

LAS VEGAS CITY GUIDE



Made by dk.
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1

Things to do

Aladdin

Reopened in 2000, Aladdin hotel and casino megaresort bears the same name as its much humbler predecessor. Somewhat more expensive than the old Aladdin, the new one cost a cool \$1.4 billion. The 50-ft (15-m) waterfall that tumbles down the faux-sandstone cliff at the entrance, the arches, and embellishments of the façade conjure images of exotic Arabian lands, which are echoed throughout the interior. One departure from the theme is the London Club, a posh casino within the casino for high rollers and VIPs.

For more theme hotels (see Theme Hotels)

For more on shopping (see Places to Shop)

Top 10 Features



with its own personal computer.

1 Architecture and Ambiance

In Vegas, hotels rise phoenix-like, not from the ashes but from demolition sites. Aladdin is the city's most recent phoenix (the original opened in 1967). The whole is an Arabian fantasy of domes and minarets.

Drawbacks are the somewhat confusing layout and the piped-in music that doesn't quite fit the theme, but the guest rooms are luxurious – each complete



2 Desert Passage

The most interesting shopping arcade in the city, Desert Passage is divided into areas: India Gate, the Lost City, Morocco Gate, and Merchants Harbor. The names are intriguing, and so

are the shops. The architecture reflects the Arabian theme, and, for added drama, realistic thunderstorms crash into the "harbor" every half hour.

3 Blue Note Jazz Club

Styled after the legendary jazz club in New York's East Village, the Blue Note in Las Vegas serves up contemporary jazz stars such as Spyro Gyra and the Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars, along with drinks and dinner.

4 Theater for the Performing Arts

The original Aladdin's Theater for the Performing Arts was saved from the surrounding demolition and incorporated into the new design. The renovated, state-of-the-art venue now hosts Broadway shows and major concerts by top stars.

5 Commander's Palace

Like its New Orleans parent, Commander's Palace Las Vegas is best known for its signature creole dishes such as turtle soup au sherry, and bread pudding soufflé. The decor recreates an Old South ambience with

draped and shuttered windows, ornate chandeliers, and potted palms.

6 Josef's Brasserie

At Josef's, the decor is casual French country, with hand-painted murals and large, ornately framed mirrors. The menu features traditional dishes such as boudin blanc (pork and chicken sausage), quiche Lorraine, and leg of lamb. Grand meal finales include bananas foster and peach melba. The oyster bar, with seafood flown in daily, gets rave reviews.

7 Sur la Table

In Desert Passage, Sur la Table is an outlet of one of America's best houseware chains. More than 14,000 items are stocked in the excellent Las Vegas store. Specialty foods such as fondue mix, unusual marinades, and luxury chocolates are popular, along with cookbooks, top-brand utensils, and kitchen furniture.

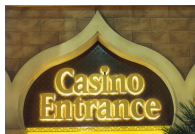
8 Rickshaws

Festively painted and decorated with flowers, rickshaws transport footsore shoppers along the cobbled and mosaic-paved streets of Desert Passage. You can hop on for free, but do tip – the service is provided by an independent company, and tips form the drivers' only income.



9 Exotic Shops

Several of the shops and boutiques in Desert Passage are far more exotic than the usual Las Vegas fare, selling artifacts imported from Africa and beyond.



10 Casino

The decorative touches of Aladdin's casino are as flamboyant as any in Las Vegas. The centerpiece is an enormous Aladdin's Lamp, which dwarfs the players on the casino floor below.

Aladdin

Practical information

- Map Q2
- 3667 Las Vegas Blvd S.
- 702 785 5555, 877 333 9474 (toll free)
- www.aladdincasino.com
- \$\$\$\$ (for price categories (see Hotels and Motels))

Top tips

- Visit Desert Passage first. Check out the restaurants as you stroll and be sure to make dinner reservations at the one you like the look of best.
- Don't miss the giant bird from Sinbad the Sailor guarding the Roc Bar.
- Leave the laptop at home. Each room and suite at Aladdin has its own computer.

A Design Triumph

The Aladdin's unusual "stacked" design puts the hotel's lobby, restaurants, and casino on different levels. This allows panoramic views of the interior – up from the ground level lobby and down from the restaurant floor. The hotel does not have a central elevator core: instead, the elevators are spread out so that no guest room in the 40-story tower is more than seven doors from one. Best of all, it is not necessary to trek across hundreds of yards of casino floor to reach the elevators!

Bellagio

From the flower arrangements in the halls to the fixtures in the bathtubs, Bellagio Resort Hotel, built in 1998, is the epitome of perfection. The goal of Steve Wynn, who conceived this grand monument to leisure, was to create a hotel "that would exemplify absolute quality while emphasizing romance and elegance – romance in the literary sense, a place of ideal beauty and comfort; the world everyone hopes for, as it might be if everything were just right." Most everyone agrees that Wynn achieved his goal.

More on Theme Hotels

For advice on booking accommodations (see Tips on Booking a Hotel)

Top 10 Features



- 1 Italianate Theme**
Fronting on a pristine 8.5-acre lake with a tree-lined boulevard beyond, this extraordinary resort hotel was built to resemble an idyllic village on the shores of Italy's Lake Como. The

Italianate theme is carried through the entire property – its 3,000-room tower, 16 restaurants, two wedding chapels, salon, and spa – imbuing the whole with an atmosphere of opulence. Creating this representation of Italy cost \$1.6 billion.



- 2 Lobby Ceiling**
Visitors are greeted by a dazzling 2,000 sq ft (186 sq m) garden of glass flowers – the Fiore di Como – suspended from the lobby ceiling. The creator was Dale Chihuly, the first American

artist to be designated a national treasure; amazingly, every single flower is different.



- 3 Via Bellagio**
You are only likely to frequent Bellagio's shopping promenade if you have deep pockets. The establishments are as elegant as the Via itself, numbering among them such names as Prada, Tiffany & Co., Chanel, Giorgio Armani, Moschino, Hermes, Gucci, and Yves St Laurent.



- 4 Conservatory and Botanical Gardens**

Keen gardeners and plant-lovers who stay here regularly will be rewarded with floral displays that change with each season and every major holiday. Each change employs the services of no fewer than 150 professionals.

- 5 Casino**

Aesthetically this is the most pleasing casino in Las Vegas, less flamboyant and more sophisticated than the rest. Slot-machine carousels are fringed with specially designed fabrics rather than the ubiquitous neon tubing, and custom-made carpets provide a stylish relief from the norm.

- 6 Gallery of Fine Art**

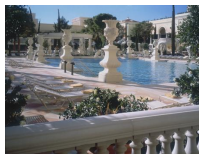
Bellagio's art gallery hosts major temporary exhibitions of important international artists past and present in conjunction with other large art galleries and museums in North America and around the world.

- 7 Theater**

Designed for Cirque du Soleil's spectacular production "O", the theater combines Old World magnificence (it is styled after the Paris Opera) with cutting-edge technology. Central to the production is a 1.5 million gallon (6.8 million liter) pool, which can be remodeled to meet each act's needs.

- 8 Restaurants**

Bellagio's superb restaurants include Le Cirque, Aqua, Noodles, Jasmine, and Shintaro. Picasso holds the coveted Mobil five stars and is decorated with original Picassos.



9 Courtyard With its Italianate columns and statuary, six outdoor pools, and four spas (see Spa Bellagio), the formal courtyard at Bellagio is glorious for morning and evening strolls. During the middle part of the day, it is

transformed into a scene of poolside cabanas, chaises (sunbeds), and umbrella tables, with bronzed sun-worshippers sipping cool drinks.

10 Meeting and Business Facilities Bellagio has the capacity to host conference groups of up to 5,000 people in 10 different rooms, including two ballrooms. A professional staff is on hand to assist with needs such as word processing.

Bellagio

Practical information

- Map Q1–2
- 3600 Las Vegas Blvd S.
- Reservations 888 987 6667
- General info 702 693 7111
- www.bellagio.com
- \$\$\$\$\$ (for price categories see Hotels and Motels)

Top tips

- For a leisurely lunch in a tranquil setting, reserve a table on the terrace at Olives, overlooking Lake Bellagio.
- Take the monorail that runs between Bellagio and Monte Carlo. The ride through the extensive grounds of both resorts provides a few minutes of sightseeing and at the same time allows you to rest your feet.
- To enjoy the full effect of Bellagio's fountain show, cross the street and go to the observation level of the Eiffel Tower at Paris Las Vegas.

High Rollers

High rollers – gambling's big spenders – are courted by every major casino. Who qualifies (based on the amount he or she bets) varies a good deal, but a really big spender – someone who wagers thousands in an evening – will get superstar treatment from the top hotels. They may get flown to Las Vegas in a private jet, put up in a luxurious suite, and given carte blanche to order whatever they want from the hotel. Like superstars, high rollers are also treated with the ultimate discretion, so you may not spot one.

The Forum Shops at Caesars

"So many shops and so little time" is the complaint of most first-time visitors to the Forum Shops. Opals from Australia, an endangered species store, couturier clothes, and art galleries – there are 150 stores in all. The common areas of the complex are open 24 hours a day, so the savvy travelers who want to window shop and get close-up looks at the Forum's fountains and buildings will stroll its lanes in the wee hours of the morning.

For more on shopping (see Places to Shop, Souvenirs and Shopping Tips

More on Caesars Palace Hotel

Top 10 Shops and Sights

1 Festival Fountain

Focal point of the original group of Forum Shops, the Festival Fountain is guarded by four animatronic statues of Roman notables, who on the hour from 11am talk about the days of the Roman Empire. The production generated excitement when the center opened in 1992.



2 Lost City of Atlantis

Created in 1997, this attraction is the centerpiece for the newer section of the Forum Shops. Atop the giant circular monument is a statue of Poseidon. Rare species of Atlantic Ocean

fish swim in a 50,000-gallon aquarium, the focus of a feature presentation held every half hour from 11:30am.



3 Sky Ceiling

The domed ceiling of the Forum Shops simulates a constantly changing sky. The morning sun shines; afternoon clouds float by; evening stars twinkle.

4 Chinois Restaurant

Wolfgang Puck's Chinois offers an eclectic blend of Asian and French cuisine. Charcoal-grilled Szechuan beef, wok-fried lobster, and sizzling whole catfish are all prepared with a French twist.

5 Upscale Fashion Shops

When the Forum Shops opened in 1992 with the three Vs (Vasari, Versace, and Vuitton) among them, a new era in Las Vegas shopping dawned. Gucci, Escada, Christian Dior, Fendi, Bernini, Armani, and Lalique also beguile.



6 FAO Schwarz

Walk through a huge Trojan horse to enter this toy store. Inside, the sheer volume of toys is overwhelming. Character dolls range from storybook favorites Eloise and Madeline to G.I. Joe and Harry Potter. Computer toys include Virtual FAO Baby and Virtual Playroom. A robotic puppy named Techno walks, talks, begs, sniffs, snores, and plays with his ball. Buttercup Hippo, the Big Piano Dance Mat, and the Tommy Hilfiger Dolls are sold only by FAO Schwarz.



7 Planet Hollywood

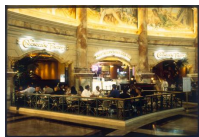
This enormous restaurant is crammed with Hollywood memorabilia. Framed movie posters, celebrity photographs, costumes worn in famous films, and movie props make this café – according to its advertisements – one of the largest repositories for movie mementos in the world. California-style cuisine features out-of-the-ordinary sandwiches and salads.

8 Wolfgang Puck's Spago

Spago was the first of the celebrity chef restaurants on the Vegas scene, starting the trend that is upstaging the city's traditionally famous buffets (see Salad Bars, Buffets, and Brunches) with upscale dining. Duck with roasted garlic polenta and other unusual combinations are among the rotating specials at this sophisticated dining spot.

9 3-D Motion Simulator

Don special 3-D glasses to experience the amazing full effects of four rides here. One features a spaceship ride through the galaxy, another simulates a submarine race to the South Pole. The roller coaster thrill ride is not for people who suffer car sickness, and the timid should avoid the haunted graveyard ride. Tickets can be purchased individually or as a package.



10 Cheesecake Factory With more than 200 items on the menu, Cheesecake Factory has everything from hot spinach and cheese dip with tortilla chips, bruschetta, and Tex Mex eggrolls to Triple

Chocolate Brownie Truffle Cheesecake. Entrées include a teriyaki chicken that incorporates banana slices, pineapple, and brown sugar.

The Forum Shops at Caesars

Practical information

- Map P1–2
- Caesars Palace Hotel, 3570 Las Vegas Blvd S.
- Shops open 10am–11pm Mon–Thu, 10am–midnight Fri–Sun
- Dining reservations 702 731 7731
- www.caesars.com/palace

Top tips

- Have lunch at one of the restaurants with a sidewalk café, from where you can watch the passing parades.
- Pick up a map of the shops at the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (see Sources of Information).
- Walking from the parking garage to the shops is a shorter trek than through the enormous casino.
- If you're visiting with youngsters, set aside some time to visit the child-pleasing Disney Store, Warner Brothers Studio Store, and FAO Schwarz.

Commerce or Entertainment?

In most US cities, shopping is an end in itself: go to the mall, make purchases, return home. In Las Vegas, however, shopping has the added dimension of being coupled with entertainment. The Forum Shops and a trio of the new hotels – Aladdin, Paris, and the Venetian – all have musicians, singers, mimes, and other performers strolling along the shopping arcades entertaining the crowds. It's all free and it adds to the glamour and excitement (see Places to Shop).

Glitter Gulch

During the 1980s and early 1990s, as the Strip became ever more glamorous, the downtown area – including the stretch along Fremont Street known as Glitter Gulch – went further and further into decline. City fathers and casino owners alike agreed that something had to be done to reverse the process and took action to see that it was. The resulting efforts have revitalized the area. There is even a new hotel-casino under construction – the first to be built in the area in decades.

For more on Downtown Las Vegas

For the top hotels and casinos in Las Vegas (see *Theme Hotels, Casinos*)

Top 10 Sights

1 Glitter Gulch Lights

The heart of downtown has earned its name for reasons that become obvious as soon as you set foot here. This is one of the brightest places on earth – so much so that you can stand on the street at midnight and read a newspaper. Even before the Fremont Street Experience was conceived, the country's leading neon designers and lighting engineers were strutting their stuff here.



2 Fremont Street Experience

A major part of the downtown revival was the transformation in 1995 of one four-block stretch of Fremont Street into a pedestrian mall, covered with a 90-ft (27-m) high "Space Frame" containing more than two million lights. Every night, from 8pm until midnight, an hourly sound and light extravaganza entertains the crowds below.

3 Signs of the Past

Las Vegas Vic (see Vegas Vic Sign) has been waving to passersby on Fremont Street since 1951. More illuminating insights into the history of neon are at the Neon Museum on the corner of Fremont and Las Vegas Boulevard.

4 Las Vegas's First Casino

The place where it all started is the Sal Sagev Hotel on Fremont Street, which is now the Golden Gate. The strange-looking original name makes sense in mirror-writing. The new place is famous not so much for gambling as for its shrimp cocktails.

5 Fremont Street Pedestrian Promenade

Another mid-1990s downtown improvement is the walkway between Main and 4th Streets, which is decked with flowers, colorful street vendors' carts, and strolling performers.

6 Golden Nugget

The four-star Golden Nugget is the best-value hotel in the city (rates can fall as low as \$60 in the off-season).

Its casino is also first-rate. Try the California Café for some of the best-value food downtown – and also for some great people-watching.

7 Binion's Horseshoe

The biggest names in poker play at the Horseshoe, and the annual World Series is held here each May. To compete for the million-dollar prize, contestants must ante (put up) \$10,000. Dallas bootlegger and gambler Benny Binion established the property in 1951, and it is still owned by his descendants.



8 Lady Luck Casino Hotel

Lady Luck is best known for its "fun-books" (coupon booklets) which have been known to include such items as free foot-long hotdogs and free photos. The books are available at the casino's Mad Money booth.

9 Casino Characters

If you ever want to get from one end of Fremont Street to the other, you will have to resist the charms of an assortment of exotically dressed showgirls, mermaids, and cowboys hired by the casinos to entice people in.

10 Entertainment

In addition to the production shows and lounge acts at most of the hotels (see *Nightclubs and Lounges*), entertainment centers on Fremont Street. It's a popular venue for parades and performances by musical groups. (see *Fremont Street Experience*)

Glitter Gulch

Practical information

- Map J-K4
- Golden Gate, 1 Fremont St
- 702 385 1906
- Golden Nugget, 129 Fremont St
- 702 385 7111
- Binion's Horseshoe, 128 E. Fremont St
- 702 382 1600 or 800 237 6537
- Lady Luck, 206 N. 3rd St
- 702 477 3000 or 800 523 9582

Top tips

- For a memorable meal, try Florida Café Restaurante Cubano (1401 Las Vegas Boulevard S.).
- Don't wander away from the bright lights after dark. High-crime areas still exist not far from Glitter Gulch (see Crime Zone)
- Arrive a few minutes before the hour to see the light and sound show at the Fremont Street Experience. Then explore the shops and casinos or enjoy the stage entertainment until the next show begins.

Glitter Gulch Beginnings

For 20 years after its incorporation, entertainment in Las Vegas was limited to a few bars and brothels in the red-light district downtown. The legalization of gambling and arrival of 5,000 dam-construction workers in 1931 changed all that. Casinos opened on Fremont Street, and tourists began to arrive. World War II personnel and their families gave Las Vegas another population surge in the 1940s, and casino building continued apace after the war – as it does to this day.

Grand Canyon



“Overwhelming” and “humbling” are the words most often used to describe the Grand Canyon experience. One of the world’s most awesome sights, the canyon is 277 miles (443 km) long, 10 miles (16 km) wide, and as deep as a mile (1.6 km) in places. Because of the vast differences in elevation between floor and rim, the canyon encompasses a range of desert and mountain habitats. The South Rim, easier to access via road than the North Rim, is a five-hour drive away from Las Vegas.

For more on the canyon and places to stay (see Parks and Preserves)

Top 10 Features

1 Flyovers

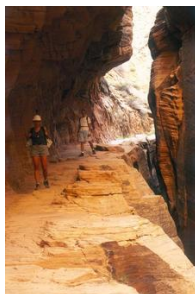
Airplane flights to the Grand Canyon rank among the most popular day trips from Las Vegas (see Las Vegas Tour and Travel).

2 Flatwater Adventure

If you want a taste of canyon rafting, sign up for a one-day flatwater rafting tour. The tours begin at the Glen Canyon Dam and travel 15 miles (24 km) downstream to Lee’s Ferry, which is the entrance to Marble Canyon (see Marble Canyon, Grand Canyon) and the beginning of the Grand Canyon itself. Along the way, near-vertical canyon walls rise high above the lake-like surface of the river.

3 Visitor Centers

Information centers at the North and South Rims of the canyon supply free maps as well as *The Guide*, which has general park information, *The Jr. Ranger Guide*, listing children’s activities, and *The Accessibility Guide*, with information for disabled visitors. The Grand Canyon Railway runs from the town of Williams to Grand Canyon Village, close to the South Rim Visitor Center. Great observation points are near both centers.



4 Hiking Trails

Ranking high with South Rim hikers are the South Kaibab, Bright Angel, and Rim trails. Popular North Rim day hikes include those along the North Kaibab, Bright Angel Point, and Widforss trails. Don’t attempt to hike to the canyon floor and back in one day: get an overnight permit.



5 Overlooks

For the grandest of grand views, head for the Yaki, Grandview, and Moran Points on the South and East Rims. You can see almost to Utah from the top of the 70-ft (23-m) Watchtower. Yavapai Observation Station and Maricopa Point, at the park’s east entrance (Desertview), have marvelous vistas. Motorists can use the Desert View Drive (Hwy 64) along the South Rim, following the edge for 26 miles (42 km). Hermits Road

hugs the North Rim for 8 miles (13 km), but is closed from October to May due to heavy snowfall.

6 Whitewater Rafting
Dozens of companies, like Canyon Explorations, offer whitewater rafting trips along the Colorado on the canyon floor. Trips vary in length from 12 to 20 days.

7 Kaibab Squirrels
Dark gray with white tails and tufted ears, Kaibab squirrels are found only on the Kaibab Plateau and North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Look out for these pine-cone-eaters in forested areas.

8 Tusayan Village
Ruins of rock dwellings inhabited by ancestors of the Hopi Indians around AD 1200 are preserved between South Rim Village and the park's east entrance. On display at Tusayan Ruins and Museum are artifacts, recreated dwellings, and exhibits of contemporary local tribes. Grand Canyon – The Hidden Secrets is shown on a giant IMAX screen in Tusayan village.

9 California Condors
Standing over 3 ft (1 m) tall and with a wingspan of about 9 ft (3 m), the rare California condor may be spotted flying over the South Canyon Rim in summer.

10 Golden Aspen
In the fall, the North Rim explodes in a brilliant yellow blaze, as thick stands of aspen trees turn a golden hue.

Exploration of the Canyon

In 1869, Major John Wesley Powell, a veteran of the American Civil War, led an exploration party along the Colorado River through the canyon. On August 28, three of the men left the group at the rim of Separation Canyon. They were killed by Native Americans. Ironically, it was the following day that Powell's expedition emerged safely from the gorge, completing the first exploration ever made of the Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon

Practical information

- Map V2
- South Rim 271 miles (434 km), North Rim 255 miles (408 km) E of Las Vegas
- South Rim Visitor Center, Canyon View Information Plaza, Mather Point
- open 8am–5pm daily
- 928 638 7888
- www.nps.gov/grca
- Admission charge to enter national park \$20 per vehicle or \$10 per pedestrian

Top tips

- See Parks and Preserves, Places to Eat for great places to eat at the Grand Canyon.
- The South Rim of the Grand Canyon is accessible by road year-round, but the North Rim road and facilities are closed from November to mid-May.
- You will need a permit to camp outside the official campsites within the national park. Apply in advance at the Backcountry Information Center.

Hoover Dam

Before the construction of the Hoover Dam early last century, the mighty Colorado River frequently flooded countless acres of farmland in southern California and Mexico. A series of studies into how to tame the rampaging river led in 1928 to the Boulder Canyon Project Act and the subsequent construction of the dam. This colossus of concrete – a triumph of engineering – not only provides flood control and generates electricity, but is also a huge tourist attraction, with nearly a million visitors a year.

For more on the Hoover Dam and Lake Mead (see *Lake Mead, Hoover Dam, and Laughlin*)

For more outdoor activities (see *Thrill Rides and Simulators*)

Top 10 Sights



1 Hoover Dam Overlook

For a lasting first impression, stop at the overlook on Highway 93 as you approach the dam from Las Vegas. The vista point is often crowded, but stop anyway: the sight of 3.2

million cu yards (2.6 million cu m) of concrete, standing 727 ft (221 m) high and erected by thousands of workers laboring around the clock for four years, is truly awe-inspiring.

2 Hoover Dam Visitors Center

Audiovisual and theater presentations as well as multimedia exhibits explain the processes and perils involved in building this eighth wonder of the modern world. An overlook on top of the center provides an eagle-eye view of the dam, Lake Mead, and the Black Canyon.



3 Self-guided Tours

The tours include a descent to the fifth floor, where you can see the dam's huge turbine generators in operation.



4 Lake Mead

The dam's lake is the largest man-made body of water in the USA. Its 700 miles (1,120 km) of shoreline boast forests, canyons, and flower-rich meadows; its waters abound with fish. Boulder Beach offers the best swimming.

5 Black Canyon River Raft Trips

The Colorado River flows lazily below the dam, so rafting is pleasant rather than of the white-knuckle variety. The trip takes a little more than three hours to

make the 12-mile (19-km) trip to Willow Beach. Look out for petroglyphs carved in the rock, and ringbolts: in the days before the dam these were used to winch steam boats through Ringbolt Rapids.

6 Lake Mead Cruises

The lake's shores come to colorful life from the deck of a boat. You'll see sandy beaches and rocks of every hue. There's wildlife, too – look out for burros, jack rabbits, lizards, and the occasional bighorn sheep.

7 Scuba Diving

An unusual underwater scene greets divers: in addition to fish, there is a submerged factory where the dam's concrete was mixed, and the drowned community of St. Thomas. Take a trip with a local company; certified divers can rent scuba gear.



8 Boulder City/Hoover Dam Museum

The dam and the people who built it are the focus of this museum, housed in the historic Boulder Dam Hotel (see Boulder City Historic District). Don't miss the film

chronicling the dam's construction. Memorabilia, photos, and posters give insights into life in the 1930s.

9 Construction Workers' Houses, Boulder City

Up to 8,000 dam workers were housed here, and although many of the buildings have disappeared, cottages 1–12 look much as they did when they were built.

10 Commercial District, Boulder City

Walk back into 1930s America. The arched, southwestern-style buildings were the precursors of today's shopping plazas. Boulder Dam Hotel, by contrast, is in southern colonial style.

Hoover Dam

Practical information

- Map T2
- 30 miles (50 km) SE of Las Vegas
- Hoover Dam Visitors Center, Hwy 93, Hoover Dam, Boulder City, NV
- 702 294 3521
- Open 9am–4:45pm daily
- Tour reservations 866 291 8687 (toll free)
- www.hooverdam.com

Top tips

- Before you leave Las Vegas, stock up on beverages and mouthwatering sandwiches at Capriotti's Sandwich Shop (324 W. Sahara) to have as a picnic later on a Lake Mead beach.
- Take a cruise that does not include meals: it will be cheaper and give you more time to take in the surroundings.
- Drive along the west shore of Lake Mead on highways 166 and 167, to access the Valley of Fire and Lost City Museum (see Lost City Museum of Archeology, Overton)

Ancient Peoples

Archeologists disagree about how long humans have lived in the desert along the Colorado River. There were certainly people living downstream from the dam 3–4,000 years ago, and possibly as many as 8,000. The Patayans were among the first Native Americans known to live in the broader tri-state area (Nevada, Arizona, California), appearing in about 900 AD; they lived in brush shelters and ate pulverized seeds and plants. Their descendants split into the Hualapai and Mojave tribes.

Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum



Everything about Las Vegas is larger than life. At Madame Tussaud's (within the Venetian Hotel) this is literally true – and the precise figure is 2 percent larger. Each waxwork figure in the museum is made marginally bigger than its real-life counterpart, because wax shrinks as it ages. For authenticity, many items of clothing and props were purchased at celebrity auctions. Rings on the figures' fingers are regularly cleaned; hair must be washed and makeup retouched. And, as with real people, the figures' clothes frequently need cleaning.

More Museums

For more about the Venetian Hotel (see The Venetian)

Top 10 Features

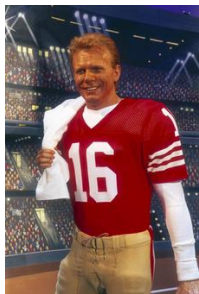


1 Frank Sinatra
Before entering the "Show-time Legends" section of the museum, get acquainted with a young, slender Sinatra performing on the stage of the old Sands Hotel. Recordings of Sinatra standards and other stage props enhance the 1950s mood.

2 Show-time Legends
Come face to face with your idols in a real spine-tingler of a room: eavesdrop on Louis Armstrong chatting with Ella Fitzgerald, and gaze without fear of reproach at Marilyn Monroe, tantalizingly real in a sequined dress.



3 The Big Night
A Hollywood gala is the setting, and the guest list is impressive. Mingle with the likes of Arnold Schwarzenegger (positively huge at just 2 percent larger than life), Shirley MacLaine, Whoopie Goldberg, Paul Newman, Princess Diana, and Elizabeth Taylor; and yes, the hair is real.



4 Sports Celebrities

They would never normally be gathered together in the same room, but at Madame Tussaud's you suspend disbelief. Rubbing well-muscled shoulders are stars of track and field, tennis court, and boxing ring. Even with the waxwork enlargement, Russian gymnast Olga Korbut still looks tiny.

5 Rock and Pop

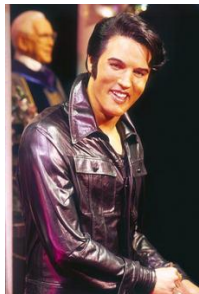
Remember those teenage heartthrobs of yours – Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and Bruce Springsteen? Here you can get closer than you ever imagined. Videos and wrap-around sound help bring the experience to glorious life.



6 Behind the Scenes Glimpse

It can seem a little creepy, but the painstaking process of making the waxwork models is fascinating – from taking precise measurements of each

celebrity to matching skin tones, dental impressions, eye, and hair color.



7 Finale

The somewhat anti-climactic finale is a state-of-the-art, multimedia, theatrical tribute to Las Vegas, featuring music, movie clips, and a special appearance by Elvis.

8 Souvenir Photos

A must-have souvenir is a photograph of yourself alongside your famous (or infamous) idol. It's a great talking point with your more gullible friends back home.

9 The Building

Extending the copycat theme, and in typically grand Las Vegas style, the building itself is a small-scale replica of the library building on the Piazza San Marco in Venice.



10 The Gift Shop

The gift shop is almost as entertaining as the museum itself. You can choose a wig or a hat that makes you look like your favorite star (well, quite like) – great for kids or for costume parties. On a more serious note, there's a chocoholics' area, with chocolate body-frosting and other "choco-therapy" items.

Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum

Practical information

- Map P2
- St Mark's Library Building within the Venetian Hotel, 3377 Las Vegas Boulevard S
- www.madame-tussauds.com/site/lasvegas
- Open 10am–7pm Sun–Thu, 10am–10pm Fri–Sat
- 702 367 1847
- Admission charge \$19.95 (no need to prebook)

Top tips

- For a quick lunch on the way there or back, try the Venetian's Food Court.
- To avoid big crowds, arrive soon after the museum opens and visit the rooms in reverse order.
- Save time for browsing around the gift shop: the merchandise is more imaginative than you might expect.

Madame Tussaud

Born Anne Marie Grosholtz in Strasbourg, France, in 1761, the future Madame Tussaud inherited a collection of wax figures from her mother's employer when the latter died in 1794. Anne Marie married civil engineer François Tussaud and went to Britain, where she toured her collection for 33 years, finally setting up the exhibit in London. The original collection was destroyed by fire but has been revived in the form of the present London museum and several other versions around the world.

Red Rock Canyon

About 225 million years ago, everything at Red Rock Canyon was covered by an inland sea. The escarpment, formations, and caves were created after that sea evaporated and wind and rain began sculpting the land. This remarkable desert region lies just 10 miles (16 km) west of Las Vegas. A conservation area since 1990, it is protected from the encroaching asphalt and grass of city expansion. The 13-mile (21-km) scenic road that loops off Hwy 159 provides a good overview, but the best way to explore this part of the Mojave Desert is on foot.

More Parks and Preserves near Las Vegas

Top 10 Features

1 Red Rock Vista

The view from this overlook (about one mile past the Hwy 159 turnoff to the Canyon) is of the Red Rock escarpment itself, which rises a breathtaking 3,000 ft (1,000 m) from the valley floor. Time your trip to get here at either sunrise or sunset when the colors of this Aztec sandstone are at their sensational best.



2 Visitor Center

The Visitor Center has area maps and staff on hand to answer questions. You can peer through telescopes on the viewing terrace at the detail of surrounding formations. A small museum contains geological and natural history displays.

3 Hikes and Guided Walks

Of more than 30 miles (50 km) of hiking trails within the canyon, the most popular include those to Ice Box Canyon (it really is cooler there) and Oak Creek. Guided walks focus on aspects of the environment such as native wild-flowers and the area's geology.

4 Desert Tortoises

Look out for brown-shelled tortoises, which, with their lifespan of up to 100 years, may outlive you. They dig burrows in the desert and spend at least 95 percent of their long lives below ground. Astonishingly, adult tortoises can survive for a year without water.

5 Children's Discovery Trail

Ask at the visitor center about their especially strong program for children, which includes educational funbooks and incentives for learning. Up near Willow Creek is the Children's Discovery Trail to Lost Creek. Less than a mile long, this fun round-trip highlights points of interest along the way. Pick up the free accompanying workbook at the Visitor Center.



6 Petroglyphs and Pictographs

The area around Willow Springs contains some fascinating prehistoric rock carvings and paintings. The exact meaning of many of the incised and painted symbols is not known, but because the area's early inhabitants were hunters and gatherers, it is believed that many symbolize the procuring of food.



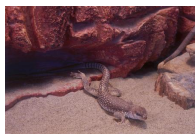
7 Thirteen-Mile Drive

The main scenic loop is a one-way road taking in the Rainbow and Bridge mountains, and the Calico Hills. Designated stopping points for views are scattered along the way.

Head for Willow Spring or Red Spring for picnic areas. Most of the hiking trails are accessible from car parks on the loop.

8 Bookstore

The Visitor Center bookstore covers the local flora, fauna, and geology. Excellent Southwest-themed books for children include *Gully-washer* by Joyce Rossi and *Cowboy Country* by Ann Herbert Scott.



9 Desert Whiptail Lizards

Common to the western United States, these small lizards have pointed snouts and forked tongues, which help them eat termites, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, and other lizards. Recognize them by the four or five light stripes along the back, and yellow-or cream-colored belly with scattered dark spots.



10 Tinajas Prevalent in the Calico Hills and at White Rock Spring, tinajas (or tanks) are naturally formed rock catchments for water. They serve as drinking basins for wildlife and so are good places to head for photo opportunities.

Red Rock Canyon

Practical information

- Map T2
- 20 miles (35 km) W of Las Vegas
- Visitor Center, 1000 Scenic Drive
- open 8am–5pm daily
- 702 363 1921
- www.redrockcanyon.blm.gov
- Admission charge \$5
- Campground \$10 per night, per site

Top tips

- Stop at one of the Einstein Bagels shops in Las Vegas for a picnic lunch to eat at the Willow Spring picnic area.
- Trails that are suitable for wheelchairs start from the Visitor Center, at Willow Spring, and the Overlook.
- You will need a permit if you want to camp overnight or go rock-climbing at Red Rock Canyon. Apply at the Visitor Center.
- Take the usual precautions when visiting a desert area (see Desert Precautions).

Mountain Biking

Designated mountain bike trails include the 41-mile (65-km) Red Rock-Wilson Cliff Loop, with a mile-long extension to the north peak vista at the top of Wilson Cliffs. The full ride takes five to eight hours to complete and is classed as very difficult, but the views of the Sandstone Bluffs and Red Rock Canyon lands are magnificent. Other rides include those totally within Red Rock, the Bristlecone Pine trail in the Spring Mountain Recreation Area, and one through Blue Diamond back to Las Vegas.

The Strip

Nowhere are the glitz and glitter of Las Vegas, or its ambivalence, so apparent as along the Strip. This 4-mile (6-km) long thoroughfare (actually a section of Las Vegas Boulevard) is the entertainment capital of the world and home to many of the largest hotels and casinos on the planet. The extravaganza of both its adult entertainment and family favorites makes Las Vegas a city of superlatives. The Strip is a master of reinvention, selling itself on seemingly contradictory values: hedonism one decade, family fun the next.

More on The Strip

For more on gambling (see *Slot Clubs*, *Gaming Tournaments*, *Gambling Tips*, *Gambling Risks*)

Top 10 Sights

1 The Strip by Night

After dark is when the Strip is meant to be seen: its miles of neon tubes, millions of twinkling, pulsing, flashing lights, vast fiber-optic signs, and, of course, thousands of people create an almost euphoric excitement.

2 The Strip by Day

Although daytime lacks the glitter of the night, the Strip starts coming to life from mid-morning, when the street and sidewalks become thronged with cars and pedestrians. The Strip is one of 15 American thoroughfares designated as an "All American Road and Scenic Byway."

3 Older Hotel-Casinos

Westward Ho, Riviera, Tropicana, and Bally's are among the few surviving hotel-casinos of the 1950s to 1970s. Their façades and landscaping are grand but not over-the-top, reflecting the postwar era. Room prices are relatively low.



4 Theme Casinos

The MGM Grand, Treasure Island, Monte Carlo, Luxor, and Caesars Palace were all built in the early 1990s. As their names suggest, they are designed around themes. MGM Grand

features a lion enclosure with real lions, Treasure Island stages rousing pirate battles. Ancient Egypt is the theme of the Luxor.

5 The Five Megaresorts

Bellagio, Venetian, Aladdin, Mandalay Bay, and Paris (see Paris Las Vegas) have all opened since 1998. Once you are installed there is no need to venture out again: all your desires are catered for.

6 Fashion Show Mall

Fashion Show Mall proudly upholds the Las Vegas maxim that "bigger is better". This upscale mega mall houses 250 luxury shops and restaurants, and no fewer than eight major department stores are anchors here.



7 The Forum Shops at Caesars

A Las Vegas must-see, the Forum Shops, combine entertainment, dining, and shopping. Let your taste buds tingle on a burger while your eyes feast on scenes from ancient Rome.

8 Hole-in-the-Wall Businesses

Clinging to life between the skyscrapers are simple one-story buildings that house everything from snack shops to tour operators. In one storefront operation men hand-roll cigars.

9 Wet 'n' Wild

Water heaven for kids and teenagers. Experience thrill rides, a surf lagoon, and a "lazy river" for floating. Volleyball courts (dry) are thrown in for good measure.

10 Impersonators

Elvis lives – at least, his numerous reincarnations do. Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe impersonators, among others, are a routine sight on the Strip. They perform in nostalgia shows; some even perform marriage ceremonies. Keep your eyes open, though: some real celebrities live here too!

The Strip

Practical information

- Map M3–R2
- General information: Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau
- 3150 Paradise Road
- 702 892 0711 or 1800 332 5333
- www.vegasfreedom.com

Top tips

- You're on vacation – why *not* have doughnuts for breakfast?! Delicious “Krispy Kreme” doughnuts, current food fad of the western USA, are on sale at Excalibur, at the entrance to Treasure Island, and in other Strip casinos.
- To experience the excitement fully, get a hotel room with a view of the Strip. Best of all are the upper floors of the Venetian or Treasure Island, facing south.
- Put on your shopping shoes early to beat the crowds at stores along the Strip. Or else patronize the hotel shops, which stay open until late.

The Mob

As is vividly portrayed in the 1995 Robert de Niro movie *Casino*, organized crime and Las Vegas were natural bedfellows for several decades from the 1940s. Gangsters were drawn like magpies to the glittering coins piling up effortlessly in so many slot machines. Bugsy Siegel was the trailblazer with his Flamingo Hotel (see Christmas Day, 1946: Bugsy Siegel Opens the Flamingo Hotel), while Midwest crime boss Moe Dalitz opened the Desert Inn in 1950. These days, improved regulation and policing appear to have virtually eliminated Mob involvement.

The Venetian



Some months after the opening of Bellagio, Sheldon Adelson was ready to unveil the Venetian. Everyone held their breath. Could anyone possibly replicate Venice? Of course not: Adelson imitated this most romantic of Italian cities just enough to catch the flavor but without sacrificing Las Vegas pizzazz. Since opening, the Venetian has announced a number of added attractions – the Guggenheim Las Vegas, the Hermitage-Guggenheim, plus extra eateries. Venice? Not really. But exciting – definitely!

For more Theme Hotels)

For more on museums (see Museums)

Top 10 Features

1 Architecture and Ambience

The grandeur of Venice meets Las Vegas glitz, and the results are surprisingly spectacular. True, the Grand Canal is only 1,200 ft (350 m) long as opposed to 2.5 miles (4 km), but any lack of authenticity is more than made up for by the festive Las Vegas ambience.

2 Lobby

Reproductions of frescoes framed in 24-karat gold adorn the domed and vaulted ceilings. Marble floors, classical columns, costumed courtiers, and a giant overview of the real Venice all serve to transport the imagination.



3 Grand Canal

Push the boat out and hire the Venetian's very own Wedding Gondola for your marriage ceremony! You can even sail under the Rialto Bridge.

4 St. Mark's Square

So the geography isn't exactly as per the original, but even if you notice you probably won't care – the total effect is, aesthetically, extremely pleasing, perhaps more so than at any of the other new resorts.



5 Canal Shoppes

The galaxy of goodies in the shops along the canal satisfy a wide range of tastes: there are magic tricks at Houdini's and ice-cream cones at Haagen Däzs; there are pearls at Mikimoto and smart sportswear at Banana Republic. Travel by gondola or meander the (rather long) walkway linking the stores.



6 Madame Tussaud's

In a building fashioned after the library on St. Mark's Square, the wax museum opened in 1999 and soon became a top attraction; some visitors say the figures are even more lifelike than those in the London original. (see Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum)

7 Guggenheim Las Vegas

Completed in late 2001, this is the fifth of the world's Guggenheim museums. The others are in New York, Bilbao, Berlin, and Venice.

8 Hermitage-Guggenheim Also established in late 2001, this is the first permanent museum outside St. Petersburg, Russia, to house treasures from the Hermitage.

9 Casino Set in the Doge's Palace, the vast casino has 110 table games and 2,000 slot machines. On the walls of the high rollers' "Renaissance Room" hang works by Tiepolo, Tintoretto, and Titian. Costumed singers belt out arias in counterpoint to the cacophony of slot-machine bells and clanging coins.

The Venetian

Practical information

- Map P2
- 3355 Las Vegas Blvd S.
- 702 414 1000 or 888 283 6423
- www.venetian.com
- \$\$\$\$ suites only (for price categories (see Hotels and Motels)

Top tips

- Splurge on a meal at Wolfgang Puck's Postrio, named by Hotels Magazine as "one of the ten greatest restaurants in the world."
- It is almost as much fun – and a lot less expensive – to watch the gondoliers from land as it is to actually ride in the gondolas.
- If possible, visit the Venetian when there is a full moon and the crowds have thinned: by moonlight it is breathtaking.

High Hurdles

The journey of a major hotel-casino from the drawing board to the grand opening is a long and often tortuous process. Of course, plans must be submitted and approved by city government and county commissioners. But the most rigorous scrutiny is reserved not for the building but for those involved in owning and managing the casino. These people are vetted by the Nevada Gaming Commission and subjected to a thorough background check before a gaming license is issued.

2

Where to stay

Excalibur

One of the first theme hotels (built in 1990), this is still a favorite with children. The legend of King Arthur and his Knights is the theme through the games arcade and on into the wedding chapel on the “Fantasy Faire” floor.

► 3850 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map R1-2** • 702 597 7777
• www.excaliburcasino.com • \$\$\$

Hard Rock Hotel



The huge guitar sign outside and an enormous chandelier with saxophone pendants clearly identify this as a Hard Rock enterprise. Throughout the public rooms are displays of rock-and-roll memorabilia. And you'll hear only one kind of piped music, of course.

► 4455 Paradise Rd • **Map Q3** • 702 693 5000 • www.hardrockhotel.com • \$\$\$\$

Luxor

Its 30-story pyramid and giant sphinx have been Vegas landmarks since 1993.

► 3900 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map R1** • 800 288 1000 • www.luxor.com • \$\$

Mirage

Conveniently located in the center of the Strip, the Mirage is famous for its tropical atrium, pretty pool with cascading waterfall, and Siegfried & Roy's white tigers (see Mamma Mia! & White Tiger Habitat).

► 3400 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map P1-2** • 702 791 7111
• www.themirage.com • \$\$\$\$\$

Monte Carlo

An elegant European theme is reflected in the large rooms, each with a marble bathroom.

► 3770 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map Q1-2** • 800 311 8999
• www.monte-carlo.com • \$\$

New York–New York

The Statue of Liberty raises her torch over the busiest intersection in Las Vegas. Nearby the Empire State, CBS, and Chrysler buildings rub shoulders with the Brooklyn Bridge, Grand Central Station, and the New York Public Library. Despite the architectural license, New York–New York is an exciting place with all manner of well-observed details.

► 3790 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map R1-2** • 888 696 9887
• www.nynyhotelcasino.com • \$\$\$

Paris Las Vegas

Alas, the City of Light has to lose something in translation to the City of Bright Lights. Even so, the Eiffel Tower model is impressive; the bicycle-riding delivery boy, and a cheery “bonjour” from valet-parking attendants are nice touches, too.

► 3655 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map Q2** • 702 946 7000 • www.paris-lv.com • \$\$\$\$

The Venetian

Whether or not the Venetian really evokes accurate images of Venice is beside the point: the sum of the hotel's parts adds up to an aesthetically pleasing whole.

3

Where to eat

Café Nicolle



A smart black-and-white decor with lipstick-red accents plus one of the nicest terraces in the city provide the backdrop for equally fine food. French crêpes, Italian osso buco, and a Greek spinach pie are among the highlights.

► 4760 W. Sahara Ave • **Map M2** • 702 870 7675 • \$\$\$

Carnival World Buffet



Half the fun here is watching the chefs work as they interpret the flavors of Brazil, the East, Italy, Mexico, and the USA in a staggering 1,000-recipe repertoire.

► Rio Hotel, 3700 W. Flamingo Rd • **Map C4** • 702 252 7777 • \$\$

Pamplemousse



With rough-hewn beams, baskets of fresh flowers on the tables, and nooks decorated with pottery and copper cookware, Pamplemousse ("grapefruit" in French) resembles a dining room in Provence. Dinner begins with baskets of breads, crudités, hard-cooked eggs, and olives. Entrées include veal medallions in a dijon-accented cream sauce, and roast duckling in a red wine and rum sauce.

► 400 E. Sahara Ave • **Map M3** • 702 733 2066 • \$\$\$\$

Paris Buffet

An innovative blend of offerings at the Paris Las Vegas Hotel, including omelets, imported cheeses, bouillabaisse, wild mushroom bisque, lamb, venison, prime rib steak, and huge shrimp, all followed by a wealth of French-inspired desserts.

► Paris Las Vegas, 3655 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map Q2** • 702 946 7000 • \$\$

Picasso



The room is exquisite, with original Picassos on the walls and a carpet designed by Pablo Picasso's son, Claude, underfoot. Spanish-born chef, Julian Serrano, creates contemporary French dishes with an Iberian accent. Among the delights are sautéed medallions of fallow deer, a warm lobster salad, sautéed foie gras, and roasted langoustines.

► Bellagio Hotel, 3600 Las Vegas Blvd S. • **Map Q1-2** • 702 693 7223 • \$\$\$\$\$

Sweet Tomatoes Salad Bar



The cool green and white interior plus extras like custom-made omelets and stuffed potato distinguish this salad bar from its rivals. The choice of dressings is extensive, and the ingredients are garden-fresh. The homemade chili is divine.

► 375 N. Stephanie St • **Map E6** • 702 648 1957 •
Another branch at 2080 N. Rainbow Rd • \$\$

4

It's showtime

Artemis Ham Concert Hall

Across the courtyard from the Judy Bayley Theater, the Artemis Ham Concert Hall is an elegant building that serves as the venue for performances of both nationally and internationally acclaimed musicians and dancers. Violinist Itzak Perlman and the Bolshoi Ballet are among the star names that have appeared here.

► *University of Nevada, Las Vegas S. Maryland Parkway*
• **Map Q4** • 702-895-ARTS

Blue Man Group

Unique, funny, and wildly innovative, three bald blue men take the audience on a multi-sensory journey, featuring theater, percussion music, and vaudeville. Like nothing else you have ever seen!

► *Luxor Hotel, 3900 Las Vegas Blvd S.* • **Map R1** • 800 557 7428, 702 262 4400

Hollywood Theater and Garden Arena



Headliners such as comedians Rodney Dangerfield and George Carlin, and music groups such as The Monkees, regularly appear at the 630-seat Hollywood Theater. MGM's larger 15,200-seat special-events center, the Garden Arena, is used for superstar concerts, major sporting events, and other spectacles. It was the setting for the much-publicized Barbra Streisand Millennium Concert on New Year's Eve 1999, for which tickets cost as much as \$2,500.

► *MGM Grand Hotel, 3799 Las Vegas Blvd S.* • **Map R2** • 800 646 7787

Jubilee



Jubilee features showgirls who not only look good but also dance well. The show offers an effective mix of production numbers and specialty acts, glamorous costumes, and pretty tunes. There are terrific special effects, too, such as the sinking of the *Titanic*.

► *Bally's Hotel, 3645 Las Vegas Blvd S.* • **Map Q2** • 702 946 4567

Lord of the Dance



This show takes Irish dance to dizzying new heights. Michael Flatley's variations on the traditional steps make the performances especially exhilarating.

► *New York–New York Hotel, 3790 Las Vegas Blvd S.*
• **Map R2** • 702 740 6815

Mamma Mia!

This internationally acclaimed musical, based on the music of 1970s pop group ABBA, is packed with hits including *Dancing Queen*, *Money Money Money*, *Take a Chance on Me*, and, of course, *Mamma Mia!*

► *Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, 3950 Las Vegas Blvd S.*
• **Map R1** • 702 632 7580

Mystère



Created especially for Treasure Island, *Mystère* is an enchanting circus that – like all Cirque du Soleil productions – has a mystical thread running through it. The costumes are innovative and colorful.

► *Treasure Island Hotel, 3300 Las Vegas Blvd S.* • **Map P2** • 702 796 9999 for tickets

"O"



"O", staged by Cirque du Soleil, is a circus quite unlike any other. The whole show revolves around the theme of water (hence the name, as in the French *eau*). Seven hydraulic lifts raise and lower the water levels throughout the performance, allowing for spectacular diving and other feats.

► *Bellagio Hotel, 3600 Las Vegas Blvd S.* • **Map Q1–2**
• 702 796 9999 for tickets

Orleans Showroom

The 800-seat theater presents several headliners each month. The list of past performers is a veritable "who's who" of the entertainment world: Jerry Lewis; Willie Nelson; Peter, Paul, and Mary; Roy Clark; the Righteous Brothers; and Crystal Gayle, to name but a few.

► *Orleans Hotel, 4500 W. Tropicana* • **Map B4** • 702 365 7111

5

In the evening

Baby's

This hip club features top national and international DJs in a subterranean setting complete with a vast aquarium. Music ranges from funky hip-hop to California techno.

► **Hard Rock Hotel, 4455 Paradise Rd • Map Q3 • Admission charge for men (free for women) • www.babylasvegas.com**

Gilley's Dance Hall, Saloon, & Bar-B-Q

Gilley's offers a down-home atmosphere with Country and Western music. Free line-dance lessons precede the dancing proper on some evenings, "west-coast swing" lessons on others; some nights there's a live band.

► **New Frontier Hotel-Casino, 3120 Las Vegas Blvd. S. • Map N2 • 702 794 8200**

Harrah's



One of the most respected names in the gaming industry, Harrah's has more than a dozen properties across the USA and offers value for money in service, food, and ambience. Harrah's also has one of the best slot clubs as far as prizes are concerned; the club card can be used at any Harrah's casino, so it works well for people who like to gamble wherever they vacation.

► **3475 Las Vegas Blvd S. • Map P2 • 702 369 5000 • www.harrahs.com**

House of Blues



One of the city's most popular after-dark spots, House of Blues is a restaurant by day and a nightclub when no

major concerts are booked. Flashback Fridays focus on music of the 1980s. A Sunday Gospel Brunch features a Southern-style buffet accompanied by live gospel music. There's live blues Thursday through Saturday – featuring such big-name entertainers as B. B. King, Sheryl Crow, and the Blues Brothers. Even if you don't like blues, visit just for the decor alone – the place is crammed with folk art.

► **Mandalay Bay Hotel, 3950 Las Vegas Blvd S. • Map R1-2 • 702 632 7600 • Admission charge**

Studio 54



Like its Manhattan namesake, Studio 54 attracts celebrities. Some of them even make impromptu stage appearances. Most nights, DJ Frankie officiates over the four dance floors and bars; special theme nights cater for different tastes. Additional entertainment is provided by performers suspended from bungees above the crowds.



Studio 54

► **MGM Grand, 3799 Las Vegas Blvd S. • Map R2 • 702 891 1111 • Open from 10pm Tue–Sat • Admission charge for men (free for women)**

Voodoo Lounge



Smaller than the hotel's Club Rio, the VooDoo Lounge offers live music and a dazzling view of the Strip. There's a cover charge for guests not dining in the VooDoo Café.

► *Rio Hotel, 3700 W. Flamingo Rd • Map C4 • 702 247 7923*

6

Itineraries

A Day on the Strip

Morning

Start with breakfast in the delightful Verandah Café at Four Seasons, which is within the **Mandalay Bay** hotel. Be glad you're not about to become someone else's breakfast as you gape at the specimens in the **Shark Reef**. While still at the Mandalay Bay, check out the **House of Blues** and the collection of American folk art.

Head north up the Strip to the **Lion Habitat at MGM Grand** (see MGM Grand Lion Habitat) followed by a walk to the **Auto Collection at the Imperial Palace** (car buffs may have to be removed forcibly!).

For lunch, cross over to Harrah's for the **Fresh Market Square Buffet**.

Afternoon

At the **Forum Shops** you are liable to shed the shoppers in your party.

Next stop is **Circus Circus**. It's a hike, so you may opt for the CAT bus or monorail that stop along the Strip. After your trip there, you deserve a sugar break. Head for the Krispy Kreme doughnut shop and sink your teeth into one of their legendary doughnuts. Newly fortified, explore Circus Circus (laugh at your stomach outline in the funhouse mirrors) and then walk back down to the **Mirage** for the **white tigers**.

Cross the street to the Casino Royale, snag a window table, and watch **The Mirage Volcano** erupt while you dine. For a nightcap, walk down to the Eiffel Tower at **Paris Las Vegas**, for the best view of **Fountains at Bellagio**.

Downtown After Dark

Late Afternoon

Begin your excursion in the mid- to late afternoon, with a flying visit to the **Mormon Fort** (see Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort Historic Park). Allow more time if you are a history buff.

Next, head south to browse the **Bonanza Gift Shop**. Take a look around **Pawn Shop Plaza** while it is still light, then, as dusk deepens and the lights of Fremont Street begin to beguile, start exploring the **Glitter Gulch** nightlife.

Try dining at one of the top restaurants in downtown, such as Lily Langtry at the Golden Nugget Casino (129 Fremont St), with its black-and-white decor, or the romantic Hugo's Cellar at Four Queens (202 Fremont St).

Nighttime

After dinner, stroll along Fremont Street's pedestrian promenade, stopping in at the shops that catch your eye and the vendors' carts that capture your fancy. If gaming's your pleasure, step inside the El Cortez Hotel's casino (600 Fremont Street).

Check out the train station at the **Plaza**, then wander down to Main Street Station. Pick up a brochure here with a map and list of treasures – including street lamps

from Brussels and a portion of the Berlin wall – that are incorporated into the building's decor.

Back at **Fremont Street Experience**, watch a light and sound show, then head to **Stratosphere** (see View from Stratosphere Tower) to top off the night with a stunning view of the city.

Three Trips from Vegas

Although it is possible to visit Zion, Grand Canyon, and Death Valley in one trip, it makes more sense geographically to return to Las Vegas in between each place, making three separate excursions.

The Road to Zion

For an overnight trip to remember, drive east on Highway 15 to the Valley of Fire turning. Spend an hour or two on the park's scenic drive, hiking through **Petroglyph Canyon** (see Petroglyph Canyon, Valley of Fire) to Mouse's Tank and visiting the **Lost City Museum of Archeology** (see Lost City Museum of Archeology, Overton). Then, back on Highway 15, proceed to Mesquite for lunch, making sure you are within reach of one of Zion's many viewpoints by sunset: you will be richly rewarded. Overnight in the park or at Springdale.

Grand Canyon

Take Highway 93 to Kingman, then Highways 40 and 64 to the national park. It is possible to view much of the canyon's grandeur by driving along the rim routes, but the total canyon experience involves hiking or riding to the valley floor, spending the night, and perhaps river-rafting. For insights into Native American culture, visit one of the reservations along the rim.

Death Valley

Starting out from Las Vegas again, head northwest on Highway 95 to Beatty, turning off on Highway 374. You can see the major sights easily in a day and a half, but if you wish to hike or golf, you'll want to allocate more time to the trip.

Two Days at the Dam and Laughlin

Day One

Begin with early morning coffee at Railroad Pass Casino on Hwy 93, an old-timer among gambling dens. Afterward, continue on Hwy 93 to the historic **Boulder City** and the amazing **Hoover Dam Tour**.

Go back along Hwy 93 to the junction with Hwy 95 and turn south toward Laughlin. Stop at the **Nugget** in Searchlight (see Nugget Restaurant, Searchlight) for lunch and the chance to visit a typical small-town Nevada casino.

For a more picturesque route, turn off 95 and head east on the dirt road through Christmas Tree Pass. Spend the remainder of the day in **Laughlin**, perhaps hunting for bargains at the 50-store Horizon Discount Outlet.

Overnight at **Harrah's** (see Fresh Market Square, Harrah's, Laughlin) or another hotel along the river, and be sure to take an evening stroll along the promenade.

Day Two

Early next morning, golfers can tee off at the 18-hole Emerald River Golf Course. Alternatively, the Riverview Golf Course is just across the river in Bullhead City, Arizona.

Later, head for **Oatman**, an old-time western town about a half-hour's drive southeast from Bullhead City. In the afternoon drive back north to **Lake Mojave**. Be sure to make time to see the mysterious **petroglyphs** at Grapevine Canyon, off Hwy 163, before returning to your hotel in Laughlin.

Two Excursions Beyond the Neon

Morning

Begin with an early morning stroll around the UNLV campus, stopping at the **Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History**.

Drive through the Green Valley area to **Foxridge Park** where if children are in your party, the play equipment will be the main attraction. Then it's on to the **Ethel M. Chocolate Factory** for the free tour and walk around the cactus garden.

On the way back to your hotel, lunch at one of the terrace tables around the **Interactive Fountains at Green Valley Center**. You'll have the afternoon free, but if it's Thursday, don't miss the **Henderson Farmers Market**. Or, if traffic is not too heavy, you can take a second excursion.

Afternoon

Begin at the **Nevada State Museum**. Motor-racing fans should then make their next stop the **Las Vegas Speedway**.

Finish up at **Chinatown Plaza**, where the herbalist-health food shop is a repository for remedies such as dried sea horses (good for the kidneys), herbs, and shark fins.

After an hour or two shopping, head up to the second floor of the Plaza, where you have a choice of different Asian restaurants for dining. Among them are Plum Tree Inn, Pho Vietnam Restaurant, Kapit Bahay Filipino Fast Food, and Dragon Sushi.

7

Practical information

What to Pack and When to Go

1 Rate Changes

Hotel rates skyrocket when the weather is best – from about mid-March through May and September until the first part of November. However, days can be close to perfect during February, June, and November when rates are generally lower and there is less traffic and smaller crowds. Las Vegas Casino hotels offer much lower rates on weekdays, with rates soaring at weekends and during conventions.

2 Tee-Timing

It's easier for golfers to get tee times during the winter months, March, and November. Although it can be windy, the temperature is usually comfortable for playing.

3 Consider Convention Dates

The three biggest annual conventions in Las Vegas, in November, April, and January, each attract well over 100,000 delegates. Do your utmost not to coincide with them: not only will room rates be at their highest, but traffic is heavy, and the lines waiting for restaurant service are daunting.

4 Daytime Wear

As far as clothes are concerned, just about anything goes. Although shorts and T-shirts are the uniform in very hot weather, you'll see people wearing everything from designer resort wear to jeans and leather jackets the rest of the year. Bathing attire should be reserved for swimming pool areas. Women wear cover-ups and men generally wear shirts and shorts over their bathing suits when going between their rooms and the pool. Upscale hotels provide robes for guests' use.

5 After Dark Apparel

While comfort generally rules the dress code, some moderately priced restaurants have signs saying "No shoes, no shirts, no service." Sport coats (casual-styled jackets) are required at some of the more expensive restaurants, but neckties are not always a requisite. Most people dress up when going to production shows or nightclubs; Las Vegas residents tend to dress more formally (and flamboyantly) than visitors.

6 Health Matters

The sun shines an average of more than 300 days a year, so pack colored glasses, sun-screen, lip balm, moisturizer, and a hat.



7 Weather Wise

Keep in mind more than just the glorious sunshine: Las Vegas receives an average of only 4.21 inches of rainfall a year, with about half an inch falling during the wettest months, January and August. Humidity ranges from 14 percent to 41 percent. Winter is

unpredictable: some days are very cold and windy, while others are warm enough for wearing shorts.

8 US Entry Requirements for Canadian Visitors

Canadians do not need passports, but must show a photo I.D., such as a citizenship card, when entering the USA.

9 US Entry Requirements for Overseas Visitors

Citizens from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, France, the UK, and many other European countries can visit the USA for up to 90 days without a visa, so long as they have a valid passport. They will need to complete a Visa Waiver Form, usually on the incoming flight. Visitors from countries who do need a visa must apply to a US consulate or embassy, and may be asked for evidence of financial solvency and proof that they intend to return to their country of origin.

10 US Customs

Adult nonresidents are permitted to bring in a limited amount of duty-free goods. These include 0.2 gallons (1 liter) of alcohol, 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars (but not Cuban), and up to \$100 worth of gifts. Cash amounts over \$10,000 should be declared on entry.

Arriving in Las Vegas



1 Air News

If you're among the 43 percent of Las Vegas visitors who fly to McCarran International Airport, check out the airport website for information and maps. The eleventh busiest airport in the USA can be confusing when you don't know your way around.

2 Comparison Shopping

McCarran is served by all major US carriers and several international carriers, including Virgin Atlantic and British Airways, with both scheduled and charter flights. It's worth comparing prices thoroughly before making your reservation.



3 Fly-Drive and Gambling Deals

Fly-drive packages are a firm favorite with people on vacation in the USA. Investigate the so-called "Gamblers' Specials," too, which combine air travel and accommodation in Las Vegas.

4 Getting from the Airport to the City

The airport is 2.5 miles (4 km) south of the city center. Allow 10 minutes to travel by road between the airport and hotels on the Strip. Taxis, shuttles, and limousines wait outside the airport, and there are car rental agencies inside. The cheapest option is to take a bus: the CAT (Citizens Area Transit) bus routes 108 and 109 run between the airport, downtown, and the Strip.

5 Paying Fares

If you have forgotten to bring enough change for transportation between the airport and your hotel, cash machines (ATMs) are located throughout the airport, and

these accept standard cards such as Visa, MasterCard, and American Express, as well as other major US cards.



6 Car Rental If you are renting a car from the airport, be advised that the rental price may not include three taxes, which total 21 percent, charged on all airport car rentals. If you are in a hurry, use one of the

rental agencies with counters at the airport, but bear in mind that agencies with off-site counters generally charge lower rates.

7 Car Rental Documents

Visitors who plan to rent a car must remember to bring along a valid driver's license and major credit card, both of which are required by all agencies. Drivers must also be at least 25 years old to rent a car. If your own automobile insurance does not cover rental vehicles, it is wise to buy the rental companies' own coverage.

8 Road Rules

Visitors from abroad who plan to rent automobiles would be well advised to familiarize themselves with basic US driving rules and signage before they begin driving. Information is available at most vehicle-rental agencies.

9 Arriving by Road

If you are driving to Las Vegas from another part of the USA, you'll probably access the city either via I-15, which goes from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City, Utah, and beyond, or via I-95, which connects Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona. Try to avoid peak traffic times on these roads: arrive before 4pm or after 7pm.

10 Arriving by Train and Bus

Visitors who wish to travel to Las Vegas by train and bus can take the Amtrak Chief to Needles, California or Barstow, California, then transfer to the Amtrak bus service, which arrives at the Las Vegas Greyhound Station. For timetable and ticket information telephone 1800 872 7245 or visit www.amtrak.com.

Getting Around

1 Foot Power

Walking may well be the best way to travel the three-mile-long Strip: the sidewalks are wide and the terrain is flat. Since the city covers a large area, however, and is crisscrossed by multi-lane streets, you'll need a car or public transportation when visiting attractions in outlying parts of the city.

2 Finding Your Routes

If you are going to be driving, procure a good map (the Rand McNally map, which can be obtained at supermarkets, drugstores, and booksellers, is excellent). The city is laid out on a grid, with only a few principal thoroughfares running obliquely.

3 Traffic Talk

In town, be prepared for fast driving and heavy traffic. Avoid driving during rush hours (about 7–9 am and 4–7pm). Congestion on the Strip begins in late morning and continues until after midnight, especially on weekends from mid-March through October and when large special events take place. The city's major streets are six to eight lanes wide.

4 Parking Lots and Garages

Hotel/casinos on the Strip and in Glitter Gulch provide free parking in high-rise garages. Elsewhere they have huge parking lots and/or garages. Almost all hotels offer valet parking. When valet parking is full, preference is given to hotel guests over casino visitors.

5 On-street Parking

When parking on the street, be sure to read all posted signs about parking restrictions to avoid incurring fines or having your vehicle towed away. Fines for parking in disability-reserved spaces without a valid placard range from \$100 to as much as \$1,000.



6 Taxis

Hotel entrances on the Strip and downtown are the best places to find cabs. The standard fare is \$2.20 for the first mile, \$1.50 each additional mile, plus \$0.35 a minute when stopped at a red light or stalled in traffic. In heavy traffic it can cost more than \$20 to go from one end of the Strip to the other. Since taxi drivers know the city's less busy streets, a useful tip is to ask to be taken the quickest way rather than the shortest.

7 Trolleys, Trams, and Monorail

The exact fare of \$1.50 is required for the Strip trolley (9:30am–2am daily), which stops at all major locations from the Stratosphere in the north to Mandalay Bay in the south. Free trams connect Treasure Island with the Mirage, Bellagio with Monte Carlo, and the Excalibur with Luxor and Mandalay Bay. The monorail operates along the Strip between MGM Grand and Sahara (8am–midnight daily). A one-ride ticket costs \$3.



8 Public Transit System

The least expensive way to travel beyond downtown and the Strip is by CAT bus (Citizens Area Transit); CATs have an extensive network of routes. Fares are \$2 on main tourist routes, \$1.25 on others; seniors and children aged 5 to 17 pay \$1).

9 Hotel Shuttles

You may have to pay for the shuttle service between the airport and some hotels, but others offer a free service to shopping areas and sightseeing destinations.

10 Bike Riding

Bicycling along main arteries is not advised, but riding through residential neighborhoods and at Red Rock Canyon can be very pleasurable. Bikes can be rented

from various outlets; fees usually include helmets and water bottles.

Sources of Information

1 General Information

For overall information about the city, including accommodations, attractions, and shopping, contact the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA).

2 Business Information

Visitors interested in business in the area can contact the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, which will direct them to the appropriate sources.

3 Ethnic Affairs

Information about Las Vegas's various ethnic businesses and attractions is available from such organizations as the Asian Chamber of Commerce, Black Chamber of Commerce, and Latin Chamber of Commerce.

4 Organization Information

If you belong to a worldwide organization such as Rotary International or would like to meet people with similar vocational interests or hobbies, your best source of information is an Internet search engine such as www.google.com or www.yahoo.com.

5 Magazine Information

For insights into places and people who live in the Silver State, read Nevada Magazine, published by the Nevada Commission on Tourism. The magazine contains feature articles as well as information about attractions, special events, and entertainment.

6 Newspaper News

The Las Vegas Review Journal publishes dining and entertainment news throughout the week, as well as a "Best of Las Vegas" section once a year in March. You'll learn a lot by reading the ads, too!

7 Internet Info

For information on airlines, rental cars, and accommodations, use your favorite search engine to find websites with a Las Vegas focus. Among those you might find useful are www.visitlasvegas.com and www.vegasfreedom.com.

8 Cost Cutting

Bargain hunters will save money by subscribing to the Las Vegas Advisor. This monthly newsletter, aimed primarily at people who like to gamble, includes accommodation and dining deals that are also of use to non-gamblers.

9 Tourist Stations

The tourist stations along the Strip not only sell commercial tours, but they also have display racks containing promotional material about various attractions, which may be of use to you.

10 Out-of-Town Source

People traveling to Las Vegas via I-15 south manage to find special offers and deals that don't seem to be advertised anywhere else: the tourist information center in Jean, Nevada (near the border with California) has a reputation for handling the best Las Vegas coupons.

Ways to Save Money

1 Planning Ahead

Start planning early – the best airfares may require three months' advance purchase.

2 Airline Deals from Other Parts of the USA

Combined air and hotel packages from most US cities to Las Vegas are especially good bargains. Keep in mind that airline fares to hub cities served by a number of carriers are almost always less expensive than routes on which there are few competing airlines.

3 Airline Deals from Other Countries

When Las Vegas is among two or more destinations you plan to visit in the USA, price each segment of your trip's airfare separately. Visitors from Europe, for example, often save money by buying round-trip tickets from their home country to New York or Chicago and then traveling in the USA by using a combination of one-way bargain air tickets and rental cars.

4 Timing

Time your trip to save money. Hotel rates change from day to day, based on supply and demand. They're most expensive on weekends, holidays, and during big conventions and important events. The less restricted your travel dates, the more money you can save: a room that costs \$200 a night on a busy May weekend can go for \$50 in November. Airfares are usually lower during the winter months, too.

5 Car Rentals

Car-rental rates change even more rapidly – sometimes hourly. Since rental reservations don't require a credit-card guarantee, lock in a reservation when you're quoted a good price. You can always cancel it later if you find a better deal.

6 Freebie Sources

When you arrive in the city, go directly to the information center run by the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (see Sources of Information). Collect all the free magazines and brochures you can comfortably carry. Inside are coupons for special offers and money off shows and dinners, etc.



7 Meal Cost-Cutting

Eat your big meal of the day at noon. Lunch buffets usually cost a few dollars less than those offered at night, with virtually the same food served at both. If you're an early bird or a night owl, you'll save money on food: several casinos – notably those downtown and in outlying areas – offer low-cost meals between 11pm and 6 or 7am. These also work well for visitors affected by jet lag.

8 Discount Shopping
If you want to save money shopping, take one of the Strip buses to Vacation Village at the south end of the line. Transfer to the free shuttle that goes to Belz Factory Outlet World (see Belz Factory Outlet World). The bus will cost a couple of dollars each way.



9 Entertainment Savings
The extravagant nightly light and sound shows and street performances at the Fremont Street Experience are all free. Many of the big hotels along the Strip put on spectacular free shows to entice people in (see Free Entertainment). There are also less well-publicized free attractions such as the tropical bird display at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino. People-watching is entertaining, too (see Places to People-Watch).

10 Free Special Events
Every so often, casinos put on promotions, bands present concerts, and organizations sponsor other free events. These are listed in the calendar sections of local papers and the various free entertainment magazines.

Gambling Tips

1 Casino Games
Blackjack (which is also called "21") is the table game at which players have the best odds. Other popular table games include craps (dice), baccarat, roulette, poker, and three games based on Five Card Stud poker: Caribbean Stud Poker, Let 'er Ride, and Pai Gow.

2 Slot Machines
Many experts believe that slot machines (slots) are addictive. They're the big money-earners for Nevada casinos. Some – video poker, particularly – involve an element of skill. Others are purely games of chance. Newer machines incorporate elements that make them more enticing than the traditional slots.

3 Money Matters
Inserting \$10 or \$20 bills into slot machine receptors – instead of playing coins one at a time – allows for more rapid play, since players need only push a button and the selected amount of coins is deducted. When winning combinations are hit, payouts are added to the total rather than being ejected from the machine.

4 Reading the Payout Tables
Many people who are new to slot machines don't realize that you aren't able to win the highest jackpots posted on a machine unless you insert the maximum number of coins the machine will accept. This means you have to decide whether you want to risk larger amounts, or would prefer to be disappointed if you hit the big one and don't have enough coins in to collect it.

5 Keno
Odds of winning at keno are the lowest of all casino games. The game is based on selecting certain numbers (from 1 to 80) that you hope will be among the 20 numbered ping-pong balls ejected from a hopper during

each game. Pay-outs are based on the number of "catches" (matching numbers selected). Most casinos have keno lounges.

6 Gaming Terms
It is helpful to know at least some of the casino jargon. Hand pay: winnings paid by casino workers rather than machines. Stickman: a casino worker who uses a hook-shaped stick to move dice around a craps table. Shooter: the player whose turn it is to roll the dice. Tokes: tips given for services rendered. RFB comp: complimentary room, food, and beverages (usually given to customers who spend a lot). High roller: someone who wagers large amounts. Bust hand: in blackjack, a hand that totals more than 21.

7 Gaming Chips
Remember when gambling at the tables that chips are not "play money." At all Las Vegas casinos, \$5 chips are red, \$25 chips are green and \$100 chips are black. The colors of higher denomination chips may vary.

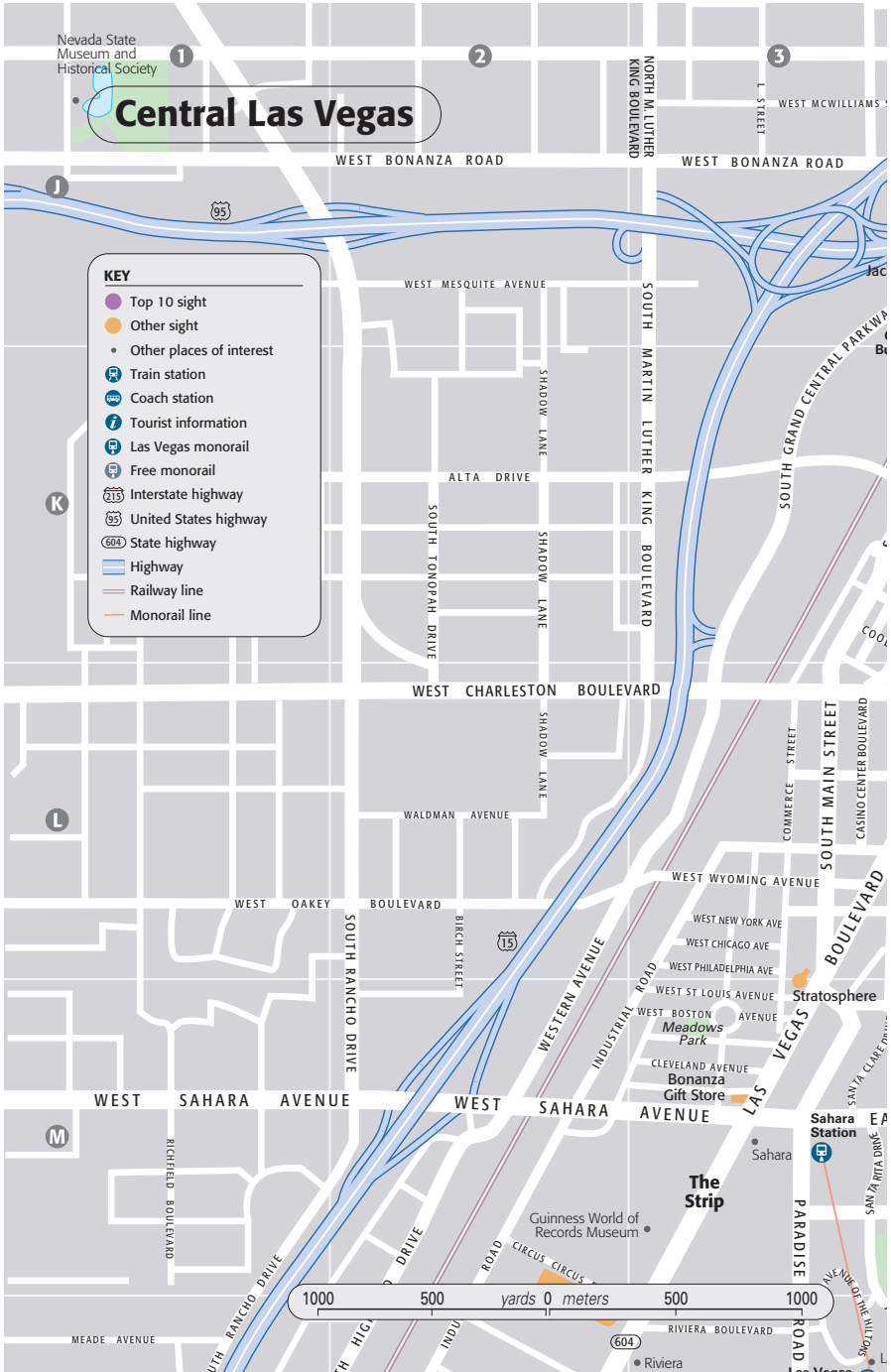
8 Coupon Caution
Take advantage of casino two-for-one or other coupons only if you plan to gamble anyway. Don't let them take advantage of you by enticing you into gambling.

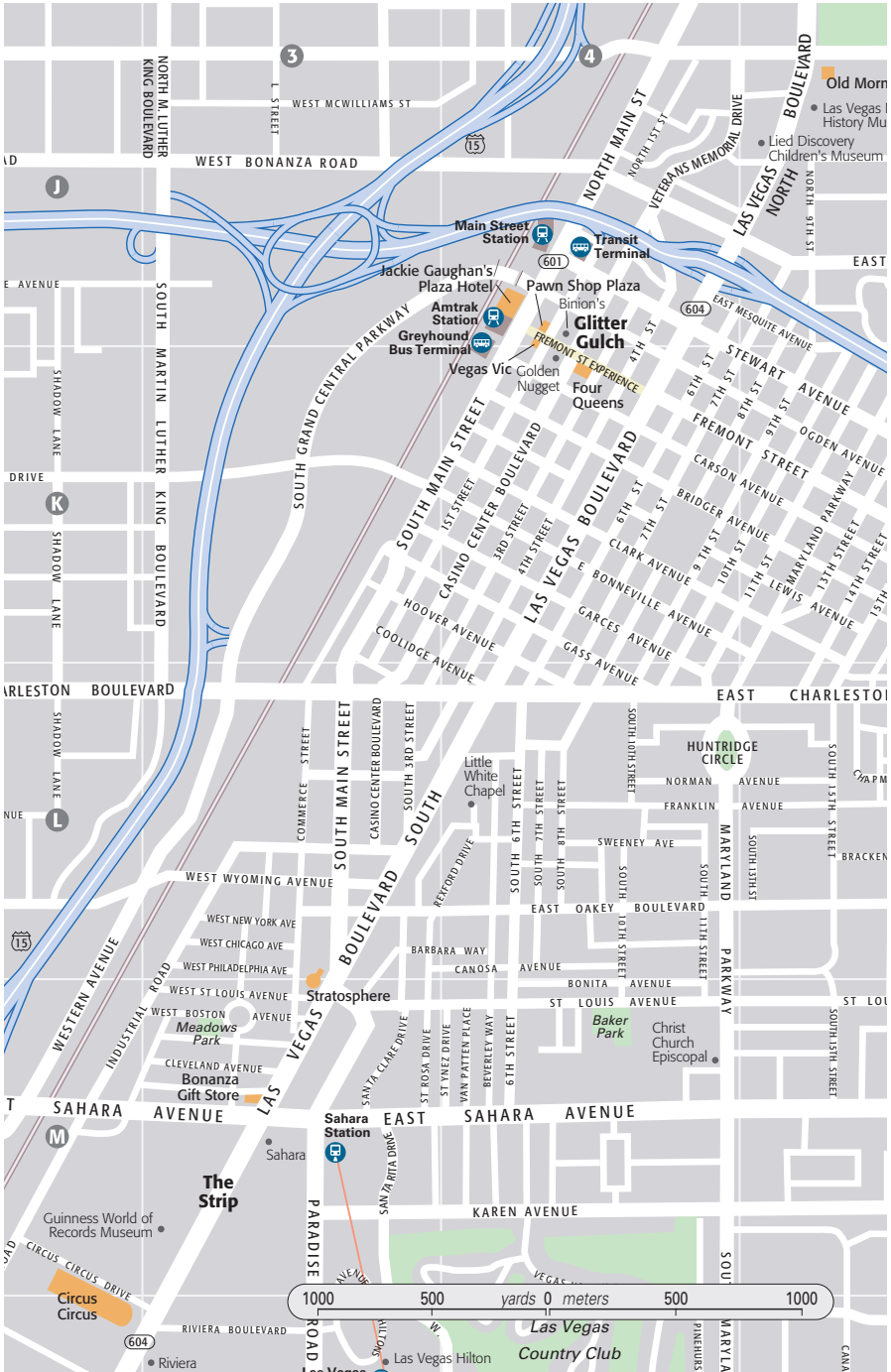
9 First and Foremost
Remember: gambling is a business. The house almost always wins. Think of it as an evening's entertainment, not as a way of making money. Decide in advance what you are willing to spend, and quit as soon as you have spent it. If you do win anything but want to keep playing then cash in frequently (put your original stake, plus part of your profit, aside) to come out ahead.

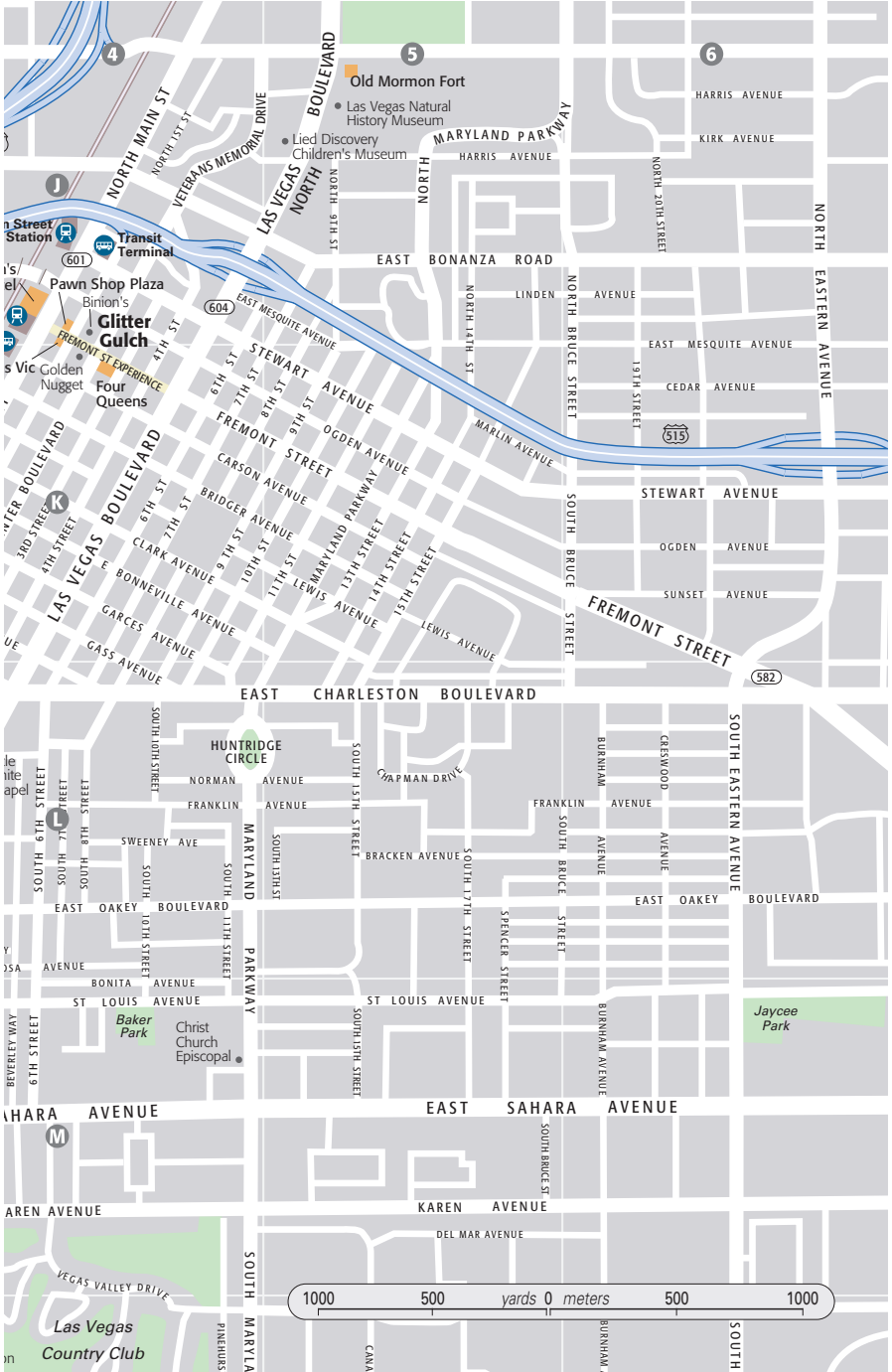
10 Hand Pays
When you hit a jackpot that is paid by casino personnel rather than the machine, it is customary to tip. Any amount is appreciated, but most people tip from three to five percent; big spenders may go as high as 10.

8

Maps

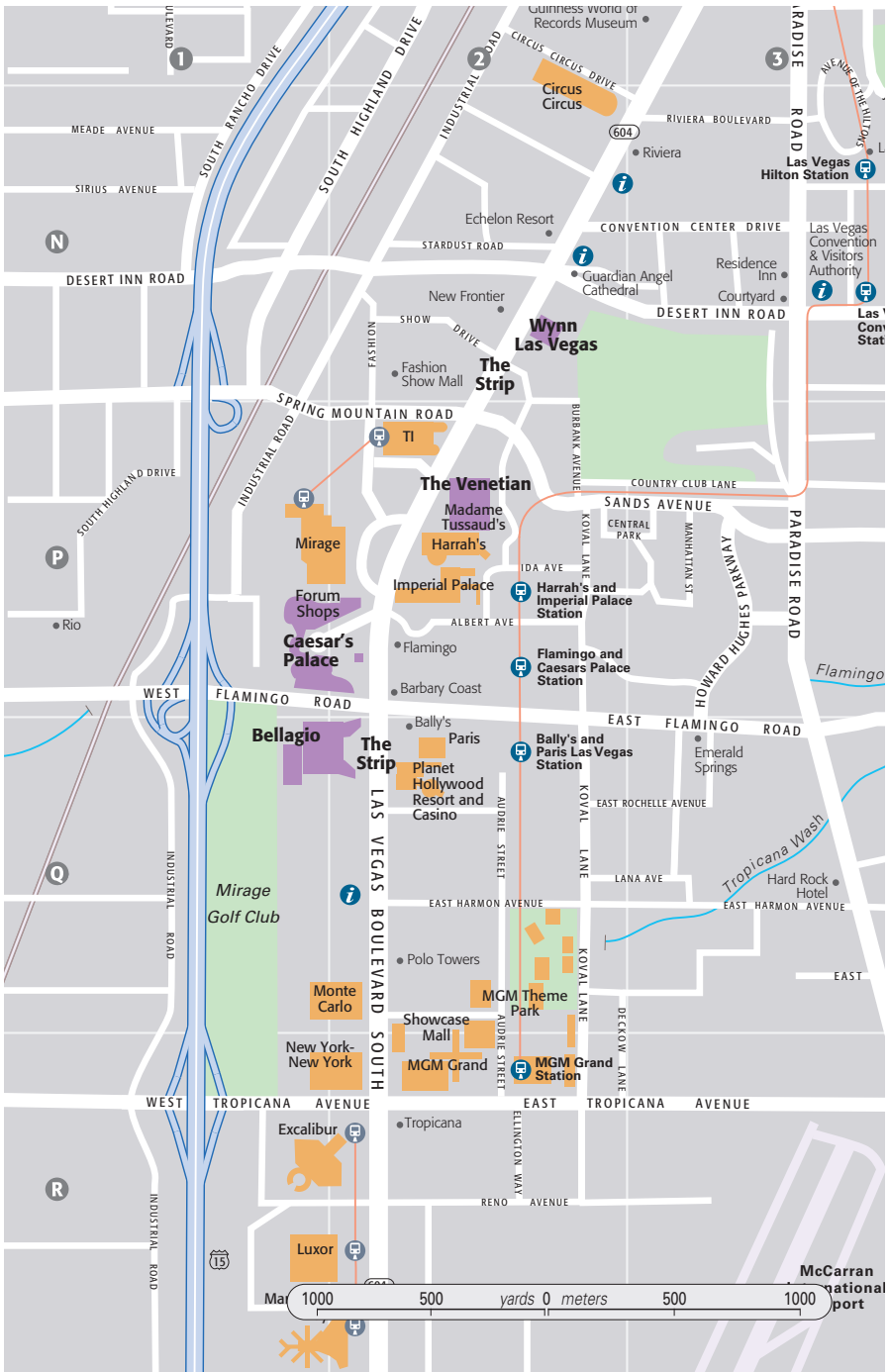


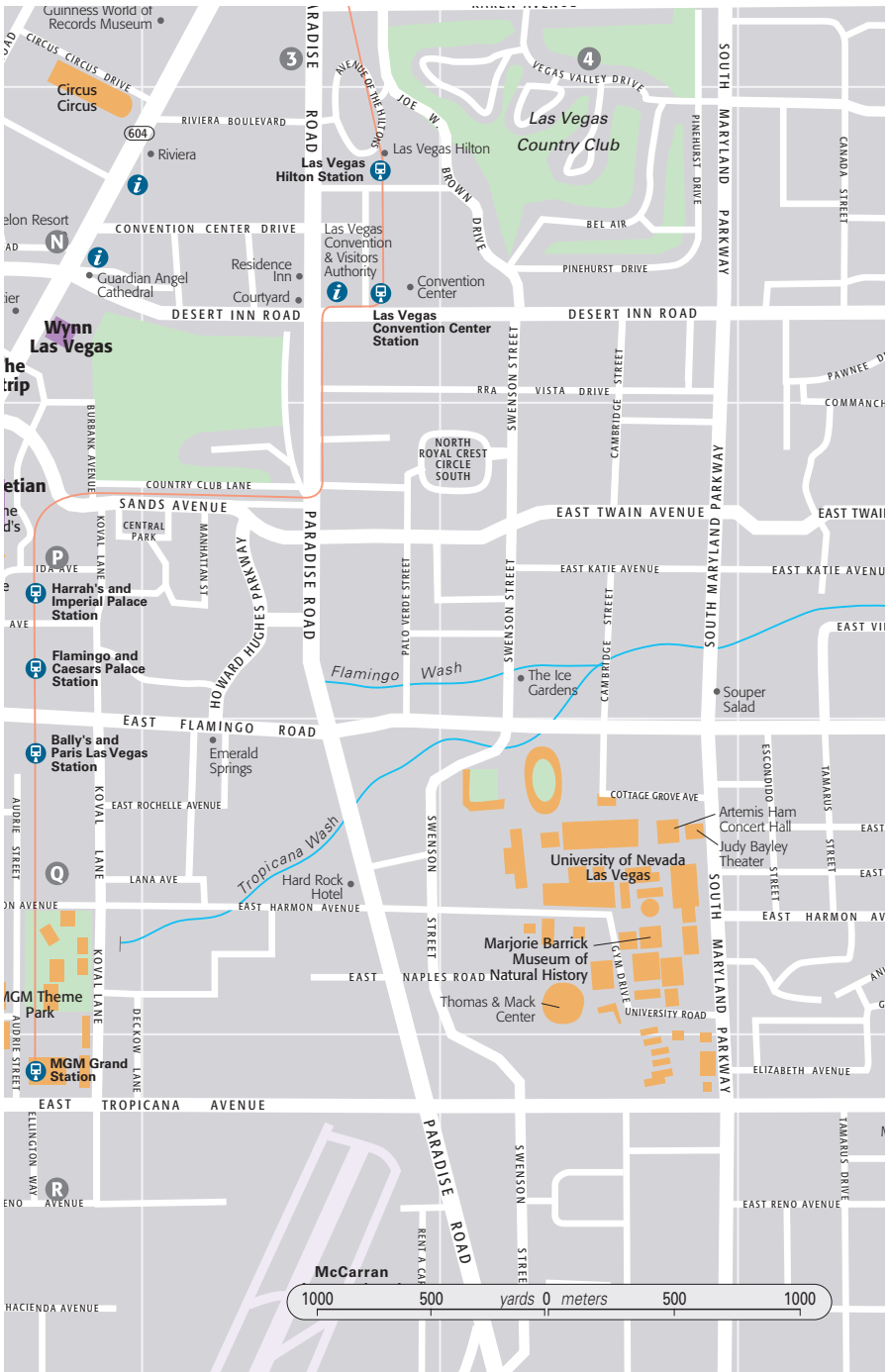




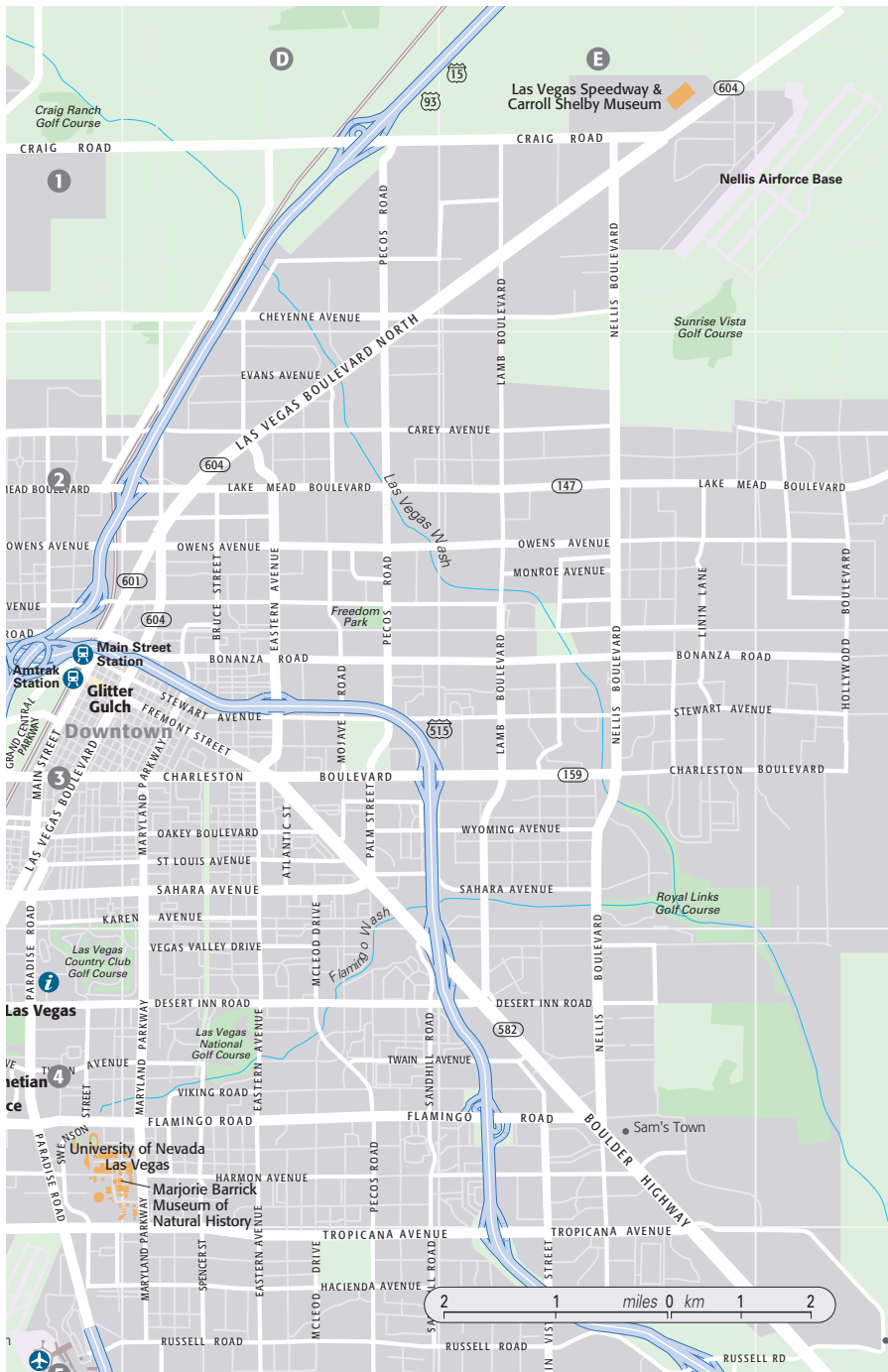




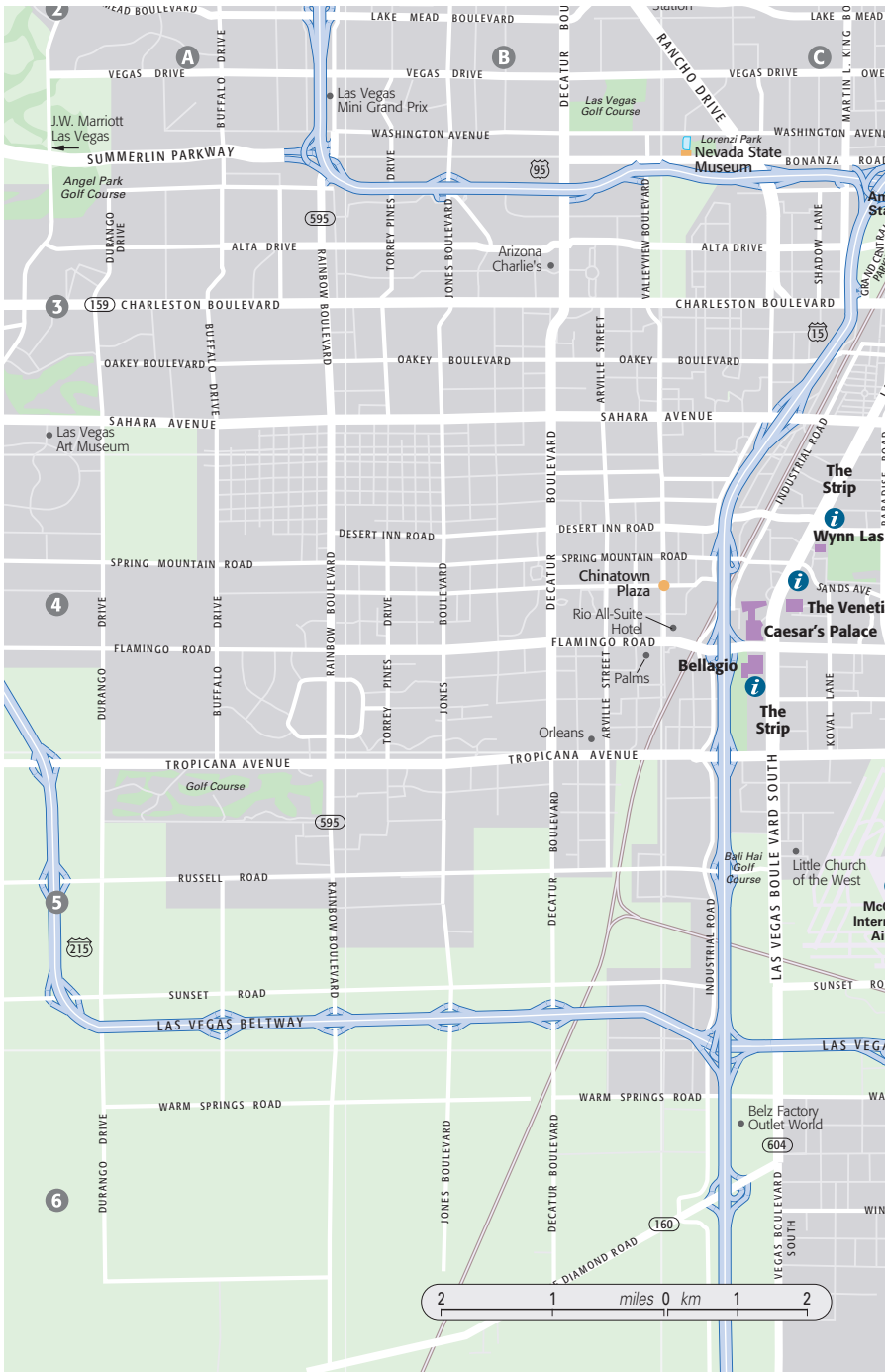


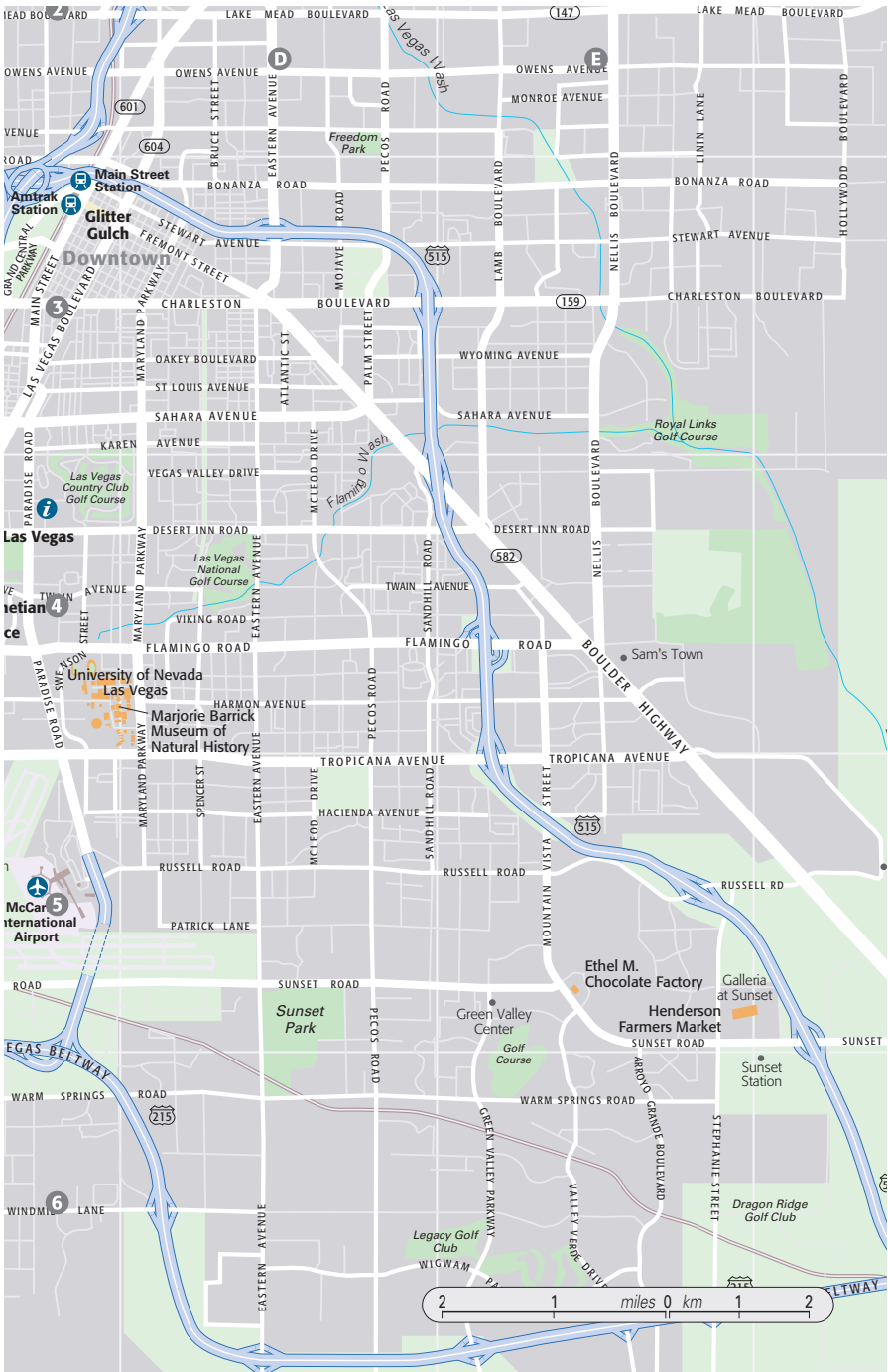
















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