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The Daily News Journal



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Checking into a legacy

Inside Dolly Parton's SongTeller Hotel, her final vision for Nashville

Hadley Hitson Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

When I walked into Dolly Parton's new SongTeller Hotel in downtown Nashville during its opening week, her legacy captivated me. From top to bottom, every inch was unmistakably hers: the sparkly tiles, airbrushed glamour shots hanging on the walls and the hum of banjos and acoustic guitars playing over the sound system. Parton's presence commands the entire 11-story building, embodying the "gaudy and flamboyant" style on which she prided herself.

AT TOP: Dolly Parton's records hang on the wall of The Listening Lounge, an area inside the SongTeller Hotel where the hotel hosts daily "sip and sparkle" events.

BELOW: The Listening Lounge features lots of seating and an old photo of Parton sitting in her own chair writing songs.

PHOTOS BY
HADLEY HITSON/
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN

I was lucky enough to be one of the very first guests to stay overnight at the SongTeller.

What I found was more than her name slapped onto a place for tourists to stay; it was an authentic ode to the girl from Appalachia who became the Queen of Country Music.

A large patchwork-patterned guitar statue hangs over the front entrance on the corner of Commerce Street and Third Avenue. After handing my car over to the valet for \$65 per night, I walked beneath it, into a pristine lobby lined with screens playing a montage of Parton images and lyrics.

Butterflies hanging from a custom chandelier shimmered over my head as an employee guided me to the second floor for check-in. The hotel seems to prioritize security. No one is allowed

entry beyond the lobby without a reservation or express permission from an employee guarding the elevators.

The total for one weeknight's stay in a room with one king bed facing the newly revitalized Second Avenue, Cumberland River and Nissan Stadium was \$503. That's higher than downtown Nashville's \$331 per night average, but in line with the average 4-star hotel in the area, according to travel site Kayak.

The sound of Parton's twangy voice is a constant. Her hits play throughout the hotel at the top of every hour, screens featuring her most famous performances are projected from the elevator bays on each floor and a peppy "Well, hey there," greets guests from the television as they enter their rooms.

What to do inside Dolly Parton's SongTeller Hotel?

On my way to drop off my bags, I passed a gift shop full of Parton's jewelry, perfume and T-shirt lines, the SongTeller Cafe and the Listening Lounge, where dozens of her albums hang on the walls. There's also a top-floor speakeasy named for Parton's famous fictional rival Jolene.

Then came the star of the show: Parton's Live, the hotel's central performance venue, bar and restaurant on the second floor. Patrons must purchase tickets online or in person at the hotel, and prices range from \$39 to \$300 depending on what kind of seat you choose and the performer of the night — not including the \$25 minimum food and beverage requirement per guest.

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Christa Pike's lawyers faced communication hurdles as execution failed

Evan Mealins
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Minutes after 8 p.m. Sept. 30, sitting in a dark room with the curtain shut, Christa Pike's only lawyer inside the prison could hear her breathing despite receiving the state's final round of lethal drugs.

The lawyer, Randy Spivey, demanded to call the rest of Pike's defense team. To do so, he would have to leave the one place he could tell if she was dead or alive.

Spivey was led through a locked door. Then another. Then four more locked doors, he said. At about 8:22, after seven minutes away from the execution chamber, during which Pike was also separated from her spiritual adviser, Spivey reached the phone, he said.

Spivey was led back to the witness room after the call, and the rest of the legal team began trying to contact the people with the power to order immediate lifesaving measures.

But the number for the Tennessee Supreme Court they were specifically given for emergencies went to voicemail.

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Murfreesboro hair stylist charged with kidnapping, robbery of customer

Scott Broden
Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Murfreesboro police officers announced Oct. 5 that a hair stylist has been charged with "especially aggravated kidnapping and aggravated robbery" involving a customer.

Officers arrested Makayla Brown, 19, Oct. 1, after she was accused of "robbing and kidnapping a man after he encountered difficulties withdrawing money from the ATM to pay her for hairstyling services," police spokesman Larry Flowers said. "According to the 23-year-old victim, Brown and several men entered his car and accompanied him to various locations as he attempted to withdraw money, without success, to pay her.

"The victim reported being robbed at gunpoint and dragged into an apartment on St. Andrews Drive after the group took his phone and car keys. He managed to escape by jumping from the apartment balcony and ran to a nearby store to call the police."

Hairstylist booked at jail, awaits court date

Criminal Investigations Division detectives and members of the Special Operations Unit executed a warrant at the apartment, according to Flowers.

"They recovered two firearms and the victim's car keys," Flowers wrote. "The investigation remains ongoing, and additional arrests may be forthcoming."

Brown is in custody at the Rutherford County Adult Detention Center in Murfreesboro with a bond set at \$40,000.

The hair stylist faces a Dec. 17 General Sessions Court date on an 8:30 a.m. docket before Judge Ben Hall McFarlin III at the Rutherford County Judicial Center in downtown Murfreesboro, online court records show.

Reach reporter Scott Broden with news tips or questions by emailing him at sbroden@dnj.com. To support his work with The Daily News Journal, sign up for a digital subscription with dnj.com.

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