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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

DrPleishner

Best Las Vegas Restaurants

Las Vegas, 1 Day

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Whether you're looking for critically acclaimed fare or an inexpensive place for lunch, you'll easily find a Las Vegas restaurant to satisfy your taste buds. For a first-class epicurean experience, try Rosemary's, Joel Robuchon's, Hugo's Cellar, or Mix. Spago, at Caesar's Palace, combines great food with very interesting people watching from the patio. For seriously authentic Mexican fare (and the best tamales), visit Dona Maria's. The Burger Bar at Mandalay Bay and Capriotti's offer casual dining and make good stops for lunch. For the mandatory Las Vegas buffet, try Bally's Sunday Brunch or the Mirage's Cravings.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Las Vegas

Rosemary's Restaurant
Nouvelle American Cuisine

Joël Robuchon at the Mansion
Chef Joel Robuchon's first U.S. restaurant

Hugo's Cellar
Intimate & Romantic in downtown Las Vegas

Mix
A terrific view and French food atop THEhotel at Mandalay

Spago
Eat And Be Seen

Dona Maria Tamales
Margaritas By The Pitcher

Burger Bar at Mandalay Bay
Unusual burgers and micro brews!

Capriotti's
Subs and Sandwiches!

Bally's Sterling Sunday Brunch
Famous & Elegant

Mirage Cravings Buffet
Delicious Cravings!!

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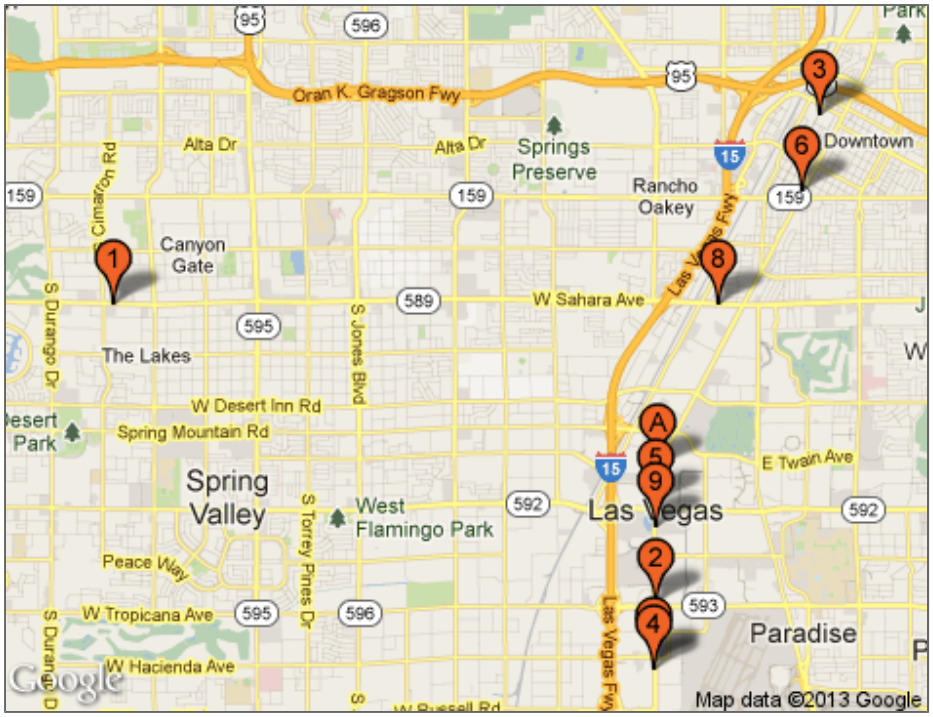
Day 1 - Las Vegas



QUICK NOTE

contact:
tel: 702/869-2251
fax: +1 702 869 2283
http://www.rosemarysrestaurant.com

location:
8125 W. Sahara
Las Vegas NV 89117

hours:
Mon-Fri 11:30am-2:30pm and 5:30-10:30pm; Sat-Sun 5:30-10:30pm

1 Rosemary's Restaurant

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Award-winning food in the Las Vegas suburbs, nine miles west of the Las Vegas Strip. CLOSED IN 2011

DESCRIPTION: No visitor would be blamed for never leaving the Vegas Strip -- it's the raison d'être of any Vegas tourist -- but a true foodie should make a point of finding the nearest moving vehicle that can get them to Rosemary's Restaurant. A 15-minute (or so) drive down Sahara (hardly anything) is all it takes to eat what may well be the best food in Las Vegas. (Certainly, it is consistently voted the best food in the Las Vegas Review-Journal's annual poll, by food critics and readers alike.) The brainchild of Michael and Wendy Jordan, both veterans of the New Orleans food scene (Michael actually opened Emeril's here in Vegas), Rosemary's Restaurant (named for Michael's mother) shows more than a few NOLA touches, from the food to the service, in a room that's warmer and more inviting than most others in Vegas. Note that you can get seats at the bar overlooking the open kitchen, great fun for foodie interaction and not a bad choice for singles, or for couples looking for an unusual romantic evening. The cuisine covers most regions of the U.S., though Southern influences dominate. Fifty local farmers help supply products. Seared foie gras with peach coulis, candied walnuts, and vanilla bean-scented arugula is like a quilt, with distinct flavors that all hang together nicely. Interesting sides include ultrarich bleu-cheese slaw, slightly spicy crispy fried tortilla strips, and perfect cornmeal jalapeño

Photo courtesy of Rosemary's Restaurant

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hush puppies. A recent visit found the crispy striped bass fighting it out with the pan-seared honey-glazed salmon for "best fish dish we've ever had." Desserts are similarly Southern -- lemon icebox pie! -- and most pleasant. There is a nice little wine list with a broad range, especially when it comes to half-price bottles. They also specialize, unusually, in beer suggestions to pair with courses, including some fruity Belgian numbers; this is such a rare treat, if you drink, you must try some of their suggestions. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 702/891-7925
http://www.mgmgrand.com/restaurants/joel-robuchon-french-restaurant.aspx

location:
3799 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89119

hours:
Sun-Thurs 5:30-10pm; Fri-Sat 5:30-10:30pm

2 Joël Robuchon at the Mansion

wcities

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Prix fixe menus come in 6, 8, or 16 courses.

DESCRIPTION: Joel Robuchon was named the "Chef of the Century," and he holds the record for the most Michelin Stars received. His namesake restaurant in Las Vegas is the only Vegas restaurant with the Michelin Three Star. It's also the winner of Forves Five Star, the AAA Five Diamond, and a host of other accolades. For serious foodies, this is a destination worthy of giving up some gambling money—and if you plan on eating here, you should come prepared for a very expensive meal.
The classic French dishes are served a la carte or prix fixe, and prix fixe meals begin at $115.00 per person. Chef Robuchon changes the menus seasonally. The restaurant's specialties are La Langoustine, Le Bar, and Le Mojito. The menu's most expensive item is the $385.00 16-course Degustation, an amazing presentation of classically prepared French foods.
This is fine dining in the first degree. The décor is 1930s era Paris, there's a dress code, and the restaurant will arrange for limo service. Described often as "European," the small restaurant offers limited seating. Reservations are a must.
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contact:
tel: 702/385-4011
http://www.hugoscellar.com

location:
202 Fremont St
Las Vegas NV 89101

hours:
Daily 5:30-11pm

3 Hugo's Cellar

Photo courtesy of Hugo's Cellar

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
An Old Vegas romantic classic.

DESCRIPTION: Hugo's Cellar is indeed in a cellar, or at least below street level in the Four Queens hotel. No, they aren't ashamed of it -- quite the opposite. This is their pride and joy, and it is highly regarded by the locals. This is Old School Vegas Classy Dining. Each female guest is given a red rose when she enters the restaurant -- the first of a series of nice touches. The restaurant proper is dimly lit, lined with dark wood and brick. It's fairly intimate, but if you really want to be cozy, ask for one of the curtained booths against the wall. The meal is full of ceremony, perfectly delivered by a well-trained and

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cordial waitstaff. Salads, included in the price, are prepared at your table, from a cart full of choices. In Vegas style, though, most choices are on the calorie-intensive side, ranging from chopped egg and bleu cheese to pine nuts and bay shrimp. Still, with a honey-orange-walnut vinaigrette, it's good enough to consider paying the $14 a la carte fee and just sticking with it. Unfortunately, the main courses are not all that novel (various cuts of meat, seafood, and chicken prepared in different ways), but on a recent visit, not one of six diners was anything less than delighted. The filet of beef stuffed with crabmeat and wrapped with bacon is over the top for us, but others loved it, while the roast duckling rubbed with anise and flambéed at the table is a guilty pleasure, just the right effect for this Old School Vegas dining experience. The T-bone steak was tender enough to cut with a fork. Vegetables and excellent starchy sides are included, as is a finish of chocolate-dipped fruits with cream. The service is impeccable, and it really makes you feel pampered. The fact that salad, the small dessert, and so forth are included makes an initially hefty-seeming price tag appear a bit more reasonable, especially compared to Strip establishments that aren't much better and can cost the same for just the entree. While it's not worth going out of your way for the food (though here we admit that well-prepared Old School is better than careless nouvelle any day), perhaps it is worth it for the entire package. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 702/632-9500
http://www.chinagrillmgt.com/mixlv

location:
3950 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89119

hours:
Daily 6-10:30pm

4 Mix

DESCRIPTION: This is highly revered French chef Alain Ducasse's first Vegas venture, and such a Big Deal needs a Big Deal setting, in this case, on the 64th (by their counting) floor of THEhotel at Mandalay Bay. It's yet another spectacular restaurant space in a hotel full of them, this one white on white on silver, a futuristic fantasy including a set design sort of like a giant beaded curtain made of blown-glass balls, which envelopes a curving stairway plopped down in the middle. Some tables are set in silver "pods" that remind one of Woody Allen's Sleeper. It looks like where the Jetsons might eat. It also has drama outside, thanks to top-of-the-tall-hotel Strip views. The playful yet hip attitude is reflected in the food, which is a little self-conscious. Still, it's hard to resist a place that starts with bread flavors such as ketchup or bacon, with a side of homemade peanut butter. But it's the sort of meal that grows progressively less "wow" as the evening wears on; early courses of melting amberjack sashimi topped with osetra caviar and a little lemon and salt are superb, as are the lovely foie gras terrines with nifty accompaniments. The signature Ducasse pressed chicken with foie gras in black truffle sauce probably would be just that much better if Chef himself were making it. Fish dishes are solidly good but not transcendent, and by the time the meal gets to, say, the rack of lamb, you may be thinking "Well, this is excellent, certainly, but not mind blowingly so." Which sounds like terrible nitpicking, but given the remarkable things going on in some other kitchens around town, and given the prices here, it's a fine line worth delineating. Still, the setting may make up for it. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of www.bluewaikiki.com

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contact:
tel: 702/369-6300
fax: +1 702 369 0361
www.wolfgangpuck.com

location:
3570 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:
Dining room daily 5:30-10pm; cafe Sun-Thurs 11am-11pm, Fri-Sat 11am-midnight

5 Spago

wcities

DESCRIPTION: At this point in the game, Spago represents both the best and the worst of the celebrity chef phenomenon. If you eat at the Beverly Hills location, you might well have the very best meal of your life, and almost certainly something that demonstrates the reason why such a fuss is made about creative cooking. The problem is that Wolfgang Puck, the man who virtually invented the Chef-as-Household-Name concept, and certainly had as much to do as anyone with California cuisine becoming a viable food genre, has stretched himself too thin -- seven restaurants in Vegas alone. No one can keep a personal watch on that many locations, and the result is that this one, the first sign that Vegas was becoming a viable restaurant destination, is now simply not our first, nor even second, choice for you to spend your hard-won jackpot money. The inside menu changes seasonally, but the signature -- and reliable -- dish is a Chinese-style duck, moist but with a perfectly crispy skin. It's about as good as duck gets, served with a doughy, steamed bun and Chinese vegetables. Our other suggestion is to come here for lunch, and that's still not the worst plan. Salads, sandwiches, and pastas are all pretty and generously portioned, and the signature Puck pizzas, like prosciutto and goat cheese and pear, are still quite good (ask for the off-the-menu and legendary "Jewish pizza," with salmon and crème fraîche). Nothing is all that innovative, however (braised leek and ham quiche with apple-smoked bacon -- good, but you've seen it before), and nothing stands out. Desserts can actually be so poor -- such as a dry chocolate cake -- we won't even bother finishing them. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 702/382-6538
fax: +1 702 382 0937
www.donamariatamales.com

location:
910 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89101

hours:
Sun-Thurs 8am-10pm; Fri-Sat 8am-11pm

6 Dona Maria Tamales

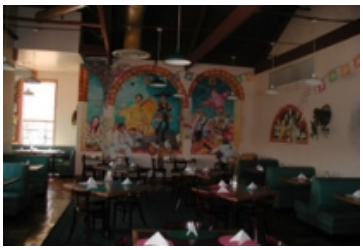

Photo courtesy of Dona Maria Tamales

DESCRIPTION: Decorated with Tijuana-style quilt work and calendars, this quintessential Mexican diner is convenient to both the north end of the Strip and Downtown. The cooks use lots of lard, lots of cheese, and lots of sauce. As a result, the food is really good -- and really fattening. Yep, the folks who did those health reports showing how bad Mexican food can be for your heart probably did some research here. The fat just makes it all the better, in our opinion. Locals apparently agree; even at lunchtime, the place is crowded. You will start off with homemade chips and a spicy salsa served in a mortar. Meals are so large that it shouldn't be a problem getting full just ordering off the sides, which can make this even more of a budget option. Naturally, the specialty is the fantastic tamales, which come in red, green, cheese, or sweet. They also serve up excellent enchiladas, chiles rellenos, burritos, and fajitas. All dinners include rice, beans, tortillas, and soup or salad. Sauces are heavy but oh-so-good. For dessert, they have flan, fried ice cream, and Mexican-style pumpkin pie. © Frommer's

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contact:
tel: 7026329364
http://www.mandalaybay.com/dining/burgerbar.aspx

location:
3950 Las Vegas Blvd S
Las Vegas NV 89119-1005

hours:
Mo to Th from 10:30 AM to 11:00 PM,Fr to Sa from 10:30 AM to 02:00 AM,Su from 10:00 AM to 11:00 PM

7 Burger Bar at Mandalay Bay

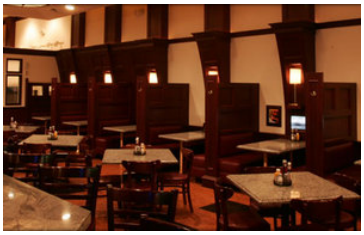

Photo courtesy of Burger Bar at Mandalay Bay

DESCRIPTION: The ultimate burger experience, from the famous restaurateur Hubert Keller of Fleur de Lys, comes to Mandalay Place. Incorporating the finest varieties of beef, buffalo, turkey, vegetarian and vegan products, a range of gourmet toppings and delicious buns, Burger Bar has a little bit of everything for the creative eater. Complete the experience with a Sweet Burger dessert or a hand-crafted micro brew. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 702/474-0229
www.capriottis.com

location:
324 W. Sahara Ave
Las Vegas NV 89102

hours:
Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 11am-5pm

8 Capriotti's

Photo courtesy of Capriotti's

DESCRIPTION: It looks like a dump, but Capriotti's is one of the great deals in town, for quality and price. They roast their own beef and turkey on the premises and stuff them (or Italian cold cuts, or whatever) into sandwiches mislabeled "small," "medium," and "large" -- the last clocks in at 20 inches, easily feeding two for under $10 total. And deliciously so. The "Bobby" (turkey, dressing, and cranberry sauce, like Thanksgiving dinner in sandwich form) would be our favorite sandwich in the world had we not tried the "Slaw B Joe": roast beef, coleslaw, and Russian dressing. But other combos, such as the aforementioned Italian cold cuts, have their fans, too, and Capriotti's even has veggie varieties. There are outlets throughout the city, but this one is not only right off the Strip but also right by the freeway. We never leave town without a stop here, and you shouldn't either. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 702/967-7999
http://www.harrahs.com/casinos/ballys-las-vegas/restaurants-dining/sterling-brunch-detail.html

location:
3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:
Sun 9:30am-2pm (last reservation at 1:30pm)

9 Bally's Sterling Sunday Brunch

wcities

DESCRIPTION: Now, the admittedly high cost of this brunch seems antithetical to the original purpose of a buffet: a lot of food for minimal money. However, if you're a dedicated buffet fan, this is probably a better spree than one of the many new high-priced restaurants. It works out to less money in the long run, and you will get, for your purposes, more bang for your buck. It's a fancy deal -- linen and silver-bedecked tables, waiters to assist you, if you choose -- and while the variety of food isn't as massive as at regular buffets, the quality is much higher in terms of both content and execution. We're talking unlimited champagne, broiled lobster, caviar, sushi, and rotating dishes of the day (items such as monkfish with pomegranate essence, tenderloin wrapped in porcini mushroom mousse, and even ostrich). No French toast that's been sitting out for days here! Perfect for a wedding breakfast or just a big treat; stay a long time and eat as much as you can. © Frommer's

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contact:
tel: 702/791-7111
http://lasvegas.citysearch.com/profile/11649299/las_vegas_nv/mirage_hotel_casino.html

location:
3400 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:
Daily 7-10pm

A Mirage Cravings Buffet

DESCRIPTION: Aesthetically, an incredible transformation from classic Vegas buffet (read: blah) style to a gleaming, streamlined look, all shining steel and up-to-the-minute high-design concept shades of green, blue, and red. Gone are the heaping mounds of shrimp and other symbols of Vegas excess and bargain. In its place are plenty of live-action stations, but minimal offerings, just a scant few in the (admittedly inclusive) categories. This probably helps with waste, but if you are used to matters the other way, it does feel mingy. Seniors won't like the poor signage; kids may get tired long before completing the lengthy circuit. No worries: The line starts with excellent pizza. Look for pot stickers and Chinese barbecue pork, quite good barbecue, tangy Japanese cuke salad, slightly dry but flavorful Mexican slow-roasted pork. A trip to the made-to-order salad station is so pokey, you'll need to find the other salads that are hidden with the open-faced sandwiches (where you can also find the gefilte fish). The desserts are generally disappointing. Despite the drawbacks -- we're probably just overthinking it anyway -- this remains popular with buffet connoisseurs. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Mirage Cravings Buffet

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Las Vegas Snapshot

Local Info

Las Vegas defies definition. This city in the desert is a gambling capital, vacation paradise, adventure destination, and premier business convention center rolled into one. Las Vegas is the city of neon and the city that never sleeps. Reality takes a hike when you enter the world of glittering casinos, and the hours trickle away in this realm of slot machines, roulette wheels, and high-stakes poker rooms. If you want to keep track of the time, be sure to wear a watch. Casinos don't have clocks, and they are open 24/7, year-round.

Las Vegas hotels range from utilitarian to luxurious, and options for entertainment come in every variety, from adults-only to family-friendly. As a business destination, Las Vegas wins hands-down with the volume of facilities and services available for either large conventions or small business get-togethers. Upscale eateries by chefs like Wolfgang Puck and Emeril Lagasse are found throughout Las Vegas, both on and off the Strip. Award-winning shows from Cirque du Soleil and adaptations of Broadway hits such asThe Phantom of the Opera grace the hotels' showrooms. Late-night entertainment is plentiful and diverse. Beyond the casinos, the Mojave Desert holds adventures like world-class rock climbing and mountain biking.

The Strip: Las Vegas Boulevard

The fabled five-mile area known as the Las Vegas Strip holds more hotel rooms than any other city in the world. You'll find famous and remarkable hotels, each with its own theme and ambiance.Bellagio's dancing fountains and Italian Renaissance aura ooze luxury.Caesars Palace recreates the glory of Rome, Vegas-style.The Venetian takes on another Italian city and era, duplicating Old World Venice, complete with canals and gondoliers. Old standbys include theFlamingo and theMirage, with its white tigers and erupting volcanoes. See theParis Las Vegas with outstanding replicas of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe andmagnifique Parisian atmosphere and charm.Treasure Island offers daily live pirate battles, free of charge. At the"bottom" or south end of the strip, risen from the ashes of the Hacienda Hotel, the magnificentMandalay Bay takes you to the tropics, including a pool with waves you can actually surf. At the top of the Strip, you will find theStratosphere Tower visible from miles away. It is the highest free-standing building in the western half of the United States, with views from the top that are indescribable.

You don't have to stay right on Las Vegas Boulevard to enjoy neon and glitz. Just off the Strip, places like theRio, thePalms, and theHard Rock Hotel and Casino are only a taxi ride away and offer easier access to areas beyond the Strip.

Downtown: Fremont Street

The original Las Vegas, where people hung out in the'30s and early'40s, is still thriving, but with a new face known as theFremont Street Experience. The Fremont Street Experience closed the fabled street to vehicle traffic, and its 90-foot overhead canopy contains state-of-the-art LED lights that create jaw-dropping images. Some tourists actually prefer this area to the Strip because room prices are generally lower. It's an easy walk from one casino to the next, and it's reminiscent of the early, nostalgic days of Las Vegas. TheNeon Museum has a permanent display along Fremont Street featuring Old Vegas signs, from Vegas Vic to Aladdin's Lamp. Nightly light shows on the canopy of the Fremont Street Experience are free, and street vendors hawk everything from spray-paint art to henna tattoos. In addition, there are famous hotels such asThe Plaza(formerly known as Union Plaza), overlooking Fremont Street, and the classicGolden Nugget. For nostalgia buffs, there is also the Golden Gate Hotel Casino, renovated to its earlier classic glory and appearance and still famous for the 99-cent shrimp cocktail.

Beyond the Strip

In the last two decades, Las Vegas has added residents at an astonishing rate, creating outlying neighborhoods full of homes and, of course, hotels and casinos. To the west of the Strip,Summerlin sits just outsideRed Rock Canyon and contains three hotel/casinos, along with several golf courses. East of the Strip,Henderson/Green Valley puts visitors a quick drive away fromLake Mead National Recreation Area and is home to the trendyGreen Valley Ranch Resort, which starred in its very own reality TV show for a while. In North Las Vegas, theLas Vegas Motor Speedway draws racing fans from all over the United States, and places like theCannery give them a place to stay close to the track.

If playing the tables isn't risky enough for you, you may want to try some of Las Vegas' outdoor adventures. Red Rock Canyon is ranked among the top five rock climbing destinations in the world and contains over 2,000 climbing routes. Bootleg Canyon inBoulder City is home to a network of mountain biking trails and a new zip-line adventure that speeds riders along a suspended cable high above the canyon.

Las Vegas Weather

Las Vegas is located in the Mojave Desert, which means that from roughly mid-May to late October, you can expect very hot temperatures, often over 100 degrees. The climate is quite dry, except during brief rainstorms—in which case be careful of flash flooding. If you're planning any outdoor activities, drink lots of water, wear sunscreen, and go as early in the day as possible. Better yet, save your desert explorations for the winter months, approximately November through April.

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Hotel Insights

Las Vegas Hotels Highlights

Deciding where to stay in Las Vegas can be challenging, simply because of the sheer number of choices. You'll want to consider the atmosphere, theme, and location of your accommodations. Room rates run the gamut from decadent to budget priced. With few exceptions, Las Vegas hotels offer everything you might need on-site —restaurants, shows, shopping, spas, sometimes even bowling alleys and movie theaters, and, of course, casinos. Once you arrive, you won't have to leave your hotel unless you want to.

The Las Vegas Strip

On the Strip, luxury permeates the newWynn Las Vegas and its neighbor,Encore. Built on the site of the old

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Desert Inn, Wynn and Encore have been showered with both praise and awards for their five-star accommodations. Further south on the Strip, theBellagio is probably best-known for its dancing fountains, but the amazing synchronized water show is secondary to the interior of the hotel. The Chihuly glass creation over the lobby is fascinating, and is a good indication of the Bellagio's attention to detail. Other notable Las Vegas luxury hotels include theMandalay Bay andTHEhotelat Mandalay Bay(which are interconnected), theVenetian, andCaesar's Palace. TheTrump International, which does not offer gaming, is another consideration for travelers looking for pampering, sophistication, and opulence.

If your budget calls for less extravagance, you have plenty of options, such as theParis Las Vegas,New York-New York,Excalibur(the medieval theme is terrific for families),Luxor(otherwise known as the big pyramid),Treasure Island, or theSahara, all of which are located on the Strip. Except for the Sahara, each of these hotels entertains visitors with distinct themes from other cities and/or other time periods. The Paris recreates the famous French city on a small scale, complete with an Eiffel Tower. Both the New York-New York and the Sahara have rollercoasters, and the Sahara offers the Las Vegas Cyber Speedway for your inner race car driver. The Treasure Island's nightly pirate show has always been popular, and they recently changed the show to "Sirens of the TI," so the show now includes a perennial Las Vegas favorite: scantily clad dancing girls. For a G-rated show, you can always go nextdoor to watch the volcano errupt atThe Mirage.

Downtown

Staying downtown will give you more of that Old Vegas feeling, without pyramids or rollercoasters. Downtown is a good place to stay if your major reason for visiting Las Vegas is strictly to gamble. None of Downtown's hotels have been imploded(yet), so favorites like theGolden Nugget,Binions, and thePlaza(formerly the Union Plaza) are still there. Downtown's nod to the modern era is theFremont Street Experience, which closed Fremont Street to traffic and connected the hotels with an overhead canopy that displays nightly light shows. If you're traveling with kids, however, Downtown hotels don't offer much in the way of entertainment for the under-21 age group.

Off the Strip

Off the Strip and in Las Vegas neighborhoods, the hotel casinos are smaller, and will appeal to visitors who want to stay away from the crowds on the Strip. The hip, upscalePalms is just a few blocks west of the Strip, as is the all-suitesRio.Station Casinos offers a chain of hotel casinos throughout Las Vegas, including the Gold Coast, the Texas, and Boulder Station. TheOrleans, a few blocks west of the Strip, frequently hosts reasonably-priced concerts and events. Non-gaming hotels include theAlexis Park and theRenaissance, and most major chains, such asMarriott andHoliday Inn, have non-gaming hotels in Las Vegas.

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Restaurants Insights

The good news about Las Vegas restaurants is that the city has officially shed its status as a restaurant backwater. The bad news is that eating out in Las Vegas isn't nearly as cheap as it used to be.

Las Vegas is now home to a variety of accomplished, award-winning chefs, some of whom will be well-known to foodies. Wolfgang Puck was one of the first celebrity chefs to set up shop in Las Vegas, beginning withSpago at Caesar's Palace; Puck now has five Strip restaurants, includingPostrio at the Venetian Hotel in the Grand Canal Shoppes. Thomas Keller has a place at the Venetian,Bouchon, which serves the fabulous bistro food he made famous in Napa Valley. Other culinary heavy-hitters in Las Vegas include Hubert Keller'sFleur de Lys at Mandalay Bay;Joel Robuchon's eponymous restaurant at the Mansion at MGM(also hisL'Atelier, for more casual dining); and Alex Strada'sAlex at Wynn.Emeril Lagasse has four restaurants in Las Vegas, most recently opening a sports bar and grill, Lagasse's Stadium, at the Palazzo.

Some Las Vegas restaurants integrate great food with beautiful décor and feasts for your eyes.Aureole at Mandalay Bay is known for its food and its wine angels, who fly though the wine racks to retrieve your selection of wine.Mix is acclaimed for its view and interior design just as much as for its food. Atop the Eiffel Tower at Paris Las Vegas, you can enjoy French cuisine at theEiffel Tower Restaurant while watching the Strip below you. For a more expansive view, theTop of the World Restaurant at the top of the Stratosphere will serve you gourmet entrees while you take in the view from the tallest structure west of the Mississippi—and the restaurant rotates.

In the years before Las Vegas restaurants went seriously upscale, the city's better restaurants were known for thick steaks. TheGolden Steer has been in business for over 50 years, and it's the perfect place to get a feel for the days before megaresorts. Downtown,Hugo's Cellar at the Four Queens is another long-time Las Vegas favorite. Also located Downtown,Chicago Joe's andDona Maria's Tamales offer diners authentic Italian and Mexican food, minus celebrity anything. West of the Strip,Rosemary's award-winning food draws both visitors and locals—it's in a rather nondescript shopping mall, but diners will be too enchanted with the food to notice anything else.

Naturally, if you're in Las Vegas, you'll have to try a buffet. Even though they're no longer the cheapest choice for meals, Las Vegas buffets are now known for their varied selections of food. The Golden Nugget was one of the first buffets to raise the price but also the quality of their food, and The Buffet is still worth visiting. The Mirage'sCravings, Bally'sSterling Sunday Brunch, and the Rio'sVillage Seafood Buffet are great places to experience the new and improved Las Vegas buffet.

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Things to Do Insights

Finding things to do in Las Vegas is easy. The Strip is dedicated to entertainment, from its lavish hotel casinos to its animal exhibits. Beyond the Strip, you'll find museums, an Arts District, and beautiful desert scenery.

Wander through any of the Strip's resorts to find plenty of gambling opportunities(you may want to join the casino's "club" for a variety of deals, if they have one). If you're not interested in gambling, almost every hotel has a spa designed to massage and

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pamper.Caesar's Palace,Planet Hollywood, and theVenetian have elaborately themed and designed shopping areas, complete with overhead skies in the ceiling that change from day to night periodically. Caesar's has talking statues and the Venetian features canals and gondolas. Animal lovers may enjoy the Mirage'sSecret Garden and Dolphin Habitat, the Mandalay Bay'sShark Reef, or the MGM Grand'sLion Habitat. Rollercoasters are a feature ofNew York-New York, theSahara, and theStratosphere. Downtown, theFremont Street Experience andNeon Museum give visitors all the bright lights they can handle along a pedestrian walkway that connects the Downtown casinos together.

Las Vegas museums offer a great deal of history about Southern Nevada. The state's oldest non-native building is located at theOld Mormon Fort(only a partial wall remains within another building). TheSprings Preserve is a new museum that features walking trails along with environmentally-friendly buildings and hands-on exhibits about Southern Nevada. TheAtomic Testing Museum details the history of the atomic bomb. The Downtown Arts District, along Charleston Avenue, is a growing community of galleries and restaurants. On the first Friday of every month, they hold a street festival.

Exploring the desert surrounding Las Vegas will take you to red sandstone cliffs and rock formations, rare desert springs, and a massive man-made lake.Lake Mead, the reservoir created byHoover Dam, sits adjacent to theValley of Fire State Park, Nevada's first state park. Look for bighorn sheep in this area.Red Rock Canyon, to the west of Las Vegas, is a popular destination with rock climbers, hikers, and horseback riders. To escape from the desert heat, visit Mt. Charleston, also known asSpring Mountain National Recreation Area. Las Vegas is also a good place to use a base camp for day trips in Death Valley, Zion National Park, and the Mojave National Preserve. Helicopter or plane tours to one of the rims of the Grand Canyon are also popular. The South and North Rims are part of the national park, and the West Rim, which is on Hualapai tribal land, features the Skywalk, a glass walkway that juts out over the canyon.

For guided tours:

Las Vegas Tours Haunted Vegas Tour(http://www.hauntedvegastours.com/) Papillion-Neon Light(+1 888 635 7272/http://www.papillon.com/) Scenic Airlines(+1 702 638 3300/ http://www.scenic.com/) Sundance Helicopters(+1 800 653 1881/http://www.helicoptour.com/)

Grand Canyon Tours Adventure Photo Tours(+1 702 889 8687/http://www.adventurephototours.com/) Eagle Canyon Airlines, Inc(+1 800 634 6801/http://www.scenic.com/) Grand Canyon Airlines(+1 866 235 9422/http://www.grandcanyonairlines.com/) Grand Canyon Coaches(+1 702 577 9056/ http://www.grandcanyoncoaches.com/) Scenic Airlines(+1 702 638 3300/http://www.scenic.com/)

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Adventure Tours All Las Vegas Tours Inc.(+1 800 566 5868/http://www.alllasvegastours.com/) Sun Buggy Fun Rentals(+1 866 728 4443/http://www.sunbuggyfunrentals.com/) Sunset Cowboy Dinner Ride(+1 877 444 4464/ http://www.awesomeadventureguide.com/)
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Fun Facts

1. The legal age for gambling and drinking in Las Vegas is 21. No exceptions.

2. Prostitution is not legal in Clark County, where Las Vegas is located. It is legal in the neighboring county of Nye, a short drive away.

3. Interesting fact: The Shark Reef at the Mandalay Bay is North America's only predator-based aquarium. It's also Nevada's first and only animal facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

4. Las Vegas is about 280 miles from the South Rim of Arizona's Grand Canyon.

5. Las Vegas is in the Mojave Desert, North America's smallest desert.

6. Average rainfall in Las Vegas is about 4.5 inches.

7. Fun fact: The Clark County Marriage License Bureau is open seven days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to midnight.

8. In 2009, over 36 million visitors came to Las Vegas.

9. Random fact: According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Las Vegas has 148,941 hotel rooms available.

10. Gambling became legal in Las Vegas in 1931.

11. The Stratosphere is the tallest observation tower west of the Mississippi River. Original plans called for it to be even taller.

12. Weird fact: Boulder City, just outside of Las Vegas, is one of only two Las Vegas towns that do not allow gambling.(The other town is Panaca.)

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