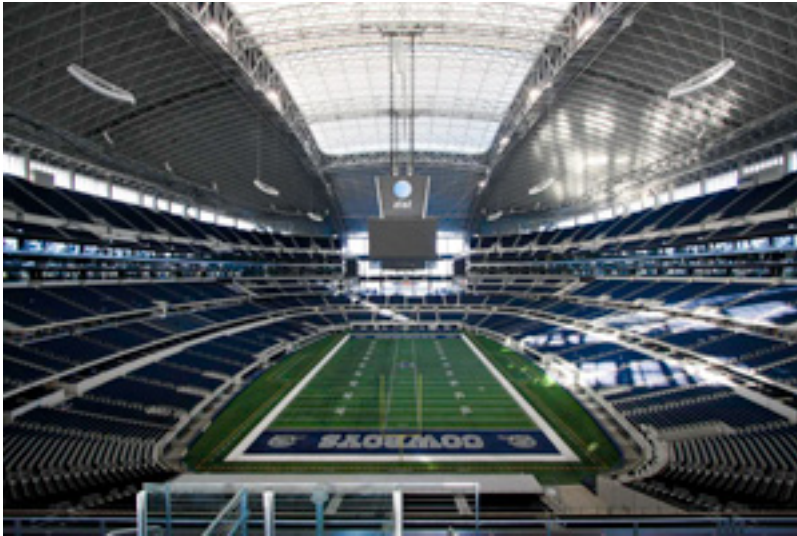


Guided tour of house that Jerry built well worth the price of admission

Written by John Singleton
Friday, 10 February 2012 14:41



If anyone had told me that I'd pay \$30.00 for admission to a sports stadium where no event was taking place, I would have thought they were smoking something illegal, or at least drinking something 80 proof. But that's exactly what I did during a recent trip to Dallas, and I was stone cold sober.

I'm not prepared to say it was the best \$30.00 I've ever spent, but the VIP guided tour of the \$1.1 billion Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, TX, was well worth the price of admission, even if you don't root for the Cowboys.

I was still miles away on a crystal clear Saturday afternoon when I spotted the oval, glistening dome of the stadium rising some 300 feet above the flat terrain. Since there were no events scheduled, getting into the parking lot and making my way to the Will Call window was simple. I shuddered to imagine what it must be like on a game day with nearly 85,000 diehard fans arriving at roughly the same time.

Not surprisingly, the tour starts and ends in the pro shop, where there is a mind-numbing array of pricey Cowboys branded merchandise – from jewelry to every item of clothing known to mankind. Up a long flight of steps, I entered a waiting area near the concession stand, which was open for a variety of snacks. A word of warning, you can't take anything to eat or drink during the tour so be careful of your timing. (Yes, I learned that the hard way.)

The group of about 20 visitors, many sporting their favorite player's jersey, is escorted to a section of comfortable padded seats for an overview of what we are going to see during the tour. The tour guide's script is sprinkled with lots of jokes and jibes --"Are there any fans of teams other than the Cowboys? Security will escort you to the nearest exit immediately!"

Think comfort, not fashion, when it comes to footwear because over the course of nearly two hours you will be escorted to virtually every level of the stadium. From the Dr Pepper Star Bar on the upper concourse, you will be treated to magnificent interior views of the field and that unbelievable \$40 million, high-definition, four-sided video board. You'll also enjoy equally

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spectacular exterior views of such nearby landmarks as Texas Stadium, home of the Texas Rangers, and Six Flags Over Texas, a gigantic amusement park.

Many areas of the stadium will remind you more of being in a five-star hotel than a sports facility. Nightclub-like lounge areas have richly appointed interiors that are elegant and timeless, while still subtly capturing the football themes and imagery that make the whole place possible. Be sure to check out the imported black granite that seemingly glows with “Cowboy blue” highlights when viewed from just the right angle. The stadium also doubles as art museum, with millions of dollars of artworks on display.

Keep up with your tour -- “We lost a couple of folks last week, and we still can’t find them!” – because it might well take a while to find your way out of this complex and colossal edifice. Highlights of the tour include a visit to Cowboys owners Jerry Jones’ very own private box (on the 50-yard line of course), as well as a look inside the locker rooms of both the Cowboys players and the Cowboys Cheerleaders. Tour takers are encouraged to take pictures, but no video.

The tour concludes on the playing field, where the guide explains how to get back to the pro shop and exit the stadium. Standing on the field beneath that 600-ton behemoth of a video board is yet another of the many excellent places to take pictures. You can also satisfy your fantasy of sprinting down the sideline and making a long over-the-shoulder catch from Quarterback Tony Romo.

Everyone who follows professional football at all knows that Jerry Jones is famous for his hands-on management style and his world-class ego. It is inconceivable that Jones would have built a football stadium that is not equally world class. After a tour of Cowboys Stadium, I happily join the chorus of those who have already proclaimed, “Mission accomplished, Mr. Jones!”

Editor’s Note: Tickets for guided and non-guided tours of Cowboys Stadium can be purchased online at: http://stadium.dallascowboys.com/tours/tourInfo_VIPGuidedTours.cfm