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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



DrPleishner

Business Travel to Las Vegas: Around the Corner from the Convention Center

Las Vegas, 3 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Thousands of conventions are held in Las Vegas every year, and it's for good reasons. Facilities for conventions and amenities for business travelers are abundant, and who can resist a trip to Vegas? Even if your commitments leave you with only a few hours to spare, Las Vegas has plenty of attractions to satisfy those on a schedule. Every hotel has several bars and restaurants to choose from when you're off the clock, and since you're in Vegas, a slot machine is never far away.
~Picture by Paul Little~

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Las Vegas

DAY NOTE: If you're attending a convention or show at the Las Vegas Convention Center, pick the Hilton or Renaissance for walking-distance accommodations. To travel in and out of the area without getting caught in traffic on the Strip, use Paradise Road for north/south travel and Desert Inn for east/west travel. To get onto the Strip from Paradise Road, go west on Sands Avenue, Sahara, or Flamingo. To avoid driving completely, take the Monorail, which can take you from the Hilton to the MGM Grand in about 20 minutes, where you can have a drink and something to eat at Wolfgang Puck's Bar and Grill. The Stratosphere is a five-minute drive from the Convention Center, and there you can see the view from the tallest building west of the Mississippi—if you're daring, try the rides at the top. For dinner, experience Old Vegas at the Golden Steer, or sample the hummus at Paymon's Mediterranean Café and Lounge..

	Renaissance Las Vegas Hotel A boutique-like non-gaming, non-smoking hotel
	Stratosphere Tower America's tallest observation tower
	Wolfgang Puck Bar and Grill Traditional bar and grill - Puck style
	Paymon's Mediterranean Cafe & Lounge Voted Best Greek
	Golden Steer Steakhouse Classic dining since 1958

Day 2 - Las Vegas

DAY NOTE: The history of the atomic bomb is presented in detail at the Atomic Testing Museum, and you won't be far from Firefly, which serves Spanish tapas. Toward Downtown, the Potato Valley Café will fill you up for breakfast or lunch (it's a ten or fifteen minute drive from the Convention Center). For elegant after-convention cocktails, try Fontana at the Bellagio.

	The Atomic Testing Museum The history of the atomic bomb and the Nevada Test Site
	Potato Valley Cafe Lunch done right



Fontana Bar at the Bellagio

Day 3 - Las Vegas

DAY NOTE: Work off that convention-related restlessness at the Sahara Hotel's Cyber Speedway, either with a virtual race car or on the rollercoaster (at the NASCAR Café, eat the entire six-pound B3 burrito to win a life-time pass on the rollercoaster). For delicious, authentic bagels, take a detour to Harry's Bagelmania. Wind down at the ESPN Zone at New York-New York to get your sports fix, or go to Red Square in the Mandalay Bay to satisfy your need for a good shot of vodka. Yolie's Brazilian Steakhouse serves delicious steak in a casual atmosphere, just what you need before you make the trip home.

	SPEED: The Ride/Las Vegas Cyber Speedway Closed May 2011
	Harrie's Bagelmania New York bagels in Las Vegas
	ESPN Zone (New York-New York) You're not dreaming
	Red Square Caviar, Vodka & More
	Yolie's Brazilian Steakhouse and Seafood Unique Brazilian dining

Day 1 - Las Vegas

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: If you're attending a convention or show at the Las Vegas Convention Center, pick the Hilton or Renaissance for walking-distance accommodations. To travel in and out of the area without getting caught in traffic on the Strip, use Paradise Road for north/south travel and Desert Inn for east/west travel. To get onto the Strip from Paradise Road, go west on Sands Avenue, Sahara, or Flamingo. To avoid driving completely, take the Monorail, which can take you from the Hilton to the MGM Grand in about 20 minutes, where you can have a drink and something to eat at Wolfgang Puck's Bar and Grill. The Stratosphere is a five-minute drive from the Convention Center, and there you can see the view from the tallest building west of the Mississippi—if you're daring, try the rides at the top. For dinner, experience Old Vegas at the Golden Steer, or sample the hummus at Paymon's Mediterranean Café and Lounge..

contact:

tel: +1 702 784 5700

fax: +1 702 735 3130

<http://www.renaissancelasvegas.com>

location:

3400 Paradise Rd
Las Vegas NV 89109

1 Renaissance Las Vegas Hotel

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The Renaissance specializes in upscale service and facilities for business travelers. A Marriott hotel.

DESCRIPTION: Not all Las Vegas visitors want to stay in a hotel casino, and the Renaissance is one of several hotels that offer non-gaming accommodations--and the property is smoke-free as well. It's close to the Las Vegas Convention Center and Las Vegas Monorail, and just off the Las Vegas Strip. Rooms are upscale, with flat panel TVs, high-speed internet, a coffee maker, refrigerator, and quality bedding. Standard rooms and suites are available. On site dining includes the award-winning restaurant, Envy The Steakhouse, and Envy the Lounge, along with a cafe. Business travelers will appreciate the 24-hour business center and on site rental car counter. Renaissance has a pool, a health center, and a concierge--and in addition to being right on the doorstep of the Las Vegas Convention Center, it also offers meeting facilities, along with catering. Renaissance earned the AAA Four Diamond Award, and it strives to offer a luxury, boutique-like experience. With less than 600 rooms, it's a small hotel by Las Vegas standards, and it wants to offer guests a different kind of Vegas hotel
© NileGuide



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contact:

tel: +1 702 380 7777 / +1 800 998 6937
http://www.stratospherehotel.com/Tower

location:

2000 Las Vegas Boulevard South
Las Vegas NV 89104

2 Stratosphere Tower

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Fun, family-friendly place to visit. Rides are closed during bad weather.

DESCRIPTION: The Stratosphere is America's tallest observation tower (1,149 feet) and one of the tallest structures west of the Mississippi River. At the very top, the daring get their adrenaline going on one of the thrill rides: The Big Shot, which shoots its riders into the air; the X-Scream, a teeter-totter that dangles you over the side; the Insanity, which spins you over a thousand feet of thin air; and the Sky Jump, where you can free-fall your way to the bottom.

You don't have to be a thrill seeker to visit the top of the Stratosphere. A rotating restaurant, the Top of the World Restaurant, takes advantage of the view to offer a memorable meal. You'll also find bars and lounges here. Tickets to the top of the Stratosphere are \$16. An indoor and outdoor observation deck are available. The Stratosphere's wedding chapel also offers services at the top.

© NileGuide



contact:

tel: 7028913000
fax: +1 702 891 3263
http://www.wolfgangpuck.com/rest/fine/bargrill/las_vegas/

location:

3799 Las Vegas Blvd South
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:

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

3 Wolfgang Puck Bar and Grill

DESCRIPTION: Located in MGM Grand Hotel, the Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill has modernized the traditional bar and grill concept in a setting that combines California beach lifestyle with a fine dining experience. The diverse menu features appetizers like Truffled Potato Chips with blue cheese and Skirt Steak Skewers. Entree selections include gourmet pizzas, panini and foccacia sandwiches, burgers, steaks, pasta, and fresh seafood. An extensive wine list and delicious homemade desserts complete the Wolfgang Puck experience. Private dining is also available here. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: 702/731-6030
fax: +1 702 731 2220
www.paymons.com

location:

4147 S. Maryland Pkwy
Las Vegas NV 89119

hours:

Restaurant Sun-Thurs
11am-1am, Fri-Sat
11am-3am; lounge Mon-Thurs
5pm-1am, Fri-Sat 5pm-3am

4 Paymon's Mediterranean Cafe & Lounge

DESCRIPTION: The emphasis on safe, mainstream food for the masses, to say nothing of the basic economy involved in running a Vegas restaurant (take your pick, either pay costly rent to a Strip hotel or get less tourist traffic with an off-Strip site), means that the kind of eateries other big cities take for granted -- you know, cheap holes-in-the-wall, or charming little quirky joints, or the kind of ethnic places the chowhound folks brag about discovering -- are rare indeed. And when you do find them, they are always, but always, in a strip mall. Paymon's Mediterranean Cafe is no exception, and its main dining room has no decor worth mentioning. But it gets extra points for having a courtyard seating area full of Middle Eastern touches and an honest-to-goodness hookah lounge -- it's a



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good break from an otherwise often stifled, insulating time in Sin City. Plus, it's just so darn nice to find ethnic food in this town. As the menu warns, kabobs take 25 minutes, so order an appetizer plate with various dips to while away the time. The hummus here is too reminiscent of its chickpea origins, but the baba ghanouj is properly smoky, and the falafel has the right crunch. Gyros may not be the most adventurous thing to order, but who cares about that when you've got a well-stuffed pocket pita, gloopy with yogurt sauce. Fresenjan is a dish of falling-apart chicken swimming in a tangy pomegranate sauce; ask them to ensure that the ratio of sauce to chicken is greater than 10:1. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 702 384 4470
<http://www.goldensteerv.com>

location:
308 West Sahara
Las Vegas NV 89102

hours:
Mo to Su from 05:00 PM to
11:00 PM

5 Golden Steer Steakhouse

DESCRIPTION: At the same location since 1958, this traditional gourmet steakhouse has been visited by hundreds of celebrities and thousands of loyal diners. The Alaskan King Crab Cocktail has a delicious mustard sauce, and the Blue Point Oysters are also a favorite. For your entree, a visit here would not be complete without tasting the Diamond Jim cut of prime rib. The rack of lamb for two requires 45-minutes preparation time. Steaks and lobster are also standard on the menu, as well as frog legs, scallops and filet mignon. Full wine and bar service is available. © wcities.com



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Day 2 - Las Vegas

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: The history of the atomic bomb is presented in detail at the Atomic Testing Museum, and you won't be far from Firefly, which serves Spanish tapas. Toward Downtown, the Potato Valley Café will fill you up for breakfast or lunch (it's a ten or fifteen minute drive from the Convention Center). For elegant after-convention cocktails, try Fontana at the Bellagio.

contact:

tel: 702/794-5151
fax: +1 702 794 5155
<http://www.atomictestingmuseum.org>

location:

755 E. Flamingo Rd
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:

Mon-Sat 9am-5pm; Sun
1-5pm

1 The Atomic Testing Museum

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

No photographs are allowed inside the museum.

DESCRIPTION: From 1951 until 1992, the Nevada Test Site was this country's primary location for testing nuclear weapons. Aboveground blasts in the early days were visible to the tourists and residents of Las Vegas. This well-executed museum, library, and gallery space (a Smithsonian affiliate) offers visitors a fascinating glance at the test site from ancient days through modern times, with memorabilia, displays, official documents, videos, interactive displays, motion-simulator theaters (like sitting in a bunker, watching a blast), and emotional testimony from the people who worked there. It respectfully treads that tricky line between honoring the work done at the site and understanding its terrible implications. Not to be missed, even if it's only because of the Albert Einstein action figure in the gift shop. Visitors should plan on spending at least an hour. © Frommer's



Photo Courtesy of Smart Destinations

contact:

<http://www.usmenuguide.com/potatovalleycafe.html>

location:

801 S Las Vegas Blvd. Ste 110
Las Vegas NV 89101

hours:

Mon-Fri 8am-4pm

2 Potato Valley Cafe

DESCRIPTION: The first franchised Cafe is owned and operated by husband and wife team Jerry and Tyronda Weinert. The Cafe is located in the Business & Arts District of Downtown Las Vegas 2 blocks North of Charleston Blvd on the Southeast corner of Las Vegas Blvd & Gass. Their Mission is to serve unique, nourishing gourmet food to the business community of Southern Nevada in a professional and relaxing atmosphere. They are committed to bringing you the highest quality service and products available: Gourmet Oven Roasted Baked Potatoes, Onsite Catering, Offsite Catering, Sandwiches, Gourmet Salads, Box Lunches, Vegetables, Fresh Soups Daily, Desserts and a Full Coffee Bar. They deliver, too. © NileGuide



"Photo courtesy of Potato Valley Cafe

contact:

tel: (702) 693-7111
http://lasvegas.citysearch.com/profile/11341975/las_vegas_nv/fontana_bar_at_the_bellagio.html

location:

3 Fontana Bar at the Bellagio

DESCRIPTION: In Short

Despite the velvet rope and elegantly attired hostesses, the bar's early hours are filled with the shorts-in-any-season crowd. Once the sun sets, the Fontana emerges as a spacious, yet intimate, upscale lounge. Classic cocktailing becomes a high art here. Beauties like the sidecar and the

3600 S Las Vegas Blvd
Las Vegas NV 89109

metropolitan (sweetened with rock-candy syrup) are available. Significantly tasty options include the fresh peach Bellini and the Casino cocktail, a gin martini sweetened with various fruit liqueurs.

hours:

Lounge: Sun-Thu

5:30pm-1am Fri-Sat

6:30pm-2am Bar: Daily 24

hours

Day 3 - Las Vegas

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Work off that convention-related restlessness at the Sahara Hotel's Cyber Speedway, either with a virtual race car or on the rollercoaster (at the NASCAR Café, eat the entire six-pound B3 burrito to win a life-time pass on the rollercoaster). For delicious, authentic bagels, take a detour to Harry's Bagelmania. Wind down at the ESPN Zone at New York-New York to get your sports fix, or go to Red Square in the Mandalay Bay to satisfy your need for a good shot of vodka. Yolie's Brazilian Steakhouse serves delicious steak in a casual atmosphere, just what you need before you make the trip home.

contact:

tel: 702/737-2111
<http://www.nascarcafelasvegas.com>

location:

2535 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:

Daily noon-10pm

1

SPEED: The Ride/Las Vegas Cyber Speedway

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

A roller coaster, virtual race cars, and an arcade-- perfect for kids of all ages.

DESCRIPTION: CLOSED MAY 2011

Auto racing is the fastest-growing spectator sport in America, so it's no surprise that these two attractions at the Sahara are a popular stop. The first is an 8-minute virtual-reality ride, **Cyber Speedway**, featuring a three-quarter-size replica of a NASCAR race car. Hop aboard for an animated, simulated ride -- either the Las Vegas Motor Speedway or a race around the streets of Las Vegas (start with the Strip, with all the hotels flashing by, and then through the Forum Shops -- whoops! There goes Versace! -- and so forth). Press the gas and you lean back and feel the rush of speed; hit a bump and you go flying. Should your car get in a crash, off you go to a pit stop. At the end, a computer-generated report tells you your average speed, how many laps you made, and how you did racing against the others next to you. It's a pretty remarkable experience. Speed junkies and race-car buffs will be in heaven here, though those with tender stomachs should consider shopping at the well-stocked theme gift shop instead. **SPEED: The Ride** is a roller coaster that blasts riders out through a hole in the wall by the NASCAR Cafe, then through a loop, under the sidewalk, through the hotel's marquee, and finally straight up a 250-foot tower. At the peak, you feel a moment of weightlessness, and then you do the entire thing backward! Not for the faint of heart.
© Frommer's



Photo courtesy of SPEED: The Ride/
Las Vegas Cyber Speedway

contact:

tel: (702) 369-3322
<http://harries.tripod.com/>

location:

855 E Twain Ave Ste 120
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:

Daily 6:30-3pm

2

Harrie's Bagelmania

DESCRIPTION: A family-owned Jewish deli, Harrie's Bagelmania brings a taste of New York to Las Vegas--literally. Locals line up for boiled bagels, pastrami sandwiches, chopped liver and egg creams. The place is packed with devoted regulars on weekend mornings, but well worth any wait.
© NileGuide

contact:

tel: +1 702 933 3776
fax: +1 702 933 6509
<http://espnzone.com/lasvegas/>

location:

3790 Las Vegas Blvd So
Las Vegas NV 89109

hours:

Su to Th from 10:30 AM to
11:00 PM, Fr to Sa from 10:30
AM to 12:00 AM

3 ESPN Zone (New York-New York)

DESCRIPTION: This place is in every sports fan's fantasies, and it really exists. The two-level, 33,000-sq. ft. bar/restaurant has three areas: the Screening Room, the Sports Arena and the Studio Grill. The Screening Room allows viewers to sit back in leather recliners and watch sports surrounded by 14 big screened TVs. The Sports Arena is on the second level and is filled with activities including a football toss, a climbing wall, virtual reality boxing, a duckpin bowling alley, and, of course, video games. The Studio Grill offers food like chicken wings and cheese fries, but also has pastas, ribs, seafood, and steaks. Don't forget to grab a drink while you're at it; even if you want to go play some more games, just put your beer or martini in one of the drink holders built into them. Really! © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of hyku

contact:

tel: 702/632-7407
www.chinagrillmgt.com

location:

3950 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas NV 89119

hours:

Daily 4-10:30pm

4 Red Square

DESCRIPTION: The beheaded and pigeon-dropping-adorned statue of Lenin outside Red Square only hints at the near-profane delights on the interior. Inside you will find decayed posters that once glorified the Worker, cheek by jowl with a patchwork mix of remnants of Czarist trappings, as pillaged from toppled Bolsheviks and Stalinists. It is disconcerting to see the hammer and sickle so blithely and irreverently displayed, but then again, what better way to drain it of its power than to exploit it in a palace of capitalistic decadence? And then there's the ice-covered bar -- all the better to keep your drinks nicely chilled. After all, they have 150 different kinds of vodka, perhaps the largest collection in the world. It's all just one big post-Communist party (sorry, we had to say it). Anyway, if you can tear your eyes away from the theme-run-amok, you might notice that the menu is quite good, one of our favorites around. Blow your expense account on some caviar (we found we liked nutty osetra better than stronger beluga), properly chilled in ice, served with the correct pearl spoon. Or, more affordably, nosh on Siberian nachos -- smoked salmon, citron caviar, and crème fraîche. The chef's special is a Roquefort-crusted tender filet mignon, with some soft caramelized garlic and a fine reduction sauce; it's a grand piece of meat, one of the best in town and more cheaply priced than similarly ranked places. We also very much liked the pan-seared halibut with a roasted beet vinaigrette and basil oil on a mushroom risotto. Try a silly themed drink, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, which is Rain vodka, dark rum, sugar-cane syrup, and lime juice, or better still, take advantage of that vodka menu and try a tasting flight of four kinds, joined by theme (in our case, the "Ultimate Flight" paired Polish, Russian, Scottish, and Estonian vodkas). Desserts are not so clever but are worth saving room for, especially the warm chocolate cake with a liquid center and the strawberries Romanoff. © Frommer's



wcities

contact:

tel: (702) 794-0700
http://www.yoliesbraziliansteakhouse.com/

location:

3900 Paradise Road
Las Vegas NV 89109

5 Yolie's Brazilian Steakhouse and Seafood

DESCRIPTION: Welcome to Yolie's, Churrascaria House of Meats. Those of our guests who have had the pleasure of visiting beautiful Brazil will know that a churrascaria (She-has-ca-reeah) compares favorably with the finest Steak Houses in the U.S. The unique difference is the way the meat is prepared and served. Strangers to Brazil and the method of preparing and cooking meat are in for a delightfully pleasant surprise. You will feel right at home by our casual and informal atmosphere. While enjoying your cocktails an assortment of appetizer meats will be served at Lunch & Dinner. Prepared by our famous Brazilian chef, succulent meats will be sliced from the skewer onto your plate continuously by your Waiter. © NileGuide



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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 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.

© NileGuide

© NileGuide

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 new Wynn Las Vegas and its neighbor, Encore. Built on the site of the old

Las Vegas Snapshot continued

Desert Inn, Wynn and Encore have been showered with both praise and awards for their five-star accommodations. Further south on the Strip, the Bellagio 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 the Mandalay Bay and The Hotel at Mandalay Bay (which are interconnected), the Venetian, and Caesar's Palace. The Trump 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 the Paris Las Vegas, New York-New York, Excalibur (the medieval theme is terrific for families), Luxor (otherwise known as the big pyramid), Treasure Island, or the Sahara, 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 erupt at The 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 the Golden Nugget, Binions, and the Plaza (formerly the Union Plaza) are still there. Downtown's nod to the modern era is the Fremont 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, upscale Palms is just a few blocks west of the Strip, as is the all-suites Rio. Station Casinos offers a chain of hotel casinos throughout Las Vegas, including the Gold Coast, the Texas, and Boulder Station. The Orleans, a few blocks west of the Strip, frequently hosts reasonably-priced concerts and events. Non-gaming hotels include the Alexis Park and the Renaissance, and most major chains, such as Marriott and Holiday Inn, have non-gaming hotels in Las Vegas.

© NileGuide

© NileGuide

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 with Spago at Caesar's Palace; Puck now has five Strip restaurants, including Postrio 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's Fleur de Lys at Mandalay Bay; Joel Robuchon's eponymous restaurant at the Mansion at MGM (also his L'Atelier, for more casual dining); and Alex Strada's Alex 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 through 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 the Eiffel Tower Restaurant while watching the Strip below you. For a more expansive view, the Top 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. The Golden 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 and Dona 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's Cravings, Bally's Sterling Sunday Brunch, and the Rio's Village 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

Las Vegas Snapshot continued

pamper. Caesar's Palace, Planet Hollywood, and the Venetian 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's Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat, the Mandalay Bay's Shark Reef, or the MGM Grand's Lion Habitat. Rollercoasters are a feature of New York-New York, the Sahara, and the Stratosphere. Downtown, the Fremont Street Experience and Neon 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 the Old Mormon Fort (only a partial wall remains within another building). The Springs Preserve is a new museum that features walking trails along with environmentally-friendly buildings and hands-on exhibits about Southern Nevada. The Atomic 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 by Hoover Dam, sits adjacent to the Valley 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 as Spring 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/>) Papillon-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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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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