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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



DrPleishner

Best Places to Stay in Las Vegas

Las Vegas, 1 Day

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Guide Description












AUTHOR NOTE: The vast array of Las Vegas hotels gives visitors some tough choices about where to stay. For famous and classy, stay at the Bellagio. Upper-crust opulence is found at Wynn. The MGM Grand offers spacious rooms. The fantastic pool areas at the Mirage and Mandalay Bay will make you forget about doing anything but swimming. To be transported to another city or era, try Paris or the Venetian. A good, old-fashioned Vegas hotel is the Golden Nugget. Off the Strip, the Green Valley Ranch Resort and Red Rock Resort make great places to stay away from the crowds. ~Thank you to Joakim Syversen for his picture of the Bellagio.~

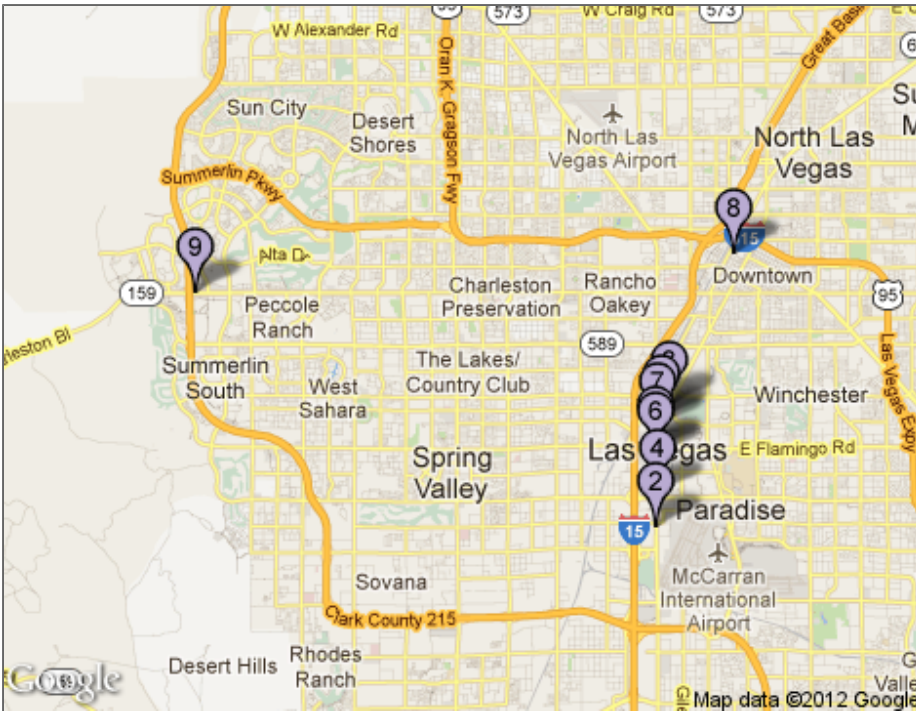
Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Las Vegas

	Bellagio Plush Resort Defines Luxury
	Mandalay Bay A tropical-themed hotel with a incredible pool area
	Wynn Las Vegas The Last Word In Luxury
	MGM Grand Hotel & Casino Huge hotel casino on the South Strip
	The Venetian Venice In Las Vegas
	Paris Las Vegas C'est Magnifique
	The Mirage The iconic Vegas resort, complete with erupting volcano
	Golden Nugget Old Favorite, New Look
	Red Rock Resort Upscale resort on the western edge of Las Vegas

Day 1 - Las Vegas



QUICK NOTE

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3600 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

1 Bellagio

DESCRIPTION: This is the luxury resort that ushered in the new post-Vegas-is-for-families elegance epoch, and it was so successful that many of its attributes can now be found, in varying forms, up the street at the Wynn resort. It's hard not to compare the two, and which you prefer will depend on your aesthetics. We give the edge to Bellagio because even though it is not as theme-intensive as it could be, it still has some elements drawn from its charming Lake Como village namesake, and we do prefer even our resorts to have some of old school Vegas silliness, however slight. In this case, it's an 8-acre Lake Como stand-in out front, complete with a dazzling choreographed water-ballet extravaganza, plus a representation of an Italian lakeside village, while the pool area is sort of Hearst Castle Romanesque. However, don't think this is much like a getaway to a peaceful, romantic Italian village because it's not. But it is exactly like going to a big, grand, state-of-the-art Vegas hotel. To expect more probably isn't fair, but then again, they tried to set the tone with dreamy, soft-focus TV ads aired when the hotel debuted. Nothing with a casino stuck in the middle of it can be that serene and restful. But does it work as a luxury hotel? Sort of. It certainly is much closer to a European casino hotel than a Vegas one. Fabulous touches abound, including a lobby that's unlike any other in Vegas. It's not just grand, with marble and an eye-popping Dale Chihuly blown-glass flower sculpture on the ceiling (the largest of its kind in the world), but it's also brave with plants, natural lighting, and actual seating. There's also a downright lovely conservatory, complete with a 100-year-old fountain



stuffed full of gorgeous, brightly colored flowers and plants, preposterously (and delightfully) changed every few weeks to go with the season (yellows and whites for Easter, for example, though we could have done without the ginormous animatronic bald eagle chicks as part of the extremely gaudy July 4th decor) -- it's one of the sweetest spots in all of Vegas. On the downside, you still can't avoid a walk through the casino to get just about anywhere (with the inevitable ruckus shattering your blissful state every time you exit the elevators from your room). At least the casino is laid out in an easy-to-navigate grid with wide aisles. (**Tip:** Black floral carpets indicate the main casino paths.) Another downside is that there are hidden charges galore, such as a pricey fee for the spa, another one for poolside cabanas. The rooms are quite nice, better than ever thanks to a recent redo that changed the colors from the usual resort-sand to a more cosmopolitan look with handsome sage greens and dark woods, but given the relatively puny size, it may still not be enough for the price. Having said that, you can find deals on Bellagio's website, depending on day of week and time of year. Furnishings are plush (good, cushy beds with quality linens, comfy chairs), the roomy bathrooms even more so (marble and glass plus good-smelling soap and hair dryers -- it works every time), but it's all just a busier and slightly more luxurious variation on what's found over at TI-Treasure Island. Strip-side rooms, while featuring a much-desired view of the hotel's dancing water fountains, don't quite muffle the booms the fountains make as they explode (although we didn't find it annoying). Rooms in the newer Spa Tower are more desirable if you want a shorter walk to the pool and the gym and spa areas (guests in the original building will have a long jog around the casino perimeter instead), but only a "partial" (read: a bit set back with a parking lot in the foreground) view of the fountains. Note that a channel on the TV will play the songs as the fountains dance because you can't quite hear the music from your room. Still, service is top-notch, despite the size of the place; the staff is eager to please and nonpatronizing. Meanwhile, many of the better restaurants are found in Bellagio. And the man who brought us a free pirate show and a volcano explosion now brings us a **water ballet**, courtesy of a dancing fountain with jets timed to a rotating list of songs (everything from pop to Sinatra to Broadway to opera). This sounds cheesy, but it absolutely is not. It's really quite delightful and even witty (no, really) and is the best free show in Vegas. Bellagio also features an upscale casino and **O**, one of the most incredible shows yet from Cirque du Soleil. Bellagio is also home to **Petrossian Bar**, and **The Bank**, a high-end nightclub. The hotel's pool area has skidded to the top of our favorites list; it boasts six swimming pools (two heated year-round and two with fountains) geometrically set in a neoclassical Roman garden, with flowered, trellised archways and Italian opera piped in over the sound system. The Grand Patio could have come right off a movie set (pillars, domes, you get the idea). A more sophisticated environment than the tropical party over at The Mirage (our other favorite), it is surely the sort of place where thonged model types hang out with moneyed Eurotrash -- it comes off as that chic. The **health club** is marvelous, large, and well stocked with top-of-the-line machines, with natural light coming in through windows to the outside world, but at \$25 a pop, it's pretty

pricey if all you want is a simple session on a treadmill (though with your fee, you are allowed to return throughout the day for additional soakings/steamings/workouts). Attendants ply you with iced towels and drinks. The **spa** is not quite as pretty as some others around town, but it does offer a full range of pricey treatments and has a serene soaking area, with plunge pools ranging in temperature from icy to boiling. In addition to drinks and snacks, smoothies are sometimes offered -- take one. The shopping area, called **Via Bellagio**, features all the stores that advertise in color in glossy magazines: Tiffany, Armani, Gucci, Prada, Hermès, and the like. There's also an **art gallery** that boasts enough highly regarded works to draw some million visitors a year. What does all this add up to? As good as a casino-hotel can provide and perform the duties of a luxury resort experience, certainly. If it doesn't quite work, that's probably more the fault of the initial concept than the hotel itself. **Facilities:** 14 restaurants; nightclub; casino; showrooms; wedding chapel; 6 outdoor pools; large health club; spa; concierge; tour desk; car-rental desk; business center; elegant shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; in-room massage; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms
© Frommer's

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Las Vegas NV 89119

2 Mandalay Bay

DESCRIPTION: Mandalay Bay brings the tropics to Las Vegas. Palm trees, a beach, and a hint of coconut in the air give guests the feeling that they've landed in South Pacific instead of the Southwestern United States. It's not just the atmosphere that makes Mandalay Bay a popular Vegas resort. It's upscale but friendly, hip but good for kids. Somehow, this resort manages to really embody the idea of something for everyone, and it does it well.

Deluxe rooms are large—over 500 square feet—and feature upgraded and updated amenities, including pillow-top mattresses and flat screen television. More importantly, the rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows. Suites come in seven different styles, and hospitality suites are available. A resort fee covers incidentals like Internet access and phone calls.

Mandalay Bay's pool area is so inviting that a person could easily skip doing anything other than relaxing on its sandy beach. The pool area is just short of a water park and includes a lazy river and a wave pool. Adults-only areas are available, and a European-style (tops optional) is also offered.

Over twenty restaurants are onsite. Choices range from fast food to award-winning places like Aureole. Guests staying at Mandalay Bay don't need to worry about finding a place to eat. The Shark Reef is a small exhibit/aquarium that showcases sharks, rays, reptiles, and fish. An exclusive boutique mall at Mandalay Place offers upscale shops and restaurants. A tram connects Mandalay Bay to the Excalibur and Luxor, so guests can easily explore these neighboring properties.

Mandalay Bay is located on the south Strip and is close to the MGM Grand, New York-New York, and the Tropicana. Visitors



Photo courtesy of cayusa

who don't mind walking will find it easy to navigate the area on foot.

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contact:

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3 Wynn Las Vegas

DESCRIPTION: Wynn is named after its owner, Steve Wynn, the Las Vegas visionary who breathed new life into the Golden Nugget, remade the face of Las Vegas with the Mirage, and figured out how to sink ships in front of the Treasure Island. After changing the Strip's design aesthetic, Steve Wynn moved on and opened Wynn, ushering in (again) a whole new look and feel for Las Vegas hotel casinos.

Wynn, along with its sister property, Encore, are among the most awarded and acclaimed hotels in the world. Wynn has received more Forbes Travel five-star awards than any other hotel in the world. It's also a five-diamond AAA winner. Classy, understated luxury is the "theme" here. Instead of mega-hotel, Wynn is aiming for a boutique feel (although Wynn's size qualifies it in the mega category).

The large rooms at Wynn consistently earn high marks from travelers. Guests enjoy fabulous views, luxury bed linen, and first-class room accoutrements (flat screen TVs, of course). At Wynn, visitors can enjoy a resort stuffed full of fine dining options (22 restaurants) and a Cirque du Soleil show, Le Reve, along with a host of other entertainment options.

Built on the site of the Desert Inn, Wynn gives Vegas visitors a whole new experience. No more pirates, no more faux cities, just luxury and first-class. This may not have the appeal to kids that the themed places offer, but discriminating adults will enjoy the exclusive experience that Wynn offers.

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Hotels.com

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<http://www.mgmgrand.com/>

location:

3799 Las Vegas Blvd. S

Las Vegas NV 89109

4 MGM Grand Hotel & Casino

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Take advantage of the "you are here" maps to find your way in this huge hotel casino.

DESCRIPTION: The MGM Grand Hotel is one of the largest hotels in the world. "Grand" is the right word for this hotel casino, which holds thousands of rooms that range from fairly basic (both in design and price) to elaborate suites.

The MGM is located right on the Strip, and it also has its own Monorail stop. Two pedestrian walkways in front of the MGM offer easy access to the other hotels in the immediate vicinity (New York-New York, Excalibur, and Tropicana).

Rooms come with double pillow-top mattresses, large bathrooms, and sitting areas even in the standard rooms. The top two floors of the hotel are The Skylofts, exclusive



Hotels.com

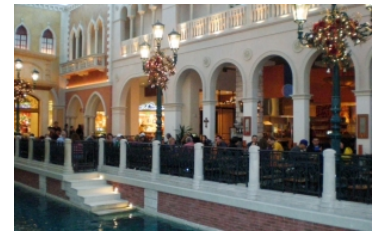
accommodations that come with a butler. Signature, also part of the MGM, is a non-smoking, non-gaming, all-suites complex connected to the main hotel. The variety of rooms gives guests the chance to make sure they have a room that is right for them. An \$18.00 a day resort fee does apply to cover high speed internet, daily newspaper, and other extras. Over twelve restaurants are on site. For entertainment, MGM has a Cirque du Soliel show, Ka, and an adult revue, Crazy Horse Paris. The MGM Grand Garden Arena hosts large concerts and shows. Studio 54 (reincarnated from its days in New York) and Tabu make up the nightclub/bar scene. The pool complex is like a water park—five pools are available—and the chic adult day club, Wet Republic, gives grown-ups a place to enjoy the water.
© NileGuide

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3355 Las Vegas Blvd. S
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5 The Venetian

DESCRIPTION: One of the most elaborate hotel spectacles in town, The Venetian falls squarely between an outright adult Disneyland experience and the luxury resort experience currently dominating the Vegas landscape. The big draw here is the rooms, all suites, and all successful examples of that same luxury resort mindset, though the commitment to theme in the Grand Canal Shoppes is certainly appealing. The hotel's exterior, which re-creates most of the top landmarks of Venice (the Campanile, a portion of St. Mark's Square, part of the Doge's Palace, a canal or two), ranks right up there with New York-New York as a must-see, and since you can wander freely through the "sights," it even has a slight edge over New York-New York. This may be the only hotel in Vegas where it seems inviting to wander around outside in the front. As stern as we get about re-creations not being a substitute for the real thing, we have to admit that the attention to detail here is impressive indeed. Stone is aged for that weathered look, statues and tiles are exact copies of their Italian counterparts, security guards wear Venetian police uniforms -- all that's missing is the smell from the canals, but we are happy to let that one slide. Inside, it's more of the same, particularly in the lobby area and the entrance to the extraordinary shops, as ceilings are covered with hand-painted re-creations of Venetian art. With plenty of marble, soaring ceilings, and impressive pillars and archways, it's less kitschy than Caesars but more theme park than Bellagio. The lobby says classy hotel, if "classy hotel on steroids." The lobby, casino, and shops can all be accessed from outside through individual entrances, which helps avoid that irritating circuitous maneuvering required by most other locations. This is all the more appreciated because the casino seems to have a most confusing layout, with poor signage; perhaps it's just our problem with spatial navigation, but we consistently got lost on the way to the guest elevators. A room makeover has pared down the previously over-the-top fussy decor, which is a good thing, but then again, apart from the size it's not as dreamily romantic on the eye. Now the suites have the same sleek new look as The Palazzo, though the beds lack The Palazzo's fluffy comforters. The towels are nicer here.



wcities

You still can't see the bathroom TV from the tub. The marbled bathrooms rocketed virtually to the top of our list of favorites, in a tie for second place with those at Bellagio. (Mandalay Bay's THEhotel are the best.) Devices for the hearing-impaired (ranging from door-knock lights to vibrating alarm clocks and telecaption decoders) are available upon request. Despite the niceties, there is a certain amount of price gouging at this hotel that unpleasantly reminds one of the real Venice. There is a charge for that in-room faxing and printing, and the minibar is automated so that if you so much as rearrange items inside, you are charged for it. And all this is even before the **Venezia Tower**, with over 1,000 more rooms, with the same large and lush footprint and style as the originals. The tower has its own check-in and gestalt -- somehow, it comes off even more lush than the original hotel, which is pretty frilly to start. It's like a Four Seasons on human growth hormones, with over-the-top opulence. The gas lamp-lit lobby hallway slays us, as do the flatscreen TVs in the bathrooms. Rooms here cost about \$35 more a night (in theory -- in practice, anything goes with hotel pricing in Vegas) and we would spend it. The trend toward casino hotels adding additions that are away from a casino -- "Nope, no slot machines here. We are just a luxury hotel. Really!" -- is a disingenuous stance that is actually entirely genius. There are many who prefer their Vegas at arm's length, whose finest compliment for a hotel is, "It doesn't seem like it's in Vegas." These people are willing to spend extra to stay in a grown-up atmosphere, and certainly are more inclined to want a comfortable room -- and nothing says "comfortable room" like "plasma TV in the bathroom." Many celebrity chefs and high-profile restaurants are in residence at The Venetian. Eateries include **Bouchon** (by Thomas Keller, perhaps America's top chef), **Delmonico Steakhouse**, **Canaletto**, **Valentino**, **Mario Batali's B&B Ristorante** and **Pinot Brasserie**. Nightlife options include the **Blue Man Group** and a special production of the long-running **Phantom of the Opera**. And, of course, there is an elegant but confusingly laid-out casino. The Venetian has five pools and whirlpools, but its pool area is disappointingly sterile and bland. Pools are neoclassical (think rectangles with the corners lopped off), and the fourth-floor location probably means that more dense foliage is not going to be forthcoming. The Venezia Tower has a courtyard pool area that is amusing, but the water space is tiny. The **Canyon Ranch SpaClub** is run by a branch of arguably the finest getaway spa in America. This is an unbelievably lavish facility, certainly the finest hotel spa in town. From the Bed Head and Bumble & Bumble products on sale in the shop to the nutritionists, physical therapists, and acupuncturists on the staff to the vibrating massage chairs that you rest in during pedicures -- geez, what more could you want? Well, we want our own home gym to be as nice as the one here, with ample equipment, racks of big TVs, and a staff eager to help you with advice and bring you bottled water. The \$35-a-day fee is high, but it does include a full day's worth of classes, ranging from regular aerobics to yoga, Pilates, and dance. Did we mention the rock-climbing wall, which, because this is Vegas, costs extra? The **Grand Canal Shoppes** rank with the Caesars Palace shops as an absolute must-see. Like Caesars, the area is a mock Italian village with a blue, cloud-studded, painted sky overhead. But down the middle runs a canal, complete with

singing gondoliers. (The 10-min. ride costs about \$15, which seems steep, but trust us, it's a lot more in the real Venice.) The entire thing finishes up at a small re-creation of St. Mark's Square, which features glass blowers, traveling musicians, flower sellers, and the like. Expect to run into famous Venetians such as a flirty Casanova and a travel-weary Marco Polo. It's ambitious and a big step up from animatronic figures. Oh, and the stores are also probably worth a look -- a decent mixture of high-end fashion and more affordable shops. **Facilities:** 18 restaurants; casino; showroom; wedding chapels; 6 outdoor pools; health club; spa; concierge; tour desk; car-rental desk; business center; extensive shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms © Frommer's

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South
Las Vegas NV 89109

6 **Paris Las Vegas**

DESCRIPTION: Location. Designed to emulate 1920s Paris with replicas of the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe, the Paris Las Vegas is located on the south end of The Strip in Las Vegas, Nev. The Paris Las Vegas connects to Bally's Las Vegas via an interior passageway. This property is located adjacent to Planet Hollywood Hotel & Casino.

Hotel Features. Positioned on the 11th floor of the Eiffel Tower, the Eiffel Tower Restaurant serves classic French cuisine including seasoned lamb and foie gras. Meats and cheeses served at Le Village Buffet are selected from each French province of origin. The hotel features an 85,000-square-foot casino housed beneath a replica of Paris' wrought-iron train platforms. The hotel offers a pool complex with a seasonal pool and two oval spa tubs. Located on the pool deck, Café Du Parc offers views of the Eiffel Tower. The Paris Spa by Mandara, the hotel's 26,000-square-foot spa, includes a fitness center, sauna, steam room, spa tub and vanity bar. The spa offers Balinese health treatments and massages and wraps that include the Elemis Exotic Coconut Rub and Milk Ritual Wrap. Le Boulevard recalls outdoor Paris with storefronts, streetlamps, stone paths and sky-simulated ceilings.

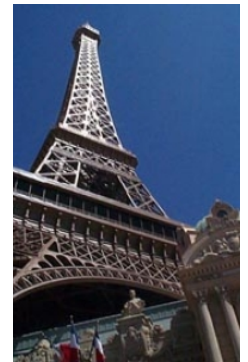
Guestrooms. The Paris Las Vegas' 2,916 guestrooms feature French-inspired décor and custom European furnishings. Select rooms feature complimentary in-room safes, built-in wet bars with sinks and refrigerators, and separate seating areas with sofas and coffee tables. Bathrooms contain marble bathtubs, separate showers and Gilchrist & Soames toiletries. Select bathrooms include jetted tubs and dual sinks. High-speed Internet access is available for a fee.

Expert Tip. The hotel provides complimentary shuttle service to a partner property, the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino.

Please Note:

The hotel requires photo identification and a credit card deposit (per day) or a cash deposit (per stay) at check-in for incidental charges. Cash deposits can be applied to in-room movies and telephone charges only. Check-in is not permitted if the requested deposit is not provided.

© wcities.com



wcities

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location:

3400 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

7 The Mirage

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

One of the best things about the Mirage is its location, right in the heart of the Strip.

DESCRIPTION: The Mirage was a ground-breaking Las Vegas hotel casino when it was built. Its erupting volcano and extravagant landscaping were firsts for the Strip, and it set a standard for hotels as entertainment. Over twenty years later, the Mirage remains a AAA Four Diamond resort. With a prime location in the center of the Strip, updated rooms, and a large selection of onsite amenities, the iconic Mirage is still a popular Vegas hotel casino. Three types of standard guest room layouts are available. Several styles of suites, as well as luxury villas (complete with backyards), are available. Rooms have been updated with modern décor and amenities like LCD TVs, MP3 player docks, and cordless phones. The Mirage has several restaurants in all price ranges. Shows include LOVE, the Cirque du Soleil tribute to the Beatles, and the Terry Factor Show. Nightclubs, a pool "day club," and several bars and lounges are available for guests. Finding a place to eat, drink, or be entertained is never a problem at the Mirage. The volcano erupts every hour in the evenings. The Secret Garden and Dolphin Exhibit are family-friendly, although rather small. The Mirage is next to the Treasure Island and Caesars Palace, and across from the Venetian. A tram connects the Mirage to the TI.
© NileGuide



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<http://www.goldennugget.com>

location:

129 E. Fremont St
Las Vegas NV 89101

8 Golden Nugget

DESCRIPTION: Always the standout hotel in the Downtown area, a recent face-lift has made it more appealing than ever, so while it's not the cheapest accommodations, it is by far the nicest. A massive face-lift has made the place look terrific; a new color scheme has given it a rich, deep look that is most posh and fresh. Everything feels brighter, lighter, and more spacious. The re-do is a good complement of the best of old and new Vegas; new enough not to be dated, but still user friendly. The Golden Nugget opened in 1946 as the first building in Las Vegas constructed specifically for casino gambling. Steve Wynn, who is basically responsible for the "new" Vegas hotel look, took over the Golden Nugget as his first major project in Vegas in 1973. He gradually transformed the Old West/Victorian interiors (typical for Downtown) into something more high-rent and genuinely luxurious, especially for downtown Vegas. The sunny interior spaces are a welcome change from the Las Vegas tradition of dim artificial lighting. Don't forget their mascot (well, it ought to be): the world's largest gold nugget. The Hand of Faith nugget weighs in at 61 pounds, 11 ounces, and is on display for all to see. Deluxe rooms are done in pretty floral schemes, and are attractive and comfortable enough that you don't need to splash out on the more contemporary gold-club rooms. In the North Tower,



the rooms are slightly larger than in the South (smaller than the newer Strip places but not at all "small"). You don't have to walk through the casino to get to your room, but you do have to walk a distance to get to the newly redone pool, a chic and snazzy highlight, complete with a water slide that goes right through a glass tunnel in the shark tank. And check out that underwater restaurant! The presence of the pool, and general overall quality, makes this the best hotel Downtown for families; the other Downtowners seem geared toward the much older set and/or the single-minded gambler set. The **Golden Nugget Buffet** is home to a fine Sunday brunch. Oh, and yes, there is a casino. Don't think they'd forget that! The Nugget's top-rated health club (\$20 per day) offers a full line of Universal equipment, Lifecycles, stair machines, treadmills, rowing machines, free weights, steam sauna, and massage. Salon treatments include everything from leg waxing to seaweed-mask facials. Free Sebastian products are available for sprucing up afterward. The spa's opulent Palladian-mirrored foyer is modeled after a room in New York's Frick Museum. © Frommer's

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<http://www.redrocklasvegas.com>

location:

11011 W. Charleston Rd
Las Vegas NV 89135

9 Red Rock Resort

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Terrific option for visitors who want a different kind of Vegas experience, away from the crowds on the Strip.

DESCRIPTION: Located on the far west side of Las Vegas, the Red Rock Resort is at least a 20-minute drive from the Strip. While it may be far away from the tourist corridor, this neighborhood hotel casino has not skimped on amenities or design. The Red Rock Resort is aiming for boutique-like, and its rooms offer terrific views of either the Strip or Red Rock Canyon. For visitors who want something different from the usual Strip scene, this hotel casino provides a departure from the Vegas norm.

Rooms and suites are available, and all include a 42" plasma television and iPod jack, as well as standard amenities. The resort has received the AAA Four Diamond Award. The \$24.99 per day resort fee includes internet access, phone calls, and other incidentals.

This is a resort, so it does have a full spa. Limited childcare is available at Kids Quest. Movie theaters and a bowling alley are options away from the casino. The pool area is up to current Vegas standards—which means you can rent a cabana or enjoy the adults-only area. Ten restaurants, plus a food court and buffet, give guests plenty of dining options, and the resort has three bars. Concerts are held frequently, so anyone planning a visit should check the events calendar for the scheduled performances.

A shuttle to the Strip's Fashion Show Mall runs several times a day. Access to the 215 Beltway freeway is right next to the Red



Hotels.com

Rock. Guests who would like to do more than explore the hotel casino and its immediate neighborhood will should rent a car.
© NileGuide

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 as *The 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 the Flamingo and the Mirage, with its white tigers and erupting volcanoes. See the Paris Las Vegas with

outstanding replicas of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and magnifique 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 magnificent Mandalay Bay takes you to the tropics, including a pool with waves you can actually surf. At the top of the Strip, you will find the Stratosphere 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 the Rio, the Palms, and the Hard 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 the Fremont 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. The Neon 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 as The Plaza (formerly known as Union Plaza), overlooking Fremont Street, and the classic Golden 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 outside Red 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 from Lake Mead National Recreation Area and is home to the trendy Green Valley Ranch Resort, which starred in its very own reality TV show for a while. In North Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Motor Speedway draws racing fans from all over the United States, and places like the Cannery 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 in Boulder 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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