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DrPleishner

Las Vegas Outdoors: Great Red Rock Canyon Hikes

Las Vegas, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: West of Las Vegas, Red Rock Canyon offers hikers a multitude of trails. The Fire Ecology trail, off the Pine Creek trail, is an easy path to the creek. Continue on the Pine Creek trail, and you'll find the remnants of an old homestead. Willow Springs is another easy trail leading to riparian habitat. On the Ice Box Canyon and Calico Tanks trails, rock cairns help mark the way. The six-mile White Rock/La Madre Springs trail gives you a good view of the Keystone Thrust, some of Red Rock's oldest rock formations. Access the First Creek trail off State Route 159; no entrance fee is required. ~Pictured: Ice Box Canyon~

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Las Vegas



Fire Ecology Trail

Easy double-looped trail



Ice Box Canyon Trail

Moderate Red Rock Canyon hike to a seasonal waterfall



Calico Tanks

Hike and rock scramble to a tinaja, a desert water source



Willow Springs Loop Trail

See pictographs and an agave roasting pit on this easy trail



First Creek Canyon Trail

Moderately strenuous 5-mile scenic trail



White Rock / La Madre Springs Loop Trail

Moderately difficult 6-mile trail

Day 1 - Las Vegas



QUICK NOTE

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www.nv.blm.gov/vegas/Default.htm

location:

HCR 33, Box 5500
Las Vegas NV 89123

1 Fire Ecology Trail

DESCRIPTION: Sitting within the Red Rock Canyon this easy double-looped trail is accessed via the Pine Creek Trail. Take the trail to the left heading toward the escarpment. Continue across a bridge and over a rise to enter the second loop. Next return across the same bridge and follow the trail back to the Pine Creek Trail.

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http://www.redrockcanyonlv.org/hikes_trails.php

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2 Ice Box Canyon Trail

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Very popular Red Rock trail with lots of bouldering after you drop into the wash.

DESCRIPTION: From the parking lot, the trail heads down across the wash and up the other side toward the canyon. The trail is well defined as it leads you up the side of the canyon for approximately 3/4 of a mile. It then drops into the bottom of the canyon. From this point the trail becomes a route over or around boulders as it continues upstream. The official trail ends at the large Ponderosa Pine Trees in the bottom of the canyon (2.5 miles round trip). To reach the upper pooled filled by a seasonal waterfall, be prepared for some tricky wall scrambling, and a 3 mile round trip.



Photo courtesy of Terrisa Meeks

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3 Calico Tanks

DESCRIPTION: From Sandstone Quarry the trail heads north from its junction with the Turtlehead Peak Trail to just past the Agave roasting pit site in Red Rock Canyon. Beyond this site the trail veers up a side canyon to the right where it follows ascending rock terraces to a large natural water tank (Tinaja). Water may be present in the tanks after seasonal rains. This 2.5 mile round trip is moderately strenuous and involves sock scrambling and route finding skills.



Photo courtesy of Terrisa Meeks

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4 Willow Springs Loop Trail

DESCRIPTION: From the parking lot, follow the trail by the pit toilets south. This takes you past a pictograph site and Agave roasting pits, to the Lost Creek parking lot. There the trail heads uphill to a seasonal waterfall. Return by the same route. This popular trail may be crowded at times as it is used by many school groups. Please note: Carry water, at least one gallon per person per day in the summer. Wear appropriate footwear suitable for hiking and a hat. Watch the weather, mountain thunderstorms can cause flash flooding in the canyons and nearby washes.



Photo courtesy of Exothermic / Joel '11

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location:

State Route 159, past Red Rock Canyon entrance
Las Vegas NV 89004

5 First Creek Canyon Trail

DESCRIPTION: This moderately strenuous trail leads to the mouth of the First Creek Canyon in Red Rock Canyon. Visitors to the trail need to follow the left side of the wash for a distance. Some rock scrambling is required thereafter. Seasonal waterfalls can be found in the canyon.



Photo courtesy of Terrisa Meeks

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HCR 33, Box 5500
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6 White Rock / La Madre Springs Loop Trail

DESCRIPTION: This trail can be started at White Rock Springs or Willow Springs in Red Rock Canyon and can be done either direction. By starting at Willow Springs hikers can deal with the steep climb to White Rock near the beginning of the hike, rather than at the end. When you come to a fork with a sign reading "White Rock Springs 2.2 miles", take the uphill trail to the left. Follow it to White Rock upper parking lot, continuing east from the lot. When the trail forks, go left and follow the trail until it intersects an old dirt road. Follow that road downhill to where it



Photo courtesy of Chuck Abbe

forks to the left, returning you to Willow Springs, or right to La Madre Spring.

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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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.

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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 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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Horse Back Riding Tours Cowboy Trail Rides, Inc. (+1 702 387 2457/<http://www.cowboytrailrides.com/>) Sagebrush Ranch Adventures (+1 866 552 7838/<http://www.sagebrushranchadventures.com/>) Sunset Cowboy Dinner Ride (+1 877 444 4464/<http://www.awesomeadventureguide.com/>)

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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