re doing is to try and bring back the quail. Everybody thinks...you’ve got grass, the quail will come back, but you’ve got to have brood habitat, nesting cover...and somewhere to rear the chicks. It’s pretty in-depth...it’s got to be just perfect for the quail to be here,” says Atkinson.

While its conservation efforts alone are praise-worthy, Prairie Wildlife also recently garnered recognition for its service

and quality with a unique distinction. In 2018, they were granted an official endorsement from Orvis. This prestigious designation has only been given to 28 wing shooting lodges in North America and requires an arduous, invite-only vetting process.

“They send somebody down; they go through every aspect of what you do. Basically, from the time you pick them up from the airport to the time you drop them off...they vet everything,” says Atkinson.

While hunting and shooting are the mainstay, it doesn’t end there. Prairie Wildlife is working to offer something for everyone who visits, regardless of age or interests. Their facilities can be rented for weddings, private parties, corporate meetings and retreats. Public events and tournaments are held throughout the year and, in an effort to support the growing trend in female hunters and gun enthusiasts, many are oriented towards women. Day camps for school-aged children are offered in summer months as well as a customized experience for young hunters. Non-hunters even have a place to participate

with options such as the Land Rover driving experience, horseback riding, and fishing.

Prairie Wildlife also works in partnership with Old Waverly and Mossy Oak making it possible to enjoy all three in one visit to West Point.

[oldwaverly.com](http://oldwaverly.com)  
[mossyoakgolf.com](http://mossyoakgolf.com)  
[prairiewildlife.com](http://prairiewildlife.com)

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