

ACCOMMODATIONS *and* CASINOS

WHERE *to* **STAY:** *Basic Choices*

LAS VEGAS HAS AN ASTOUNDING INVENTORY of about 137,000 hotel rooms. Washington, D.C., by way of contrast, has 31,000. Occupancy rates are over 98% on weekends and average 92% for the whole week, compared to a national average of 61%. By 2010 it's projected that the number of rooms in Las Vegas will top 170,000. As the memorable line from *Field of Dreams* suggests, "If you build it, they will come."

THE LAS VEGAS STRIP AND DOWNTOWN

FROM A VISITOR'S PERSPECTIVE, Las Vegas is more or less a small town that's fairly easy to get around. Most of the major hotels and casinos are in two areas: downtown and on Las Vegas Boulevard, known as the Strip.

The downtown hotels and casinos are often characterized as older and smaller than those on the Strip. While this is true in a general sense, there are both large and elegant hotels downtown. What really differentiates downtown is the incredible concentration of casinos and hotels in a relatively small area. Along Fremont Street, downtown's main thoroughfare, the casinos present a continuous, dazzling galaxy of neon and twinkling lights for more than four city blocks. Known as Glitter Gulch, these several dozen gambling emporiums are sandwiched together in colorful profusion in an area barely larger than a parking lot at a good-sized shopping mall.

Contrast in the size, style, elegance, and presentation of the downtown casinos provides a varied mix, combining extravagant luxury and cosmopolitan sophistication with an Old West-boomtown decadence. Though not directly comparable, downtown Las Vegas has the feel of New Orleans's Bourbon Street: alluring, exotic, wicked, sultry, foreign, and, above all, diverse. It is a place where cowboy, businessperson, showgirl, and retiree mix easily. And, like Bourbon Street, it is all accessible on foot.

If downtown is the French Quarter of Las Vegas, then the Strip is Plantation Row. Here, huge resort hotel-casinos sprawl like estates along a four-mile section of South Las Vegas Boulevard. Each hotel is a vacation destination unto itself, with casino, hotel, restaurants, pools, spas, landscaped grounds, and even golf courses. While the downtown casinos are fused into a vibrant, integrated whole, the huge hotels on the Strip demand individual recognition.

Although the Strip is literally a specific length of South Las Vegas Boulevard, the large surrounding area is usually included when discussing hotels, casinos, restaurants, and attractions. East and parallel to the Strip is Paradise Road, where the Las Vegas Convention Center and several hotels are located. Also included in the Strip area are hotels and casinos on streets intersecting Las Vegas Boulevard, as well as properties to the immediate west of the Strip (on the far side of Interstate 15).

CHOOSING A HOTEL

THE VARIABLES THAT FIGURE MOST prominently in choosing a hotel are price, location, your itinerary, and your quality requirements. There is a wide selection of lodging with myriad combinations of price and value. Given this, your main criteria for selecting a hotel should be its location and your itinerary.

The Strip versus Downtown for Leisure Travelers

Though there are some excellent hotels on the Boulder Highway and elsewhere around town, the choice for most vacation travelers is whether to stay downtown or on (or near) the Strip. Downtown offers a good choice of hotels, restaurants, and gambling, but only a limited choice of entertainment and fewer amenities such as swimming pools and spas. There are no golf courses and only four tennis courts downtown. If you have a car, the Strip is an 8- to 15-minute commute from downtown via I-15. If you do not have a car, public transportation from downtown to the Strip is as efficient as Las Vegas traffic allows and quite affordable.

If you stay on the Strip, you are more likely to need a car or require some sort of transportation. There are more hotels to choose from on the Strip, but they are spread over a much wider area and are often (but not always) pricier than downtown. On the Strip, one has a sense of space and elbow room, as many of the hotels are constructed on a grand scale. The selection of entertainment is both varied and extensive, and the Strip's recreational facilities rival those of the world's leading resorts.

Downtown is a multicultural, multilingual melting pot with an adventurous, raw, robust feel. Everything in this part of town seems intense and concentrated, an endless blur of action, movement, and light. Diversity and history combine in lending vitality and excitement to this older part of Las Vegas, an essence more tangible and real than the monumental, plastic themes and fantasies of many large Strip establishments.

Though downtown caters to every class of clientele, it is less formal and, with exceptions, more of a working man's gambling town. Here, the truck driver and welder gamble alongside the secretary and the rancher. The Strip, likewise, runs the gamut but tends to attract more high rollers, middle-class suburbanites, and business travelers going to conventions.

The Fremont Street Experience

For years, downtown casinos watched from the sidelines as Strip hotels turned into veritable tourist attractions. There was nothing downtown to rival the exploding volcano at the Mirage, the theme parks at Circus Circus, the pirate battle at Treasure Island (T. I.), or the view from the Stratosphere Tower. As gambling revenue dwindled and more customers defected to the Strip, downtown casino owners finally got serious about mounting a counterattack.

The counterattack, known as the Fremont Street Experience, was launched at the end of 1995. Its basic purpose was to transform downtown into an ongoing event, a continuous party, a happening. Fremont Street through the heart of Glitter Gulch was forever closed to vehicular traffic and turned into a park, with terraces, street musicians, and landscaping. By creating an aesthetically pleasing environment, Las Vegas-style, the project united all of the casinos in a sort of diverse gambling mall.

Transformative events on the ground aside, however, the main draw of the Fremont Street Experience is up in the air. Four blocks of Fremont Street are covered by a 1,400-foot-long, 90-foot-high "space frame"—an enormous, vaulted geodesic matrix. This futuristic structure totally canopies Fremont Street. In addition to providing nominal shade from the blistering sun, the space frame serves as the stage for a nighttime attraction that has definitely improved downtown's fortune. Set into the inner surface of the space frame are 12.5 million LEDs, which come to life in a computer-driven, multisensory show. The LEDs are augmented by 40 speakers on each block, booming symphonic sound in syncopation with the lights.

We at the *Unofficial Guide* enjoy and appreciate downtown Las Vegas, and all of us hope that the Fremont Street Experience will continue to have a beneficial effect. We are amazed and appalled, however, by the city's general lack of commitment to improving its infrastructure, particularly the traffic situation. The market, in terms of aggregate number of gamblers, is undeniably located out on the Strip. To create an attraction sufficiently compelling to lure this market downtown is to fight only half the battle. The other half of the battle is to make it easy for all those folks on the Strip to get downtown. There are plans to extend the monorail with a downtown station as the northern terminus. The gestation for this much-needed addition to the public transportation mix is fuzzy. Our guess is that we'll be lucky to see the monorail downtown by 2015.

If You Visit Las Vegas on Business

If you are going to Las Vegas for a trade show or convention, you will want to lodge as close as possible to the meeting site (ideally within easy walking distance) or, alternatively, near a monorail station. Many Strip hotel-casinos—including the Riviera, Flamingo, Venetian, Wynn Las Vegas, Paris, Bellagio, Mandalay Bay, Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas Hilton, MGM Grand, T. I., Tropicana, Sahara, Mirage, Caesars Palace, Harrah's, and Bally's—host meetings from 100 to upward of 4,000 attendees, offer lodging for citywide shows and conventions held at the Las Vegas Convention Center and the Sands Expo and Convention Center, and have good track records with business travelers. Our maps should provide some assistance in determining which properties are situated near your meeting site.

Because most large meetings and trade shows are headquartered at the convention center or on the Strip, lodging on the Strip is more convenient than staying downtown. Citywide conventions often provide shuttle service from the major hotels to the Las Vegas Convention Center, and, of course, cabs and the monorail are available too. Las Vegas traffic is a mess, however, particularly in the late afternoon, and there is a finite number of cabs.

LARGE HOTEL-CASINOS VERSUS SMALL HOTELS AND MOTELS

LODGING PROPERTIES IN LAS VEGAS range from tiny motels with a dozen rooms to colossal hotel-casino resort complexes of 5,000 rooms. As you might expect, there are advantages and drawbacks to staying in either a large or small hotel. Determining which size is better for you depends on how you plan to spend your time in Las Vegas.

If your leisure or business itinerary calls for a car and a lot of coming and going, the big hotels can be a real pain. At the Venetian, Excalibur, and MGM Grand, to name a few, it can take as long as 15 minutes to get from your room to your car if you use the self-parking lot. A young couple staying at the Las Vegas Hilton left their hotel room 40 minutes prior to their show reservations at the Mirage. After trooping to their van in the Hilton's distant self-parking lot, the couple discovered they had forgotten their show tickets. By the time the husband ran back to their room to retrieve the tickets and returned to the van, only five minutes remained to drive to the Mirage, park, and find the showroom. As it turned out, they missed the first 15 minutes of the performance.

Many large hotels have multistory, self-parking garages that require lengthy and dizzying drives down ramps. Post-9/11 security likewise has complicated coming and going at some large, multistory parking garages. If you plan to use the car frequently and do not want to deal

 **unofficial TIP**
Try to find a good deal on a room at a hotel that's not near your meeting site and commute to your meeting in a rental car. Often the savings on the room will pay for your transportation.

with the hassle of remote parking lots, big garages, or the tipping associated with valet parking, we recommend staying in a smaller hotel or motel that provides quick and convenient access to your car.

Quiet and tranquillity can also be reasons for choosing a smaller hotel. Many Las Vegas visitors object to passing through a casino whenever they go to or leave their room. Staying in a smaller property without a casino or a large nongaming property like the Trump Hotel Las Vegas permits an escape from the flashing lights, the never-ending clanking of coins, and the unremitting, frenetic pace of an around-the-clock gambling town. While they may not be as exciting, smaller hotels tend to be more restful and homelike.

The ease and simplicity of checking in and out of smaller properties has its own appeal. To be able to check in or pay your bill without standing in a line, or to unload and load the car directly and conveniently, significantly diminishes the stress of arriving and departing. When we visited the registration lobby of one of the larger hotels on a Friday afternoon, for example, it reminded us of Kennedy International Airport shut down by a winter storm. Guests were stacked dozens deep in the check-in lines. Others, having abandoned any hope of registering in the near future, slept curled up around their luggage or sat reading on the floor. The whole lobby was awash in suitcases, hanging bags, and people milling about. Though hotel size and check-in efficiency are not always inversely related, the sight of a registration lobby fitted out like the queuing area of Disneyland's Jungle Cruise should be enough to make a sane person think twice.

Along similar lines, a large hotel does not ensure more comfortable or more luxurious accommodations. In Las Vegas there are exceptionally posh and well-designed rooms in both large and small hotels, just as there are threadbare and poorly designed rooms in properties of every size. A large establishment does, however, usually ensure a superior range of amenities, including on-site entertainment, room service, spas or exercise rooms, concierge services, bell services, valet parking, meeting rooms, babysitting, shoe shining, dry cleaning, shopping, 24-hour restaurants, copy and fax services, check cashing, and, of course, gambling.

If you spill a cosmopolitan on your khakis, however, you may want to think twice before ponying up for the hotel-casino in-house laundry service. You'll pay by the piece, and you'll pay dearly. After a couple of days' laundry pile up on the bed, do like we do and take advantage of an area wash-and-fold service. Our favorite is **Wizard of Suds** (4275

Arville Street) where the courteous staff will wash and fold your dirties for cheap. At \$1.25 per pound, and with quick turnaround if you drop off before noon, you can't beat the Wizard; ☎ 702-873-1453.

If you plan to do most of your touring on foot or are attending a convention, a large hotel in a

 **unofficial TIP**
Try a local wash-and-fold service as an affordable alternative to expensive hotel-casino laundry services.

good location has its advantages. There will be a variety of restaurants, entertainment, shopping, and recreation close at hand. In case you are a night owl, you will be able to eat or drink at any hour, and there will always be lots going on. Many showrooms offer 11 p.m. or midnight shows, and quite a few hotels (Sam's Town, Suncoast, Gold Coast, Orleans, and Santa Fe Station) have 24-hour bowling.

For visitors who wish to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of Las Vegas, to live in the fast lane, and to be where the action is, a large hotel is recommended. These people feel they are missing something unless they stay in a big hotel-casino. For them, it is important to know that the excitement is only an elevator ride away.



GETTING AROUND:

Location and Convenience

LAS VEGAS LODGING CONVENIENCE CHART

THE FOLLOWING CHART will give you a feel for how convenient specific hotels and motels are to common Las Vegas destinations. Both walking and cab-commuting times are figured on the conservative side. You should be able to do a little better than the times indicated, particularly by cab, unless you are traveling during rush hour or attempting to navigate the Strip on a weekend evening.

Regarding the monorail, times listed include loading and unloading as well as the actual commuting time. The Strip monorail stations are located in the far rear of the host casinos, so, for example, the walk from the Strip entrance of the MGM Grand to the station is about six to eight minutes. The MGM Grand station is the closest station to the Excalibur on the west side of the Strip. From your guest room at the Excalibur it will take about 20 to 25 minutes to walk to the MGM Grand station. In our experience, because of the walking required to reach the nearest monorail station from casinos on the Strip's west side, you might want to consider a cab if you're in a hurry. Always check traffic conditions before you hop in a cab. If the Strip is gridlocked (very common), head for the monorail.

Commuting to Downtown from the Strip

Commuting to downtown from the Strip is a snap on I-15. From the Strip you can get on or off I-15 at Tropicana Avenue, Flamingo Road, Spring Mountain Road, or Sahara Avenue. Once on I-15 heading north, stay in the right lane and follow the signs for downtown and US 95 South. Exiting onto Casino Center Boulevard, you will be right in the middle of downtown with several large parking garages conveniently at hand. Driving time to downtown Las Vegas varies from about 16 minutes from the south end of the Strip (I-15 via Tropicana Avenue) to about six minutes from the north end (I-15 via Sahara Avenue).

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Commuting Times in Minutes

FROM

TO

	LAS VEGAS STRIP	CONVENTION CENTER	DOWN- TOWN	McCARRAN AIRPORT	UNLV THOMAS & MACK CENTER
Alexis Park Resort and Villas	5/cab	8/cab	15/cab	5/cab	6/cab
Ambassador Strip Travelodge	3/cab	9/cab	15/cab	4/cab	6/cab
Arizona Charlie's Boulder	12/cab	18/cab	12/cab	20/cab	22/cab
Arizona Charlie's Decatur	19/cab	18/cab	12/cab	21/cab	20/cab
Artisan Hotel and Spa	5/walk	5/cab	14/cab	14/cab	14/cab
Atrium Suites	6/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
Bally's	on Strip	8/mono	15/cab	7/cab	7/cab
Bellagio	on Strip	11/mono	15/cab	11/cab	12/cab
Best Western Mardi Gras Inn	6/cab	10/walk	15/cab	9/cab	7/cab
Best Western McCarran Inn	6/cab	9/cab	15/cab	4/cab	7/cab
Bill's Gamblin' Hall	on Strip	7/mono	15/cab	8/cab	9/cab
Binion's Gambling Hall	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	19/cab
Boulder Station	19/cab	18/cab	12/cab	21/cab	20/cab
Caesars Palace	on Strip	7/mono	12/cab	10/cab	10/cab
California	13/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	19/cab
Candlewood Suites	5/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
Cannery	23/cab	26/cab	20/cab	30/cab	30/cab
Casino Royale	on Strip	7/mono	14/cab	10/cab	10/cab
Circus Circus	on Strip	5/cab	13/cab	14/cab	13/cab
Clarion Hotel and Suites	5/cab	5/cab	14/cab	8/cab	10/cab
Comfort Inn Paradise Road	4/cab	5/cab	15/cab	10/cab	9/cab
Courtyard Las Vegas South	4/cab	14/cab	15/cab	8/cab	12/cab
Courtyard Paradise Road	4/cab	5/walk	15/cab	9/cab	8/cab
El Cortez	11/cab	15/cab	6/walk	16/cab	17/cab
Ellis Island	4/cab	6/cab	14/cab	8/cab	8/cab
Embassy Suites Convention Center	6/cab	10/walk	15/cab	9/cab	7/cab
Embassy Suites in Las Vegas	4/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
Excalibur	on Strip	13/cab	14/cab	7/cab	8/cab
Fairfield Inn Las Vegas Airport	5/cab	5/cab	15/cab	9/cab	8/cab
Fairfield Inn and Suites Las Vegas South	4/cab	14/walk	15/cab	8/cab	12/cab

FROM	TO				
	LAS VEGAS STRIP	CONVENTION CENTER	DOWNTOWN	McCARRAN AIRPORT	UNLV THOMAS & MACK CENTER
Fiesta Henderson	18/cab	17/cab	19/cab	17/cab	15/cab
Fiesta Rancho	18/cab	18/cab	10/cab	22/cab	22/cab
Fitzgeralds	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	17/cab	17/cab
Flamingo	on Strip	7/mono	13/cab	8/cab	8/cab
Four Queens	15/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	17/cab
Four Seasons	on Strip	14/cab	15/cab	7/cab	13/cab
Fremont	15/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	17/cab
Gold Coast	4/cab	13/cab	14/cab	10/cab	10/cab
Gold Spike	14/cab	15/cab	4/walk	18/cab	17/cab
Golden Gate	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	18/cab
Golden Nugget	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	18/cab	19/cab
Greek Isles	7/walk	5/walk	14/cab	9/cab	11/cab
Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa	15/cab	18/cab	16/cab	15/cab	14/cab
Hampton Inn Tropicana	10/walk	6/cab	9/cab	10/cab	6/cab
Hard Rock Hotel	4/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
Harrah's	on Strip	5/mono	15/cab	10/cab	10/cab
Hilton Garden Inn	13/cab	23/cab	26/cab	14/cab	21/cab
Holiday Inn Express	4/cab	14/cab	15/cab	8/cab	12/cab
Hooters	5/walk	11/mono	15/cab	6/cab	8/cab
Hyatt Place	4/cab	7/walk	15/cab	10/cab	9/cab
Imperial Palace	on Strip	5/mono	15/cab	10/cab	10/cab
JW Marriott Las Vegas	18/cab	21/cab	15/cab	23/cab	24/cab
Knights Inn Airport	5/cab	7/cab	15/cab	3/cab	5/cab
La Quinta Las Vegas Airport	5/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
La Quinta Tropicana	5/cab	13/cab	14/cab	10/cab	10/cab
Las Vegas Club	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	18/cab
Las Vegas Hilton	5/mono	5/walk	13/cab	10/cab	8/cab
Las Vegas Marriott Suites	14/cab	5/walk	15/cab	10/cab	9/cab
Loews Lake Las Vegas	45/cab	49/cab	43/cab	37/cab	46/cab
Luxor	on Strip	13/cab	15/cab	8/cab	10/cab

Commuting Times in Minutes (continued)

FROM	TO				
	LAS VEGAS STRIP	CONVENTION CENTER	DOWNTOWN	MCCARRAN AIRPORT	UNLV THOMAS & MACK CENTER
Main Street Station	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	19/cab
Mandalay Bay	on Strip	14/cab	16/cab	7/cab	13/cab
Manor Suites	10/cab	17/cab	20/cab	12/cab	17/cab
MGM Grand	on Strip	11/mono	15/cab	9/cab	9/cab
Mirage	on Strip	6/mono	15/cab	11/cab	10/cab
Monte Carlo	on Strip	11/mono	15/cab	11/cab	12/cab
Montelago Village Lake Las Vegas Resort	45/cab	49/cab	43/cab	37/cab	46/cab
Motel 6 Tropicana	3/cab	12/cab	15/cab	6/cab	8/cab
New York–New York	on Strip	11/mono	15/cab	11/cab	12/cab
Orleans	4/cab	15/cab	14/cab	11/cab	11/cab
Palace Station	5/cab	10/cab	10/cab	14/cab	15/cab
Palazzo	on Strip	6/mono	14/cab	8/cab	8/cab
Palms	5/cab	13/cab	14/cab	10/cab	10/cab
Paris	on Strip	9/mono	15/cab	8/cab	8/cab
Planet Hollywood	on Strip	8/cab	15/cab	7/cab	8/cab
Platinum Hotel	8/walk	5/cab	17/cab	7/cab	7/cab
Plaza Hotel	14/cab	15/cab	downtown	19/cab	18/cab
Red Rock Resort	18/cab	21/cab	15/cab	23/cab	24/cab
Residence Inn Convention Center	4/cab	6/cab	15/cab	12/cab	12/cab
Residence Inn Las Vegas South	4/cab	14/cab	15/cab	8/cab	12/cab
Renaissance Las Vegas	5/cab	10/walk	14/cab	9/cab	8/cab
Rio	5/cab	14/cab	13/cab	10/cab	10/cab

Commuting to the Strip from Downtown

If you are heading to the Strip from downtown, you can pick up US 95 North (and then I-15 South) by going north on either Fourth Street or Las Vegas Boulevard. Driving time from downtown to the Strip takes 6 to 16 minutes, depending on your destination.

FROM	TO				
	LAS VEGAS STRIP	CONVENTION CENTER	DOWN-TOWN	McCARRAN AIRPORT	UNLV THOMAS & MACK CENTER
Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas	45/cab	49/cab	43/cab	37/cab	46/cab
Riviera	on Strip	4/cab	14/cab	11/cab	10/cab
Royal Resort	3/walk	5/cab	14/cab	13/cab	11/cab
Sahara	on Strip	6/mono	13/cab	13/cab	11/cab
Sahara Westwood Inn	5/cab	10/cab	10/cab	14/cab	15/cab
St. Tropez	5/cab	6/cab	15/cab	7/cab	6/cab
Sam's Town	20/cab	25/cab	20/cab	18/cab	17/cab
Santa Fe Station	27/cab	30/cab	23/cab	33/cab	36/cab
Siegel Suites	18/cab	21/cab	15/cab	23/cab	24/cab
Silverton	10/cab	17/cab	20/cab	12/cab	17/cab
South Point	16/cab	23/cab	26/cab	18/cab	23/cab
Stratosphere	3/cab	7/cab	9/cab	14/cab	14/cab
Suncoast	18/cab	21/cab	15/cab	23/cab	24/cab
Sunset Station	18/cab	17/cab	18/cab	16/cab	15/cab
Terrible's	5/cab	6/cab	15/cab	6/cab	6/cab
Texas Station	17/cab	16/cab	13/cab	22/cab	22/cab
THEhotel at Mandalay Bay	on Strip	14/cab	15/cab	7/cab	13/cab
T. I.	on Strip	6/mono	14/cab	11/cab	10/cab
Tropicana	on Strip	11/mono	15/cab	6/cab	9/cab
Trump Las Vegas	10/walk	10/cab	11/cab	13/cab	11/cab
Tuscany	5/cab	5/cab	14/cab	8/cab	10/cab
Venetian	on Strip	6/mono	14/cab	8/cab	8/cab
Westin Casuarina	4/walk	11/mono	15/cab	7/cab	7/cab
Wild Wild West	3/cab	13/cab	14/cab	8/cab	11/cab
Wynn Las Vegas	on Strip	8/cab	13/cab	10/cab	9/cab

Free Connections

Traffic on the Strip is so awful that the hotels, both individually and in groups, are creating new alternatives for getting around.

1. On the west side, a shuttle tram serves the Excalibur, Luxor, Mandalay Bay, Four Seasons, and THEhotel.

2. The Rio operates a shuttle from the back of Harrah's on the Strip, to the Rio, about half a mile west of the Strip on West Flamingo Road.
3. Free shuttle service from the nongaming Polo Towers near Planet Hollywood runs on the hour northbound to the Stratosphere and on the half hour for the southbound return from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m.

LAS VEGAS MONORAIL

THE LONG-AWAITED \$650-MILLION Las Vegas Monorail began service in 2004 with nine trains running the four-mile route between the MGM Grand and the Sahara. The route parallels the Strip between Tropicana and Sands Avenue and then cuts east to the Las Vegas Convention Center and the Las Vegas Hilton before continuing to the last stop at the Sahara. Trains run approximately every 10 minutes between 7 a.m. and 2 a.m. on weekdays and until 3 a.m. on weekends. From one end of the line to the other takes about 15 minutes and includes seven stops. The fare for a single one-way ride is \$5. A better deal is a one-day fare (24 hours from first use) at \$15. Other options include a ten-ride fare for \$35 (with each one-way segment defined as a ride) and a three-

unofficial TIP

Because monorail stations are located at the extreme rear of the casinos served, you're better off walking to your destination if you are going less than a mile.

day unlimited travel fare for \$40. Check the Web site for special rates. The monorail is a godsend to convention and trade-show attendees commuting from Strip hotels to the Las Vegas Convention Center and the Sands Exposition Center; ☎ 702-699-8200; www.lvmonorail.com.

BUSES

LAS VEGAS'S CITIZEN'S AREA TRANSIT (CAT) provides reliable bus service at reasonable rates. Although one-way fares along the Strip are \$2, one-way fares in residential areas are only \$1.25. You can also purchase an all-day pass for the strip for \$5 and an all-day pass for residential areas for \$2.50. The pass is good for 24 hours from the time of purchase. Children age 5 and under ride all routes free. All public transportation requires exact fare. All CAT buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bicycle racks, both of which are provided at no extra charge. Disabled persons who are certified in their home state for door-to-door service should call ☎ 702-676-1815 for reservations. People who are not certified in their home state cannot get door-to-door service in Las Vegas. For general route and fare information or to request a schedule through the mail, call ☎ 702-228-7433 or visit www.rtcsonthernnevada.com/cat.

WHAT'S *in* an ADDRESS?

DOWNTOWN

THE HEART OF THE DOWNTOWN casino area is Fremont Street between Fourth Street (on the east) and Main Street (on the west).

COMMONLY USED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ROUTES

	ROUND-TRIP FROM/TO	HOURS OF OPERATION	FREQUENCY OF SERVICE	FARE
Monorail	MGM Grand/ Sahara	7 a.m.–2 a.m.	Every 5 minutes	\$5
Citizen's Area Transit Deuce Line	South Strip Transfer Terminals/ Downtown Transportation Center	24 hours	Every 15 minutes	\$2

Hotel-casinos situated along this quarter-mile four-block stretch known as Glitter Gulch include the Plaza Hotel, Golden Gate, Vegas Club, Binion's Gambling Hall, Golden Nugget, Fremont, Four Queens, and Fitzgeralds. Parallel to Fremont and one block north is Ogden Avenue, where the California and the Gold Spike are located. Main Street Station is situated on Main Street at the intersection of Ogden Avenue.

All of the downtown hotel-casinos are centrally positioned and convenient to the action, with the exception of the El Cortez, which sits three blocks to the east. While there is a tremendous difference in quality and price among the downtown properties, the locations of all the hotels (except the El Cortez) are excellent. When you stay downtown, everything is within a five-minute walk. By comparison, on the Strip it takes longer to walk from the entrance of Caesars Palace to the entrance of the Mirage, next door, than to cover the whole four blocks of the casino center downtown.

THE STRIP

WHILE LOCATION IS NOT A MAJOR CONCERN when choosing from among the downtown hotels, it is of paramount importance when selecting a hotel on the Strip.

We once received a flier from a Las Vegas casino proclaiming that it was located "right on the Strip." It supported the claim with a photo showing its marquee and those of several other casinos in a neat row with their neon ablaze. What recipients of this advertisement (except those familiar with Las Vegas) never would have guessed was that the photo had been taken with a lens that eliminated all sense of distance. While the advertised casino appeared to be next door to the other casinos in the picture, it was in reality almost a mile away.

A common variation on the same pitch is "Stay Right on the Las Vegas Strip at Half the Price." Once again, the promoter is attempting to deceive by taking advantage of the recipient's ignorance of Strip geography. As it happens, the Las Vegas Strip (South Las Vegas Boulevard) starts southwest of the airport and runs all the way downtown, a distance of about seven miles. Only the four-mile section between Mandalay Bay and the Stratosphere contains the large casinos and other attractions of interest to visitors. South of Mandalay Bay "on the Strip" are the airport boundary, some small motels, discount shopping, and

nice desert. North of the Stratosphere en route to downtown, the Strip runs through a commercial area sprinkled with wedding chapels, fast-food restaurants, and small motels.

The Best Locations on the Strip

Beware of hotels and motels claiming to be on the Strip but not located between Mandalay Bay and the Stratosphere. The Mandalay Bay basically anchors the south end of the Strip, about a quarter mile from the Luxor, its closest neighbor. Likewise, at the other end, the Stratosphere and the Sahara are somewhat isolated. In between, there are distinct clusters of hotels and casinos.

STRIP CLUSTER 1: THE CLUSTER OF THE GIANTS At the intersection of the Strip (South Las Vegas Boulevard) and Tropicana Avenue are five of the world's largest hotels. The MGM Grand Hotel is the largest hotel in the world. Diagonally across the intersection from the MGM Grand is the Excalibur, the sixth largest hotel in the world. The other two corners of the intersection are occupied by New York–New York and the Tropicana. Nearby to the south is the Luxor (third largest) and Mandalay Bay, the Four Seasons, and THEhotel. To the north are the Monte Carlo and Planet Hollywood (both on the Strip). Hooters is situated on Tropicana across from the MGM Grand. From the intersection of the Strip and Tropicana, it is a half-mile walk south to Mandalay Bay and a three-tenths-mile hike north to Planet Hollywood. The next cluster of major hotels and casinos is at the intersection of Flamingo Road, one mile north. With New York–New York, Planet Hollywood, and the Monte Carlo, Strip Cluster 1 challenges the status, at least in terms of appeal and diversity, of Strip Cluster 2 at the heart of the Strip. Progress always has its dark side, however; here it is the phenomenal increase of traffic and congestion on East Tropicana Avenue as it approaches the Strip.

unofficial TIP

If you stay on the Strip, you want to be somewhere in the Mandalay Bay–Stratosphere stretch. Even there, though, some sections are more desirable than others.

STRIP CLUSTER 2: THE GRAND CLUSTER From Flamingo Road to Spring Mountain Road (also called Sands Avenue, and farther east, Twain Avenue) is the greatest numerical concentration

of major hotels and casinos on the Strip. If you wish to stay on the Strip and prefer to walk wherever you go, this is the best location. At Flamingo Road and Las Vegas Boulevard are Bally's, Caesars Palace, Bill's Gamblin' Hall, Paris, and Bellagio. Heading east on Flamingo Road is the Westin Casuarina. Toward town on the Strip are the Flamingo, O'Shea's, Imperial Palace, Mirage, Harrah's, Casino Royale, the Palazzo and Venetian, and T. I. Also in this cluster are the Forum Shops and the Grand Canal Shoppes, Las Vegas's most distinctive shopping venues. A leisure traveler could stay a week in this section (without ever getting in a car or cab) and not run out of interesting sights, restaurants, or entertainment. On the negative side, for those with cars, traffic

congestion at the intersection of the Strip and Flamingo Road is the worst in the city.

STRIP CLUSTER 3 Another nice section of the Strip is from Spring Mountain Road up to the Wynn Encore and Wynn Las Vegas. This cluster, pretty much in the center of the Strip, is distinguished by its easy access. Visitors who prefer a major hotel on the Strip but want to avoid the daily traffic snarls could not ask for a more convenient location. Though Wynn Encore and Wynn Las Vegas are about a quarter mile from the nearest casino cluster in either direction, they are situated within a four-minute walk of Fashion Show Mall, one of the most diversified upscale shopping centers in the United States. There are also some very good restaurants here. Finally, this cluster is a four-minute cab ride (or a 16-minute walk) from the Las Vegas Convention Center.

 **unofficial TIP**
Try Strip Cluster 3 for convenience and to escape traffic congestion.

STRIP CLUSTER 4 The next cluster up the Strip is between Convention Center Drive and Riviera Boulevard. Arrayed along a stretch slightly more than a half-mile long are the Riviera and Circus Circus with its Adventuredome theme park. Casinos and hotels in this cluster are considerably less upscale than those in the “grand cluster” but offer acceptable selections for dining and entertainment, as well as proximity to the Las Vegas Convention Center.

STRIP CLUSTER 5 Finally, near the intersection of Las Vegas Boulevard and Sahara Avenue there is a relatively isolated hotel cluster that contains the Sahara and, about a third of a mile toward town, the Stratosphere. Though fairly isolated if you intend to walk, for visitors with cars or monorail riders this cluster provides convenient access to the Strip, the convention center, and downtown.

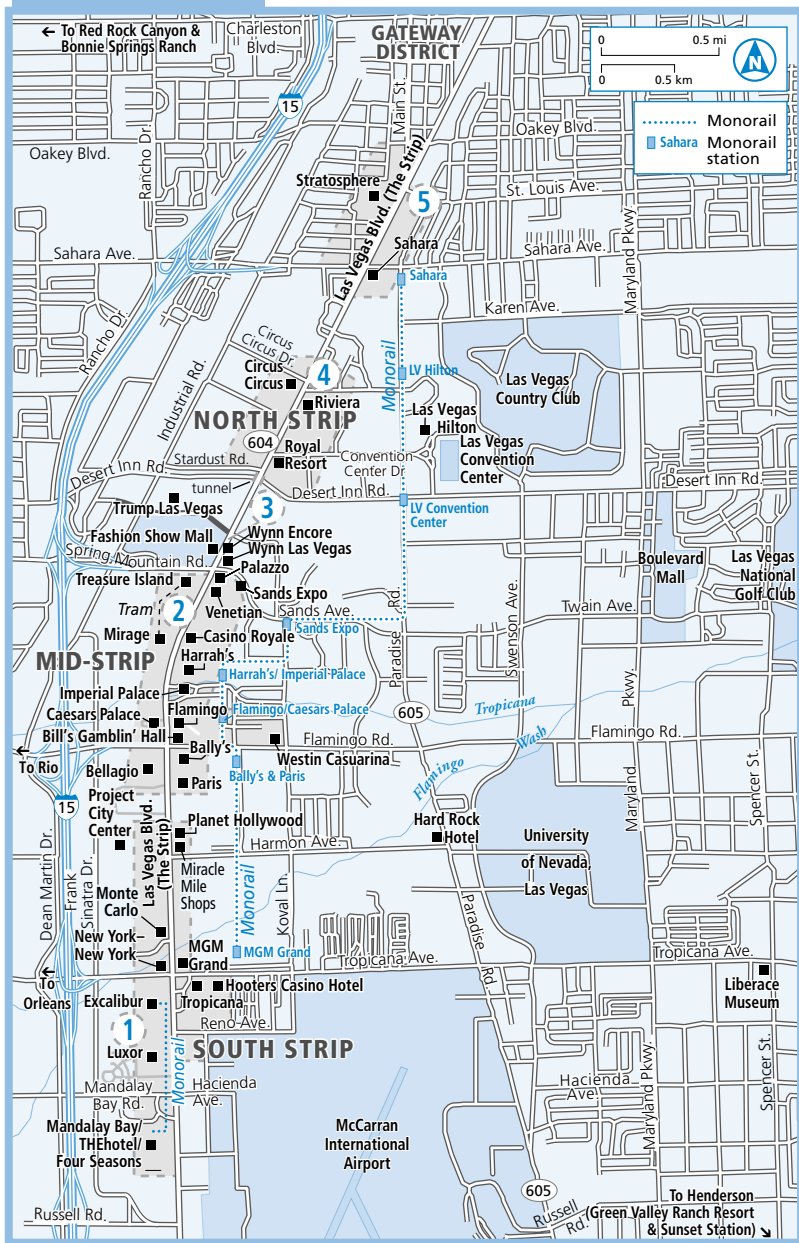
JUST OFF THE STRIP

IF YOU HAVE A CAR, and if being right on the Strip is not a big deal to you, there are some excellent hotel-casinos on Paradise Road and to the east and west of the Strip on intersecting roads. The Rio, Palms, and Gold Coast on Flamingo Road, Palace Station on Sahara Avenue, and Orleans on Tropicana Avenue offer exceptional value; they are less than a half mile west of the Strip and are situated at access ramps to I-15, five to ten minutes from downtown. To the east of the Strip are the Hard Rock on Harmon Avenue, the Tuscany on Flamingo Road, and the Las Vegas Hilton on Paradise Road, among others.

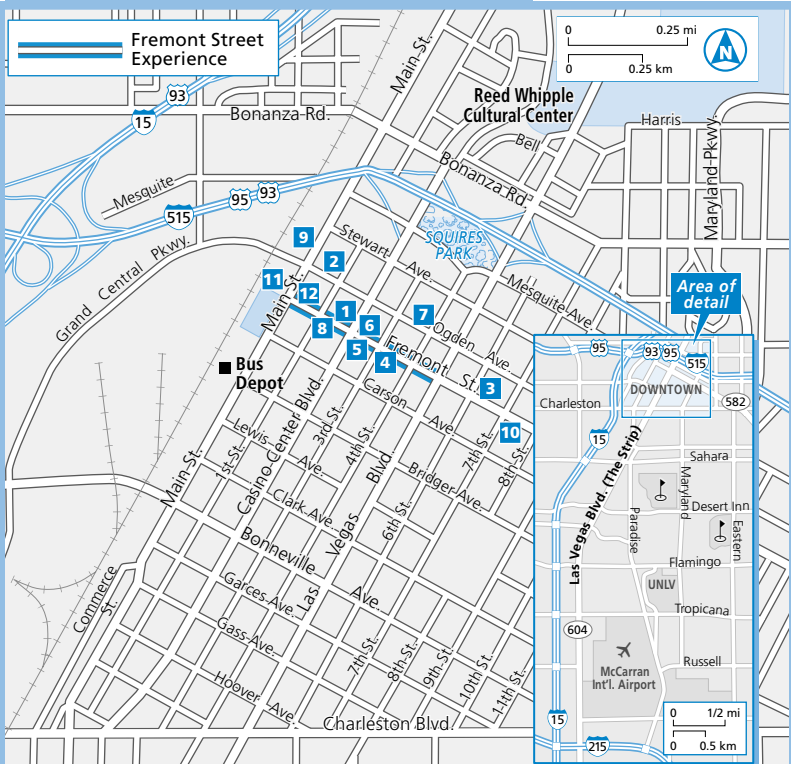
BOULDER HIGHWAY, GREEN VALLEY, SUMMERLIN, AND NORTH LAS VEGAS

TWENTY MINUTES FROM THE STRIP in North Las Vegas are Texas Station, the Fiesta Rancho, the Cannery, and, on the edge of civilization, Santa Fe Station. All four hotels have good restaurants, comfortable guest rooms, and lively, upbeat themes. Hotel-casinos on Boulder Highway southeast of town include Boulder Station, Sam's

hotel clusters



downtown accommodations



■ ACCOMMODATIONS

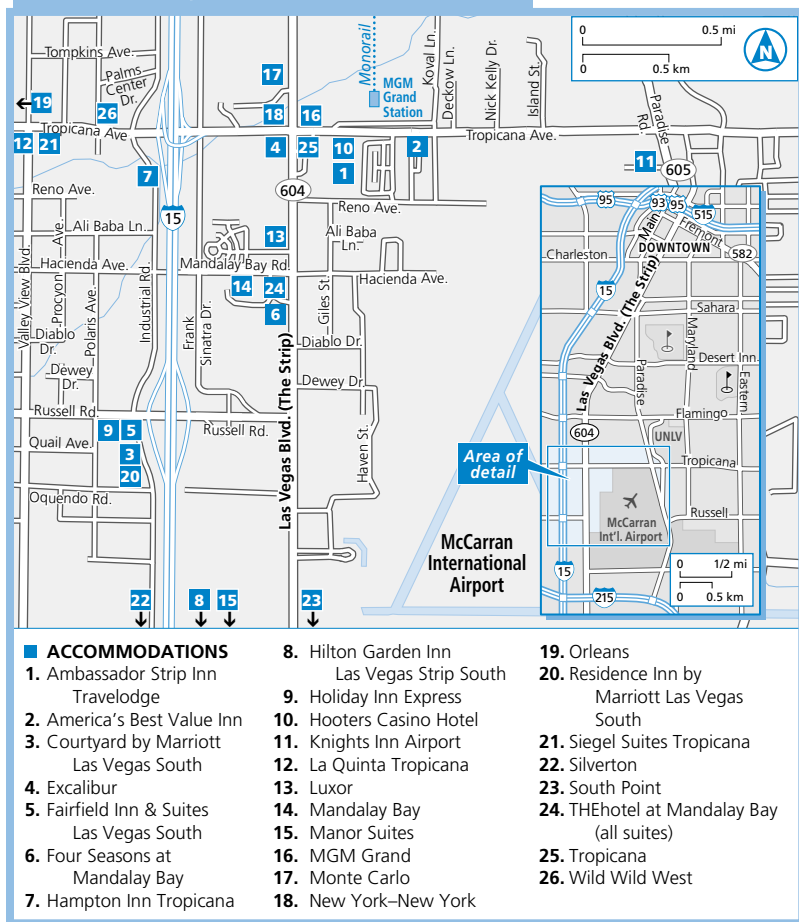
1. Binion's Gambling Hall
2. California
3. El Cortez
4. Fitzgeralds

5. Four Queens
6. Fremont
7. Gold Spike
8. Golden Nugget
9. Main Street Station

10. Motel 6 Downtown
11. Plaza
12. Vegas Club

Town, and Arizona Charlie's Boulder. Also to the southeast are Sunset Station, Fiesta Henderson, and Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa. Like the North Las Vegas trio, the Boulder Highway properties cater primarily to locals. West of town is the posh JW Marriott Las Vegas, with two upscale hotels and the Tournament Player's Club (TPC) at the Canyons Golf Course. Nearby are the Suncoast and the unique Red Rock Resort. Also northwest of the Strip is Arizona Charlie's Decatur.

south strip accommodations



THE LIGHTS OF LAS VEGAS: TRAFFIC ON THE STRIP

DURING THE PAST DECADE, Las Vegas has experienced exponential growth—growth that unfortunately has not been matched with the development of necessary infrastructure. If you imagine a town designed for about 300,000 people being inundated by a million or so refugees (all with cars), you will have a sense of what's happening here.

The Strip, where a huge percentage of the local population works and where more than 80% of tourists and business travelers stay, has become a clogged artery in the heart of the city. The heaviest traffic on the Strip is between Tropicana Avenue and Spring Mountain Drive, in the heart of the Strip. Throughout the day and night, local

mid-strip accommodations



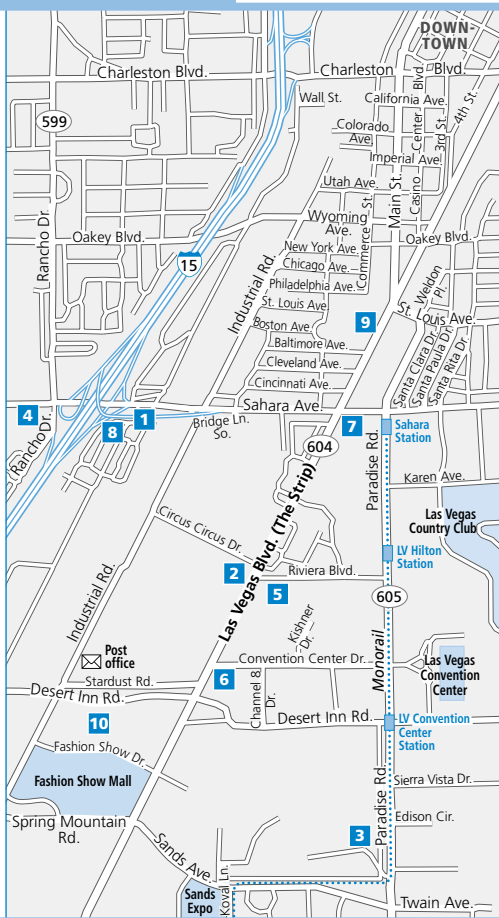
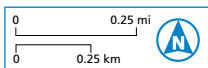
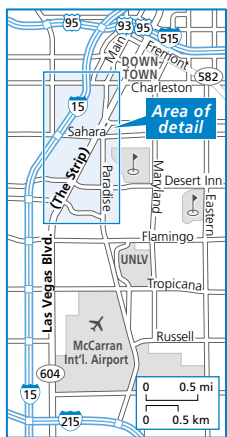
traffic combines with gawking tourists, shoppers, and cruising teenagers to create a three-mile-long, bumper-to-bumper bottleneck.

When folks discuss the “lights of Las Vegas,” it used to be that they were talking about the marquees of the casinos. Today, however, the reference is to the long, multifunctional traffic lights found at virtually every intersection on the Strip. These lights, which flash a different signal for every possible turn and direction, combine with an ever-increasing number of vehicles to ensure that nobody goes anywhere. The worst snarls occur at the intersection of the Strip and Flamingo Road. Trying to cross the Strip on perpendicular east-to-west-running roads is also exceedingly difficult. Desert Inn Road, which tunnels under the Strip, is the fastest way to get from one side to the other. Unfortunately, if you’re heading west, Desert Inn Road is hard to access on the east side of the Strip, especially from Paradise Road. To use the tunnel from the east side, turn west on Desert Inn Road from Swenson Street.

north strip accommodations

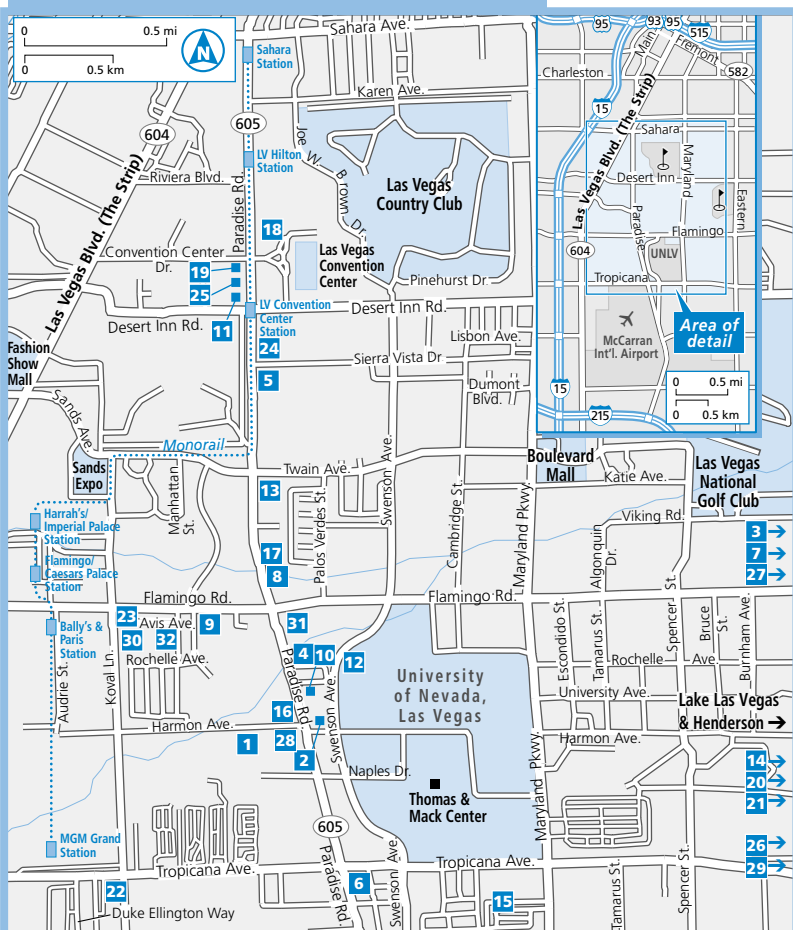
■ ACCOMMODATIONS

1. Artisan Hotel and Spa
2. Circus Circus
3. Embassy Suites
Convention Center
4. Palace Station
5. Riviera
6. Royal Resort
7. Sahara
8. Sahara Westwood
9. Stratosphere
10. Trump Las Vegas



Strip traffic is the Achilles heel of Las Vegas development and growth. It is sheer lunacy to believe you can plop a litter of megahotels on the Strip without compounding an already horrific traffic situation. While city government and the hospitality industry dance around the issue, traffic gets worse and worse. Approximately 48,000 hotel rooms were added along the Strip during the 1990s, about 30,000 more came on line since the millennium, and another 35,000 or more are under construction or planned. The monorail along the east side of the Strip represents a great alternative to driving, but it has not noticeably mitigated gridlock. Also, stations are positioned so far to the rear of the casinos that walking is faster than taking the train for distances up to

east of strip accommodations



■ ACCOMMODATIONS

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Alexis Park Resort and Villas | 12. Embassy Suites in Las Vegas | 22. Motel 6 Tropicana |
| 2. AmeriSuites | 13. Fairfield Inn Las Vegas Airport | 23. Platinum Hotel |
| 3. Arizona Charlie's Boulder | 14. Fiesta Henderson | 24. Renaissance Las Vegas |
| 4. Atrium Suites Las Vegas | 15. Green Valley Ranch | 25. Residence Inn by Marriott |
| 5. Best Western Mardi Gras Inn | 16. Hard Rock Hotel | 26. Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas |
| 6. Best Western McCarran Inn | 17. La Quinta Las Vegas Airport | 27. Sam's Town |
| 7. Boulder Station | 18. Las Vegas Hilton | 28. St. Tropez |
| 8. Candlewood Suites | 19. Las Vegas Marriott Suites | 29. Sunset Station |
| 9. Clarion Hotel and Suites | 20. Loews Lake Las Vegas | 30. Super 8 |
| 10. Comfort Inn Paradise Road | 21. Montelago Village Resort | 31. Terrible's |
| 11. Courtyard by Marriott | | 32. Tuscany |

Sneak Routes—West

HOTELS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE STRIP

Bellagio has an entrance off Flamingo Road (heading east).

Caesars Palace can be accessed from Frank Sinatra Drive.

Circus Circus can be reached via Industrial Road.

Excalibur, Luxor, and Mandalay Bay can be reached from east of the Strip by turning south off Tropicana Avenue onto Koval Lane and then turning right onto Reno Avenue. Reno Avenue intersects the Strip at a traffic light, allowing you to cross to Excalibur and Luxor. From west of the Strip, you can also access all three hotels via Frank Sinatra Drive.

The **Mirage** and **T. I.** are accessible by taking Industrial Road or I-15 and then turning east on Spring Mountain Road.

The **Monte Carlo** can be reached from Frank Sinatra Drive.

New York–New York can be reached via Tropicana Avenue or from Frank Sinatra Drive.

The **Stratosphere's** self-parking garage is off Baltimore Street, which connects to Las Vegas Boulevard.

one mile. In another effort, I-15 between downtown and the I-215 junction to the south has been widened and the interchanges improved. While welcome, the project has done little to alleviate traffic. Interestingly, the only initiative that has worked is the construction of elevated pedestrian bridges over the major Strip intersections. In addition to improving safety, the bridges remove pedestrians from the street, leaving the battlefield to vehicles.

Sneak Routes

Fortunately, most of the large hotels along the Strip have back entrances that allow you to avoid the insanity of the main drag. Industrial Road, Frank Sinatra Drive, and I-15 run parallel to the Strip on the west side, providing backdoor access to hotels situated on the west side of Las Vegas Boulevard. Although a better option than the Strip, traffic on Frank Sinatra between the Bellagio and New York–New York is frequently snarled by construction at Project City Center. Avoid this section of Frank Sinatra during shift-change times at the casinos, usually from 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 5:30 p.m. There's also a shift change from 10 to 11 p.m. It has less impact on traffic, however, due to the lateness of the hour. Paradise Road and Koval Lane run parallel to the Strip on the east side.

A hallmark development in 2004 was the construction of Frank Sinatra Drive between and parallel to the Strip and I-15. The new road runs from south of Mandalay Bay to the intersection with Industrial Road and serves as a backdoor entrance to T. I., the Mirage, Caesars Palace, Monte Carlo, New York–New York, Excalibur, Luxor, Mandalay Bay,

Sneak Routes—East

HOTELS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE STRIP

Planet Hollywood is accessible from westbound Harmon Avenue.

Bally's and **Paris** can be reached by turning north off Harmon Avenue onto an isolated section of Audrie Street.

Bill's Gamblin' Hall is the only major hotel on the east side of the Strip that is truly stuck. If you want to go to Bill's Gamblin' Hall, park somewhere else and walk over. Don't even think about arriving at or departing from Bill's parking lot between 3:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.

The **Flamingo Hilton**, **Harrah's Las Vegas**, the **Imperial Palace**, and **O'Shea's** each have a back entrance off Audrie Street, a small thoroughfare branching off Flamingo Road. Audrie Street can also be reached by turning west on Albert or Ida avenues from Koval Lane.

The **MGM Grand** is accessible by heading west (toward the Strip) on Tropicana Avenue or by turning west off Koval Lane.

The **Riviera** can be reached by turning west on Riviera Boulevard from Paradise Road.

The **Sahara** has an entrance on Paradise Road.

The **Tropicana** is accessible by turning south off Tropicana Avenue onto Koval Lane and then turning right onto Reno Avenue.

The **Venetian** is accessible from Koval Lane.

Wynn Las Vegas can be reached by heading west on Convention Center Drive, then turning left onto Channel 8 Drive to the north entrance of the hotel-casino.

THEhotel, and Four Seasons. Frank Sinatra Drive also runs behind the Bellagio, but there is no access to the Bellagio's self-parking lot.

Though a real boon for those in the know, the road is primarily used by casino employees and by truckers making deliveries. It is usually congested only during the 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. shift-change period.

ROOM RESERVATIONS: *Getting a Good Room, Getting a Good Deal*

BECAUSE LAS VEGAS IS SO POPULAR for weekend getaways, weekend occupancy averages an astounding 92% of capacity for hotels and 70% of capacity for motels. Weekday occupancy for hotels is a respectable 83%, and for motels, 63%. What these figures mean, among other things, is that you want to nail down your lodging reservations before you leave home.

Also, consider that these occupancy percentages are averages. When a large convention is in town or when Las Vegas hosts a championship prizefight, the National Finals Rodeo, or any other major event, rooms

become hard to find. If you are heading to Las Vegas purely for fun and relaxation, you may want to avoid going when the town is packed. For more information about dates to avoid, see page 58.

IT'S THE ECONOMY STUPID

THE COMBINATION OF EVER-INCREASING hotel-room inventories, a weak economy, and high gas prices is having its effect on hotel rates. With an additional 35,000 rooms coming in the next couple of years, Las Vegas hotels are limbering up deals and incentives we've not seen for almost a decade. Circus Circus, for example, is offering to buy gasoline for guests who book online, and almost all hotels are flogging special packages and room-rate discounts. A new "Vegas Right Now" ad campaign encourages travelers not to postpone Las Vegas travel plans. Bottom line: bargains are available now, and you may find even better bargains in the offing tomorrow. Because many of the deals require booking on the hotel's Web site, look there first.

THE WACKY WORLD OF LAS VEGAS HOTEL RESERVATIONS

THOUGH THERE ARE ALMOST 140,000 hotel rooms in Las Vegas, getting one is not always a simple proposition. In the large hotel-casinos, there are often five or more separate departments that have responsibility for room allocation and sales. Of the total number of rooms in any given hotel, a number are at the disposal of the casino; some are administered by the reservations department at the front desk; some are allocated to independent wholesalers for group and individual travel packages; others are blocked for special events (fights, Super Bowl weekend, etc.); and still others are at the disposal of the sales and marketing department for meetings, conventions, wedding parties, and other special groups. Hotels that are part of a large chain (Holiday Inn, Hilton, etc.) have some additional rooms administered by their national reservations systems.

At most hotels, department heads meet each week and review all the room allocations. If rooms blocked for a special event, say a golf tournament, are not selling, some of those rooms will be redistributed to other departments. Since special events and large conventions are scheduled far in advance, the decision-makers have significant lead time. In most hotels, a major reallocation of rooms takes place 40 to 50 days prior to the dates for which the rooms are blocked, with minor reallocations made right up to the event in question.

If you call the reservations number at the hotel of your choice and are informed that no rooms are available for the dates that you've requested, it does not mean the hotel is sold out. What it does mean is that the front desk has no more rooms remaining in their allocation. It is a fairly safe assumption that all the rooms in a hotel have not been reserved by guests. The casino will usually hold back some rooms for high rollers, the sales department may have some rooms

reserved for participants in deals they are negotiating, and some rooms will be in the hands of tour wholesalers or blocked for a city-wide convention. If any of these remaining rooms are not committed by a certain date, they will be reallocated. So a second call to the reservations department may get you the room that was unavailable when you called two weeks earlier.

THE INTERNET REVOLUTION

PURCHASING TRAVEL ON THE INTERNET has revolutionized the way both consumers and hotels do business. For you it makes shopping for a hotel and finding good deals much easier. For the hotel it makes possible a system of room inventory management often referred to as “nudging.” Here’s how it works. Many months in advance, hotels establish rates for each day of the coming year. In developing their rate calendar, they take into consideration all of the variables that affect occupancy in their hotel as well as in Las Vegas in general. They consider weekend versus weekday demand; additional demand stimulated by holidays, major conventions, trade shows, and sporting events; and the effect of the four seasons of the year on occupancy.

After rates for each date are determined, the rates are entered into the hotel’s reservation system. Then hotel management sits back to see what happens. If the bookings for a particular date are in accord with management’s expectations, no rate change is necessary. If demand is greater than management’s forecast for a given date, they might raise the rate to take advantage of higher than expected bookings. If demand eases off, the hotel can revert back to the original rate.

If demand is less than expected, the hotel will begin nudging, that is, incrementally decreasing the rate for the day or days in question until booking volume increases to the desired level. Though this sort of rate manipulation has been an integral part of room inventory management for decades, the Internet has made it possible to rethink and alter room rates almost at will. A hotel can theoretically adjust rates hourly on its own Web site. Major Internet travel sellers such as Travelocity, Hotels.com, and Expedia, among others, are fast and agile and quite capable of getting a special deal (that is, a lower rate) in front of travel purchasers almost instantaneously. For the hotel, this means they can manage their inventory on almost a weekly or daily basis, nudging toward full occupancy by adjusting their rates according to demand. Of course, the hotels don’t depend entirely on the Internet. Lower rates and various special deals are also communicated by e-mail to preferred travel agents, and sometimes directly to consumers (especially slot club members) via e-mail, print advertisements, or direct-mail promotions.

GETTING THE BEST DEAL ON A ROOM

COMPARED TO HOTEL RATES in other destinations, lodging in Las Vegas is so relatively inexpensive that the following cost-cutting strategies

may seem gratuitous. Yes, there are \$400-per-night rooms, but if you are accustomed to paying \$130 a night for a hotel room, you can afford 60% of the hotels in town. You may not be inclined to wade through all the options listed below to save \$20 or \$30 a night. If, on the other hand, you would like to obtain top value for your dollar, read on.

The Season

December and January are roller-coaster months for Las Vegas. In December, the town is empty except for National Finals Rodeo week in early December and Christmas–New Year’s week. Similarly, in January, the town is packed during the Consumer Electronics Show and Super Bowl weekend, and pretty much dead the rest of the time. During the slow parts of these months, most of the hotels offer amazing deals on lodging. Also, hotels frequently offer reduced rates in July and August. While the list at upper right stands up pretty well as a general guide, one type of deal or package might beat another for a specific hotel or time of year.

Sorting Out the Sellers and the Options

To book a room in a particular hotel for any given date, there are so many different in-house departments as well as outside tour operators and wholesalers selling rooms, that it is almost impossible to find out who is offering the best deal. This is not because the various deals are so hard to compare but because it is so difficult to identify all the sellers.

Though it is only a rough approximation, see the opposite page for a list of the types of rates and packages available, ranked from the best to the worst value.

The room-rate ranking is subject to some interpretation. A gambler’s rate may, at first glance, seem to be the least expensive lodging option available, next to a complimentary room. If, however, the amount of money a guest is obligated to wager (and potentially lose) is factored in, the gambler’s rate might be by far the most expensive.

Complimentary and Discounted Rooms for Gamblers

Most Las Vegas visitors are at least peripherally aware that casinos provide complimentary or greatly discounted rooms to gamblers. It is not unusual, therefore, for a business traveler, a low-stakes gambler, or a nongambling tourist to attempt to take advantage of these deals. What they quickly discover is that the casino has very definite expectations of any guest whose stay is wholly or partially subsidized by the house. If you want a gambler’s discount on a room, they will ask what game(s) you intend to play, the amount of your average bet, how many hours a day you usually gamble, where (at which casinos) you have played before, and how much gambling money you will have available on this trip. They may also request that you make an application for credit or provide personal information about your occupation, income, and bank account.

ROOM RATES AND PACKAGES		SOLD OR ADMINISTERED BY
1. Gambler's rate		Casino or hotel
2. December, January, and summer specials		Hotel-room reservations or marketing department
3. Wholesaler packages		Independent wholesalers
4. Tour operator packages		Tour operators
5. Reservation service discounts	Independent wholesalers and consolidators	
6. Internet discounts		Internet travel vendors
7. Corporate rate		Hotel-room reservations
8. Hotel standard room rate		Hotel-room reservations
9. Convention rate		Convention sponsor

If you manage to bluff your way into a comp or discounted room, you can bet that your gambling (or lack thereof) will be closely monitored after you arrive. If you fail to give the casino an acceptable amount of action, you will probably be charged the nondiscounted room rate when you check out.

Even for those who expect to do a fair amount of gambling, a comp or discounted room can be a mixed blessing. By accepting the casino's hospitality, you incur a certain obligation (the more they give you, the bigger the obligation). You will be expected to do most (if not all) of your gambling in the casino where you are staying, and you will also be expected to play a certain number of hours each day. If this was your intention all along, great. On the other hand, if you thought you would like to try several casinos or take a day and run over to Hoover Dam, you may be painting yourself into a corner.

Taking Advantage of Special Deals

When you call, always ask the reservationist if the hotel has any package deals or specials. If you plan to gamble, be sure to ask about "gambling sprees" or other gaming specials. If you do not anticipate gambling enough to qualify for a gambling package, ask about other types of deals.

If you have a lot of lead time before your trip, write or call the hotel and ask about joining their slot club. Though only a few hotels will send you a membership application, inquiring about the slot club will get you categorized as a gambler on the hotel's mailing list. Once in Las Vegas, sign up for the slot clubs of hotel-casinos that you like. This will ensure that you receive notification of special deals that you can take advantage of on subsequent visits. Being a member of a hotel's slot club can also come in handy when rooms are scarce. Once, trying to book a room, we were told the hotel was sold out. When we mentioned that we had a slot card, the reservationist miraculously found us a room. If you

are a slot club member, it is often better to phone the slot club member services desk instead of the hotel reservations desk.

If you enjoy window-shopping on the Internet, log onto the home page of hotels that interest you. As far as rooms go, however, it's rare in our experience to find a deal on the hotel's Web site that's better than the ones they quote you on the phone. A reservationist on the phone knows she has a good prospect on the line and will work with you within the limits of her authority. On the Web there's no give or negotiation: it's a take-it-or-leave-it deal. Finally, most hotels, including many of the new super-properties, really haven't learned how to merchandise rooms through their Web site.

Having shopped the hotel for deals, start checking out Las Vegas vacation or weekend packages advertised in your local newspaper, and compare what you find to packages offered in the Sunday edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Take the better deals and packages you discover, regardless of the source, and discuss them with a travel agent. Explain which one(s) you favor and ask if he or she can do any better. After your travel agent researches the options, review the whole shooting match and select the deal that best fits your schedule, requirements, and budget.

Timing Is Everything

Timing is everything when booking a guest room in Las Vegas. If a particular hotel has only a few rooms to sell for a specific date, it will often, as we discussed earlier, bounce up the rate for those rooms as high as it thinks the market will bear. Conversely, if the hotel has many rooms available for a certain date, it will lower the rate accordingly. The practice remains operative all year, although the likelihood of hotels having a lot of rooms available is obviously greater during off-peak periods. As an example, we checked rates at an upscale non-gaming hotel during two weeks in October. Depending on the specific dates, the rate for the suite in question ranged from \$75 (an incredible bargain) to \$240 (significantly overpriced) per night.

Which day of the week you check in can also save or cost you some money. At some hotels a standard room runs 20% less if you check in on a Monday through Thursday (even though you may stay through the weekend). If you check into the same room on a weekend, your rate will be higher and may not change if you keep your room into the following week. A more common practice is for the hotel to charge a lower rate during the week and a higher rate on the weekend.

NO ROOM AT THE INN (FOR REAL) More frequently than you would imagine, Las Vegas hotels overbook their rooms. This happens when guests do not check out on time, when important casino customers arrive on short notice, and when the various departments handling room allocations get their signals crossed. When this occurs, guests who arrive holding reservations are told that their reservations have been canceled.

To protect yourself, always guarantee your first night with a major credit card (even if you do not plan to arrive late), send a deposit if required, and insist on a written confirmation of your reservation. When you arrive and check in, have your written confirmation handy.

Precautions notwithstanding, the hotel still might have canceled your reservation. When a hotel is overbooked, for whatever reason, it will take care of its serious gambling customers first, its prospective gambling customers (leisure travelers) second, and business travelers last. If you are informed that you have no room, demand that the hotel honor your reservation by finding you a room or by securing you a room at another hotel of comparable or better quality at the same rate. Should the desk clerk balk at doing this, demand to see the reservations manager. If the reservations manager stonewalls, go to the hotel's general manager. Whatever you do, do not leave until the issue has been resolved to your satisfaction.

Hotels understand their obligation to honor a confirmed reservation, but they often fail to take responsibility unless you hold their feet to the fire. We have seen convention-goers, stunned by the news that they have no room, simply turn around and walk out. Wrong. The hotel owns the problem, not you. You should not have to shop for another room. The hotel that confirmed your reservation should find you a room comparable to or better than the one you reserved, and for the same rate.

WHERE THE DEALS ARE

HOTEL ROOM MARKETING and sales are confusing even to travel professionals. Sellers, particularly the middlemen, or wholesalers are known by a numbing array of different and frequently ill-defined terms. Furthermore, roles overlap, making it difficult to know who is providing a given service. Below we try to sort all of this out for you and encourage you to slog through it. Understanding the system will make you a savvy consumer and will enable you to get the best deals regardless of your destination.

Tour Operators and Wholesalers

Las Vegas hotels have always had a hard time filling their rooms from Sunday through Thursday. On the weekends, when thousands of visitors arrive from Southern California, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City, the town comes alive. But on Sunday evening, as the last of the Los Angeles retreat over the horizon, Las Vegas lapses into the doldrums. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, along with hotel sales departments, seek to fill the rooms on weekday nights by bringing meetings, conventions, and trade shows to town. While collectively they are successful, on many weekdays there remain a lot of empty hotel rooms.

Recognizing that an empty hotel room is a lost asset, various travel entrepreneurs have stepped into the breach, volunteering to sell rooms for the hotels and casinos. These entrepreneurs, who call themselves tour operators, inbound travel brokers, travel wholesalers, travel packagers,

TOUR OPERATORS AND TRAVEL WHOLESALERS

Some of the following businesses will deal directly with consumers; have your travel agent call the others.

A & P TOURS

East McKeesport, Pennsylvania

☎ 412-351-4800

(Deals directly with consumers)

EDISON TRAVEL

Kansas City, Kansas ☎ 913-788-7997

(Deals directly with consumers)

FUNJET VACATIONS

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

☎ 800-558-3050

Southfield, Michigan

☎ 800-558-3060

www.funjet.com

(Deals directly with consumers)

SUNQUEST

Toronto, Ontario

☎ 416-485-6060

www.sunquest.ca

U.S. AIRWAYS VACATIONS

Tempe, Arizona ☎ 800-235-9298

www.usairwaysvacations.com

(Deals directly with consumers)

WORRY-FREE VACATIONS

Minnetonka, Minnesota

☎ 952-474-2540 or

888-225-5658

www.worryfreevacations.com

Internet retailers, or receptive operators, require as a quid pro quo that the hotels provide them a certain number of rooms at a significantly reduced nightly rate, which they in turn resell at a profit. As this arrangement extends the sales outreach of the hotels, and as the rooms might otherwise go unoccupied, the hotels are only too happy to cooperate with this group of independent sales agents.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TOUR OPERATOR AND TRAVEL WHOLESALE DEALS

There are several ways for you to tap into the tour operator and wholesaler market. First, check the travel section of your Sunday paper for travel packages or tours to Las Vegas. Because Las Vegas hotels work with tour operators and wholesalers from all over the country, there will undoubtedly be someone in your city or region running packages to Las Vegas. Packages generally consist of a room, transportation (bus or air), and often rental cars and shows. Sometimes the consumer can buy the package for any dates desired; other times the operator or wholesaler will specify the dates. In either event, if a particular package fits your needs, you (or your travel agent) can book it directly by calling the phone number listed in the ad.

If you cannot find any worthwhile Las Vegas packages advertised in your local paper, go to a good newsstand and buy a Sunday paper, preferably from Los Angeles, but alternatively from San Diego, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, or Chicago. These cities are hot markets for Las Vegas, and their newspapers will almost always have a nice selection of packages advertised. Because the competition among tour operators and wholesalers in these cities is so great, you will often find deals that beat the socks off anything offered in your part of the country.

Find a package that you like and call for information. Do not be surprised, however, if the advertised package is not wholly available to you. If you live in, say, Nashville, Tennessee, a tour operator or wholesaler in Los Angeles may not be able to package your round-trip air or bus to Las Vegas. This is because tour operators and wholesalers usually work with bus and air carriers on a contractual basis, limiting the transportation they sell to round-trips originating from their market area. In other words, they can take care of your transportation if you are flying from Southern California but most likely will not have a contract with an airline that permits them to fly you from Nashville. What they sometimes do, however, and what they will be delighted to do if they are sitting on some unsold rooms, is sell you the “land-only” part of the package. This means you buy the room and on-site amenities (car, shows, etc.), if any, but will take care of your own travel arrangements.

Buying the “land-only” part of a package can save big bucks because the wholesaler always has more flexibility in discounting the “land-only” part of the package than in discounting the round-trip transportation component. We combined a two-for-one air special from Delta with a “land-only” package from a wholesaler and chalked up a savings of 65% over separate quoted rates and a 22% savings over the full air-land package offered by the wholesaler.

 **unofficial TIP**
One of the sweetest deals in travel is to buy the “land-only” part of a package at a time when the airlines are running a promotion.

Finding Deals on the Internet

By far the easiest way to scout room deals is on Internet search engines **www.kayak.com** and **www.travelaxe.com**. Kayak is a straightforward, easy-to-navigate site that scans not only Internet sellers but also national hotel-chain Web sites. In the case of Las Vegas, Kayak also searches individual hotel Web sites. You can organize your search by price, location, star rating, brand, and amenities. Detailed descriptions of each property along with photos, customer reviews, and a map are also available. Over 215 properties are listed. Kayak provides a direct link to the lowest-price sellers.

At Travelaxe, you can download free software (only runs on PCs) that scans the better Internet sites selling discounted rooms. You enter your proposed check-in and checkout dates (required) as well as preferences concerning location and price (optional), and click “Search.” The program scans a dozen or more Internet seller sites and presents the discounted rates for all hotels in a chart for comparison. The prices listed in the chart represent the *total* you’ll pay for your entire stay. To determine the rate per night, divide the total by the number of nights you’ll be staying. If you decide to book, you deal directly with the site offering the best price. The software doesn’t scan the individual hotel Web sites, so if you have a specific hotel in mind, you should check the hotel’s site and call the hotel’s reservation desk to ask about specials.

Finally, for Internet shopping, consider **www.priceline.com**. There you can tender a bid for a room. You can't bid on a specific hotel, but you can specify location ("Convention Center, UNLV Area, Las Vegas Strip Area," etc.) and the quality rating expressed in stars. If your bid is accepted, you will be assigned to a hotel consistent with your location and quality requirements, and your credit card will be charged in a non-refundable transaction for your entire stay. Notification of acceptance usually takes less than an hour. We recommend bidding \$45 to \$60 per night for a three-star hotel and \$65 to \$90 per night for a four-star. To gauge your chances of success, check to see if any major conventions or trade shows are scheduled during your preferred dates. Reduce your bid for off-season periods. Note that Priceline lists "Las Vegas Strip Area" as opposed to "Las Vegas Strip." Thus you might be booked into a hotel close to, but not on the Strip.

Reservation Services

When wholesalers and consolidators deal directly with the public, they frequently represent themselves as "reservation services." When you call, you can ask for a rate quote for a particular hotel, or alternatively, ask for their best available deal in the area where you prefer to stay. If

there is a maximum amount you are willing to pay, say so. Chances are the service will find something that will work for you, even if they have to shave a dollar or two off their own profit.

Our experience has been that the reservation services are more useful in finding rooms in Las Vegas when availability is scarce than in obtaining deep discounts. Calling the hotels ourselves, we were often able to beat the reser-

vation services' rates when rooms were generally available. When the city was booked, however, and we could not find a room by calling the hotels ourselves, the reservation services could almost always get us a room at a fair price.

unofficial TIP
Regarding hotel specials, hotel reservationists do not usually inform you of existing specials or offer them to you. In other words, you have to ask.

RESERVATION SERVICES

hotels.com

☎ 800-346-8357

www.hotels.com

Hotel Reservations Network

☎ 800-282-7613

www.hotelreservationsnetwork.com

National Reservations Bureau

☎ 800-805-9528; **www.bookme.travel**

Hotel-sponsored Packages

In addition to selling rooms through tour operators, consolidators, wholesalers, and Internet retailers, most hotels periodically offer exceptional deals of their own. Sometimes the packages are special-

ized, as with golf packages, or are offered only at certain times of the year, for instance December and January. Promotion of hotel specials tends to be limited to the hotel's primary markets, which for most properties is Southern California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Hawaii, and the Midwest. If you live in other parts of the country, you can take advantage of the packages but probably will not see them advertised in your local newspaper.

Some of the hotel packages are unbelievable deals. Once, for instance, a hotel offered three nights' free lodging, no strings attached, to any adult from Texas. On certain dates in November, December, and January, the Flamingo offered a deal that included a room for two or more nights at \$35 per night (tax inclusive), with two drinks and a show thrown in for good measure. In July of 2008, 22 hotels offered rates less than \$45. Look for the hotel specials in Southern California newspapers, or call the hotel and ask.

Traveler Discount Guide

A company called Traveler Discount Guide (TDG) publishes a book of discount coupons for bargain rates at hotels throughout California and Nevada. This book is available free of charge in many restaurants and motels along the main interstate highways. Properties listed in the guide for Las Vegas are generally smaller, nongaming hotels. Since most folks make reservations prior to leaving home, picking up the coupon book en route does not help much. For \$3 (\$5 Canadian), however, TDG will mail you a copy (third class) before you make your reservations. If you call and use a credit card, TDG will send the guide first class for an additional charge. Write or call:

Traveler Discount Guide

4205 NW Sixth Street

Gainesville, FL 32609

☎ 352-371-3948 or 800-332-3948

www.roomsaver.com or

www.travelerdiscountguide.com

HOW TO EVALUATE A TRAVEL PACKAGE

HUNDREDS OF LAS VEGAS PACKAGE TRIPS and vacations are offered to the public each year. Almost all include round-trip transportation to Las Vegas and lodging. Sometimes a package will include room tax, transportation from the airport, a rental car, shows, meals, welcome parties, and/or souvenirs.

In general, because the Las Vegas market is so competitive, packages to Las Vegas are among the best travel values available. Las Vegas competes head-to-head with Atlantic City for Eastern travelers and with Reno, Lake Tahoe, Laughlin, and other Nevada destinations for Western visitors. Within Las Vegas, downtown competes with the Strip, and individual hotels go one-on-one to improve their

share of the market. In addition to the fierce competition for the destination traveler, the extraordinary profitability of gambling also works on the consumer's behalf to keep Las Vegas travel economical. For a large number of hotels, amazing values in dining and lodging are used to lure visitors to the casino.

Packages should be a win-win proposition for both the buyer and the seller. The buyer (or travel agent) has to make only one phone call and deal with a single salesperson to set up the whole trip: transportation, lodging, rental car, show admissions, and even golf, tennis, and sightseeing. The seller, likewise, has to deal with the buyer only one time, eliminating the need for separate sales, confirmations, and billings. In addition to streamlining selling, processing, and administration, some packagers also buy airfares in bulk on contract like a broker playing the commodities market. Buying or guaranteeing a large number of airfares in advance allows the packager to buy them at a significant savings from posted fares. The same practice is also applied to hotel rooms. Because selling packaged trips is an efficient way of doing business, and the packager can often buy individual components (airfare, lodging) in bulk at a discount, savings in operating expenses realized by the seller are sometimes passed on to the buyer. So the package is not only convenient but an exceptional value. In any event, that is the way it is supposed to work.

In practice, the seller occasionally realizes all of the economies and passes none of the savings along to the buyer. In some instances, packages are loaded with extras that cost the packager next to nothing but run the retail price sky-high. While this is not as common with Las Vegas packages as those to other destinations, it occurs frequently enough to warrant some comparison shopping.

When considering a package, choose one that includes features you are sure to use. Whether you use all the features or not, you will most certainly pay for them. Second, if cost is of greater concern than convenience, make a few phone calls and see what the package would cost if you booked its individual components (airfare, lodging, rental car) on your own. If the package price is less than the à la carte cost, the package is a good deal. If the costs are about the same, the package is probably worth it for the convenience.

AN EXAMPLE Bob's niece and a friend were looking at a package they found with Delta Vacations. The package included round-trip airfare (on Delta) from Atlanta, four nights' lodging (Wednesday through Saturday) at the Luxor, and about 10 "bonus features," including:

- Airport parking discounts
- \$25 food and beverage credit
- 2-for-1 IMAX admission
- Planet Hollywood \$10 certificate
- Discounted Lake Mead boat cruises

The price, tax included, was \$777 per person, or \$1,555 all together. Checking the Luxor and a number of airlines, they found the following:

Same room at the Luxor, 2 people to a room, for 4 nights with room tax included	\$520
Transportation to and from the airport	\$23
Subtotal	\$543

Subtracting the \$543 (lodging and airport transfers) from the cost of Delta's package total of \$1,555, they determined that the air and "bonus features" portion of the package was worth \$1,012 ($\$1,555 - \$543 = \$1,012$). If they were not interested in using any of the bonus features, and they could fly to Las Vegas for less than \$1,012, they would be better off turning down the package.

Scouting around, the lowest fare they could find was \$469 per person on Air Tran with an advance-purchase ticket. This piece of information completed their analysis as follows:

Option A: Delta Vacation package for 2	\$1,555
Option B: Booking their own air and lodging	
Lodging, including tax	\$520
Airfare on Air Tran for 2	\$938
Transportation to and from hotel	\$23
Total	\$1,481

In this example, the package costs more. Most of the two-fers and other deals bundled into the package are available through freebie Las Vegas visitor magazines if you take time to discover them. Be aware that it doesn't always work out this way. We analyze dozens of packages each year, and there are as many bad deals as good deals. The point is, always do your homework.

For BUSINESS TRAVELERS

CONVENTION RATES: HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

BUSINESS TRAVELERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE attending trade shows or conventions, are almost always charged more for their rooms than leisure travelers. For big meetings, called citywide conventions, huge numbers of rooms are blocked in hotels all over town. These rooms are reserved for visitors attending the meeting in question and are usually requested and coordinated by the meeting's sponsoring organization in cooperation with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Individual hotels negotiate a nightly rate with the convention sponsor, who then frequently sells the rooms through a central reservations system of its own. Because the hotels would rather have gamblers or leisure travelers than people attending conventions (who usually have limited time to gamble), the negotiated price tends to be high, often \$10 to \$50 per night above the rack rate.

Meeting sponsors, of course, blame convention rates on the hotels. Meanwhile the hotels maintain a stoic silence, not wishing to alienate meeting organizers.

To be fair, convention sponsors should be given some credit simply for having their meeting in Las Vegas. Even considering the inflated convention rates, meeting attendees will pay 15 to 40% less in Las Vegas for comparable lodging than in other major convention cities. As for the rest, well, let's take a look.

Sam Walton taught the average American that someone purchasing a large quantity of a particular item should be able to obtain a better price (per item) than a person buying only one or two. If anyone just walking in off the street can buy a single hotel room for \$50, why then must a convention sponsor, negotiating for 900 rooms for five nights in the same hotel (4,500 room-nights in hotel jargon), settle for a rate of \$60 per night?

Many Las Vegas hotels take a hard-line negotiating position with meeting sponsors because (1) every room occupied by a convention-goer is one less room available for gamblers, and (2) they figure that most business travelers are on expense accounts. In addition, timing is a critical factor in negotiating room rates. The hotels do not want business travelers occupying rooms on weekends or during the more popular times of the year. Convention sponsors who want to schedule a meeting during high season (when hotels fill their rooms no matter what) can expect to pay premium rates. In addition, and regardless of the time of year, many hotels routinely charge stiff prices to convention-goers as a sort of insurance against lost opportunity. "What if we block our rooms for a trade show one year in advance," a sales manager asked, "and then a championship prizefight is scheduled for that week? We would lose big-time."

A spokesman for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority indicated that the higher room rates for conventioners are not unreasonable given a hotel's commitment to the sponsor to hold rooms in reserve. But reserved rooms, or room blocks as they are called, fragment a hotel's inventory of available rooms, and often make it harder, not easier, to get a room in a particular hotel. The bottom line is that convention-goers pay a premium price for the benefit of having rooms reserved for their meeting—rooms that would be cheaper, and often easier to reserve, if the sponsor had not reserved them in the first place. For a major citywide convention, it is not unusual for attendees to collectively pay in excess of \$1 million for the peace of mind of having rooms reserved.

Whether room-blocking is really necessary is an interesting question. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority works with convention sponsors to ensure that there is never more than one city-wide meeting in town at a time and to make sure that sponsors do not schedule their conventions at a time when Las Vegas hotels are otherwise normally sold out (National Finals Rodeo week, Super Bowl weekend, New Year's, and so on). Unfortunately for meeting planners, some major events (prizefights, tennis matches) are occasionally scheduled in Las Vegas on short notice. If a meeting planner does not block rooms and a big fight is announced for the week the meeting is in town, the attendees may be unable to find a room. This is such a nightmare to convention sponsors that they cave in to exorbitant convention rates rather than risk not having rooms. The actual likelihood of a major event being scheduled at the same time as a large convention is small, though the specter of this worst-case scenario is a powerful weapon in the bargaining arsenal of the hotels.

On balance, meeting sponsors negate their volume-buying clout by scheduling meetings during the more popular times of year or, alternatively, by caving in to the hotels' "opportunity cost" room-pricing. Conversely, hotels play unfairly on the sponsor's fear of not having enough rooms, and they charge premium rates to cover improbable, ill-defined opportunity losses. Is there collusion here? Probably not. The more likely conclusion is that both hotels and sponsors have become comfortable with an inflexible negotiating environment, but one that permits meeting sponsors to distribute the unreasonable charges pro rata to their attendees.

Working through the Maze

If you attempt to bypass the sponsoring organization and go directly through the hotel, the hotel will either refer you to the convention's central reservations number or quote you the same high price. Even if you do not identify yourself as a convention-goer, the hotel will figure it out by the dates you request. In most instances, even if you lie and insist that you are not attending the convention in question, the hotel will make you pay the higher rate or claim to be sold out.

By way of example, we tried to get reservations at the Riviera for a major trade show in the spring, a citywide convention that draws about 30,000 attendees. The show runs six days plus one day for setting up, or seven days total, Saturday through Friday. Though this example involves the Riviera, we encountered the same scenario at every hotel we called.

When we phoned reservations at the Riviera and gave them our dates, they immediately asked if we would be attending a convention or trade show. When we answered in the affirmative, they gave us the official sponsor's central reservations phone number in New York. We called the sponsor and learned that a single room at the Riviera (one person in one room) booked through them would cost \$130 per night,

including room tax. The same room (we found from other sources) booked directly through the Riviera would cost \$98 with tax included.

We called the Riviera back and asked for the same dates, this time disavowing any association with the trade show, and were rebuffed. Obviously skeptical of our story, the hotel informed us that they were sold out for the days we requested. Unconvinced that the hotel was fully booked, we had two different members of our research team call. One attempted to make reservations from Wednesday of *the preceding week* through Tuesday of the trade show week, while our second caller requested a room from Wednesday of the trade show week through the following Tuesday. These respective sets of dates, we reasoned, would differ sufficiently from the show dates to convince the Riviera that we were not conventioners. In each case we were able to make reservations for the dates desired at the \$98-per-night rate.

It should be stressed that a hotel treats the convention's sponsoring organization much like a wholesaler who reserves rooms in a block for a negotiated price. What the convention, in turn, charges its attendees is out of the hotel's control. Once a hotel and convention sponsor come to terms, the hotel either refers all inquiries about reservations to the sponsor or accepts bookings at whatever nightly rate the sponsor determines. Since hotels do not want to get in the way of their convention sponsors (who are very powerful customers) or, alternatively, have convention attendees buying up rooms intended for other, nonconvention customers, the hotel reservations department carefully screens any request for a room during a convention period.

Strategies for Beating Convention Rates

There are several strategies for getting around convention rates:

1. CHECK THE INTERNET Unlike packagers and wholesalers, Internet sellers serve as a communications nexus and can often point you to a hotel you had not considered that still has rooms available, or to a property that unexpectedly has some last-minute rooms because of cancellations. Try the aforementioned **www.kayak.com**, which facilitates comparing rates.

2. BUY A PACKAGE FROM A TOUR OPERATOR OR A WHOLESALE This tactic makes it unnecessary to deal with the convention's central reservations office or with an individual hotel's reservations department. Many packages allow you to buy extra days at a special discounted room rate if the package dates do not coincide perfectly with your meeting dates.

Packages that use air charter services operate on a fixed, inflexible schedule. As a rule these packages run three nights (depart Thursday, return Sunday; or depart Friday, return Monday) or four nights (depart Monday, return Friday; or depart Sunday, return Thursday). Two-night, five-night, and seven-night charter packages can also be

STRIP HOTELS THAT RARELY PARTICIPATE IN ROOM BLOCKS

Circus Circus

Excalibur

Luxor

DOWNTOWN HOTELS THAT SELDOM PARTICIPATE IN ROOM BLOCKS

Binion's Gambling Hall

California

El Cortez

Fitzgeralds

Four Queens

Fremont

found. Charter air packages offer greater savings, but usually less flexibility, than packages that use commercial carriers.

If you are able to beat the convention rate by booking a package or getting a room from a wholesaler, don't blow your cover when you check in. If you walk up to the registration desk in a business suit and a convention ID badge, the hotel will void your package and charge you the full convention rate. If you are supposed to be a tourist, act like one, particularly when you check in and check out.

3. FIND A HOTEL THAT DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE CONVENTION ROOM BLOCKS Many of the downtown, North Las Vegas, and Boulder Highway hotels, as well as a few of the Strip hotels, do not make rooms available in blocks for conventions. If you wish to avoid convention rates, obtain a list of your convention's "official" hotels from the sponsoring organization and match it against the hotels listed in this guide. Any hotel listed in this book that does not appear on the list supplied by the meeting sponsors is not participating in blocking rooms for your convention. This means you can deal with the nonparticipating hotels directly and should be able to get their regular rate.

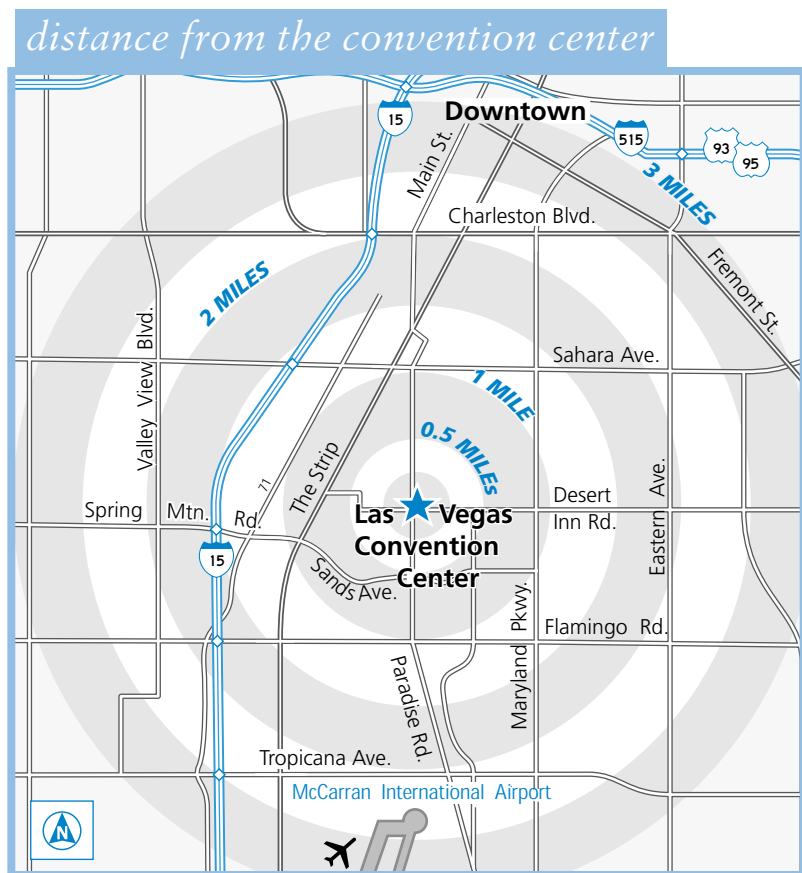
Most citywide trade shows and conventions are held at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Of all the nonparticipating hotels, only Circus Circus is within a 15-minute walk. If you stay at any of the other hotels, you will have to commute to the convention center by shuttle, cab, or car.

4. RESERVE LATE Thirty to sixty days prior to the opening of a citywide convention or show, the front desk room reservations staff in a given hotel will take over the management of rooms reserved for the meeting from the hotel's sales and marketing department. "Room Res," in conjunction with the general manager, is responsible for making sure that the hotel is running at peak capacity for the dates of the show. The general manager has the authority to lower the room rate from the price negotiated with the sponsor. If rooms are not being booked for the convention in accordance with the hotel's expectations, the general manager will often lower the rate for attendees and, at the same time, return a number of reserved rooms to general inventory for sale to the public. A convention-goer who books a room at the last minute might obtain a lower rate than an attendee who booked early through the sponsor's central housing service. Practically speaking, however, do not expect to find rooms available at the convention headquarters hotel or at most of the hotels within easy walking distance. As a rule of thumb, the farther

from the convention center or headquarters a hotel is, the better the chances of finding a discounted room at the last minute.

THE LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER

THE LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER (LVCC) is the largest single-level convention and trade show facility in the United States. This 3.2-million-square-foot facility with more than 2 million square feet of exhibit space is divided into two main buildings: the brand new South Hall and the older North Hall. A pedestrian bridge over Desert Inn Road connects the halls. Trade shows that crowd facilities in Washington, San Francisco, and New York fit with ease in this immense Las Vegas complex. In addition to the exhibit areas, the Center has a new lobby and public areas, a kitchen that can cater a banquet for 12,000 people, and 144 meeting rooms. Serving as headquarters for shows and



conventions drawing as many as 250,000 delegates, the convention center is on Paradise Road, one very long block off the Las Vegas Strip and three miles from the airport.

For both exhibitors and attendees, the Las Vegas Convention Center is an excellent site for a meeting or trade show. Large and small exhibitors can locate and access their exhibit sites with a minimum of effort. Numerous loading docks and huge bay doors make loading and unloading quick and simple for large displays arriving by truck. Smaller displays transported in vans and cars are unloaded on the north side of the main hall and can be carried or wheeled directly to the exhibit area without climbing stairs or using elevators. The exhibit areas and meeting rooms are well marked and easy to find. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority also operates Cashman Field Center, home of Las Vegas's AAA baseball team. In addition to a baseball stadium, the Center contains a 1,922-seat theater and 98,100 square feet of meeting and exhibit space. For more information, call ☎ 702-892-0711 or browse www.lvcva.com.

Lodging within Walking Distance of the Las Vegas Convention Center

Although participants in citywide conventions lodge all over town, a few hotels are within easy walking distance of the LVCC. Next door, and closest, is the huge Las Vegas Hilton, with over 3,100 rooms. The Hilton routinely serves as headquarters for meetings and shows in the convention center and provides, if needed, an additional 220,000 square feet of exhibit, ballroom, banquet, special event, and meeting room space. Many smaller conventions conduct all their meetings, including exhibits, at the Hilton. The walk from the lobby of the Hilton to the LVCC is about five minutes for most people.

Also nearby is the 548-room Marriott Renaissance, a nongaming hotel targeting business travelers. A long half-block away is the rear entrance of the 2,075-room Riviera Hotel. Like the Las Vegas Hilton, the Riviera is often the headquarters for large shows and meetings at

HOTELS WITHIN A 20-MINUTE WALK OF THE CONVENTION CENTER

Best Western Mardi Gras Inn	314 suites	12-minute walk
Circus Circus	3,763 rooms	15-minute walk
Courtyard (Marriott)	149 rooms	6-minute walk
Hyatt Place	202 suites	7-minute walk
Las Vegas Hilton	3,174 rooms	5-minute walk
Las Vegas Marriott Suites	278 suites	9-minute walk
Renaissance Las Vegas	548 rooms	4-minute walk
Residence Inn (Marriott)	192 suites	10-minute walk
Riviera Hotel	2,075 rooms	10-minute walk

the convention center. With 150,000 square feet of meeting and banquet space, the Riviera, like the Hilton, hosts entire meetings and provides supplemental facilities for events at the convention center. The walk from the rear (eastern) entrance of the Riviera to the convention center takes about ten minutes.

Cabs and Shuttles to the Convention Center

Large citywide conventions often provide complimentary bus service from major hotels to the convention center. If you are staying at a smaller hotel and wish to use the shuttle bus, walk to the nearest large hotel on the shuttle route. Though cabs are plentiful and efficient in Las Vegas, they are sometimes in short supply at convention or trade show opening and closing times. Public transportation—CAT buses (\$2)—is also available from the larger hotels. Exact fare is required. Your best bet is to stay within walking distance of the convention center. If you end up staying too far away to walk, a car is often less trouble than depending on cabs and shuttle buses.

Monorail to the Convention Center

If you are staying at a hotel in the section of the Strip between Tropicana and Sands (Spring Valley Road) avenues, or at the Sahara or Stratosphere, the best way to commute to the convention center is via the monorail. It's a no-brainer for guests in hotels on the east side of the Strip. For convention-goers who are lodging on the west side of the Strip, it's often a long walk to the nearest station. If traffic on the Strip isn't snarled, west-siders may want to consider taking a cab.

Lunch Alternatives for Convention and Trade-show Attendees

The convention center's food service provides a better-than-average lunch and snack selection. As at most convention centers, however, prices are high. Outside of the convention center, but within walking distance, are the buffet and coffee shop at the Hilton, restaurants at the Marriott Renaissance, and Nippon, a Japanese restaurant and sushi bar (a ten-minute walk). The better restaurants at the Las Vegas Hilton are not open for lunch.

The restaurants mentioned above provide decent food and fast service but are bustling eateries not particularly conducive to a quiet business lunch. At 3900 Paradise Road, however, there is a small shopping center (only three minutes from the convention center by cab) that has several quiet, high-quality ethnic restaurants. Also located in the shopping center is a sandwich shop.

unofficial TIP

Take the monorail to Harrah's (about a five-minute ride), where you'll find dozens of fast-serve and full-service restaurants within a five-minute walk of Harrah's.

Parking at the Las Vegas Convention Center

In all, there are 5,200 parking spaces for cars in nine color-coded parking lots at the LVCC. The most convenient parking is in the Silver Lots right in front of the main entrance. The

largest and third-most convenient parking is in the Gold Lots across Paradise Road north of Convention Center Drive. On the east side of the convention center are the Blue, Orange, Red, and Green lots. The Blue Lot, tucked into the northeast corner of the property, is second only to the Silver Lots in convenience, but is used extensively by convention center employees. The Orange Lot on the southeast side is likewise convenient, but it is largely reserved for tractor-trailer parking during large trade shows. The Red Lot is adjacent to the new South Hall and is a good choice if the South Hall is where you'll spend most of your time. Finally, the Green Lot is the most remote of all, though more acceptable if your primary business is in the South Hall.

Though access to the exhibit floor varies from meeting to meeting, attendees are often required to enter through the convention center's main entrance off Paradise Road. If not parked in the Gold or Silver lots, convention-goers must hike around the complex in order to reach the front door (a seven- to ten-minute walk). For other meetings, attendees with proper credentials (that is, those with registration badges) are permitted to enter the exhibit halls by one of several doors along the sides of the convention center halls. As a rule, getting out is not as hard as getting in, and attendees are usually permitted to exit through the side doors.



COMFORT ZONES:

Matching Guests with Hotels

WE REMEMBER A GOOD FRIEND, a 32-year-old single woman, who, in search of a little romance, decided to take a Caribbean cruise. Thinking that one cruise was pretty much like any other, she signed up for a cruise without doing much shopping around. She ended up on a boat full of retired married folks who played bingo or bridge every evening and were usually in the sack by 10:30 p.m. Our friend mistakenly assumed, as have many others, that cruises are homogeneous products. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Each cruise provides a tailored experience to a specific and narrowly defined market. If our friend had done her homework, she could have booked passage on a boat full of young single people and danced and romanced into the night.

In Las Vegas, it is likewise easy to assume that all the hotels and casinos are fairly similar. True, they all have guest rooms, restaurants, and the same mix of games in the casino, but each property molds its offerings to appeal to a well-defined audience. This concerted effort to please a specific population of guests creates what we call a "comfort zone." If you are among the group a hotel strives to please, you will feel comfortable and at home and will have much in common with the other guests. However, if you fail to determine the comfort zone before you go, you may end up like our friend—on the wrong boat.

Visitors come to Las Vegas to vacation and play or to attend a meeting or convention. While these reasons for coming to Las Vegas are not mutually exclusive, there is a marked difference between a recreational visitor and a business traveler. The vacationer is likely to be older (45 years and up), retired, and from the Midwest, Southern California, Arizona, Colorado, or Hawaii. The business traveler is younger on average and comes from just about anywhere. Individual hotels and casinos pay close attention to these differences and customize their atmosphere, dining, and entertainment to satisfy a specific type of traveler.

The California Hotel, downtown, for example, targets Hawaiians and maintains a food store and restaurants that supply their clientele with snacks and dishes from the islands. On the Boulder Highway, Sam's Town is geared toward cowboys and retired travelers. Entertainment at Sam's Town consists of bowling and country-western dancing. Circus Circus on the Strip attracts the RV crowd (with its own RV park) but also offers large, low-priced rooms, buffets, free circus acts, and an amusement park to lure families. Palms, Planet Hollywood, and Hard Rock target a hip, younger audience, while the Las Vegas Hilton and the Venetian, both next door to the convention centers, go the extra mile to make business travelers feel at home.

Some hotels are posh and exclusive, while others are more spartan and intended to appeal to younger or more frugal visitors. Each property, however, from its lounge entertainment to its guest-room decor or the dishes served in its restaurants, is packaged with a certain type of guest in mind.

Because Las Vegas is basically a very informal town, you will not feel as out of place as our friend did on her cruise if you happen to end up in the wrong hotel. In any given property, there is a fairly broad range of clientele. There always will be hotels where you experience a greater comfort level than at others, however. In a place as different as Las Vegas, that added comfort can sometimes mean a lot.

DEMOCRACY IN THE CASINOS

WHILE LAS VEGAS HOTELS AND CASINOS continue to be characterized as appealing to "high rollers" or "grinds," the distinction has become increasingly blurred. High rollers, of course, are wealthy visitors who come to gamble in earnest, while grinds are less affluent folks who grudgingly bet their money a nickel or quarter at a time. For many years, the slot machine was symbolic of the grinds. Unable to join the action of the high-stakes table games, these gamblers would sit for hours pumping the arms of the slots. More recently, however, the slots are the symbol of casino profitability, contributing anywhere from 40 to 100% to a given casino's bottom line.

The popularity of the slot machine among gamblers of all types has democratized the casino. The casinos recognize that the silver-haired lady at the quarter slots is an extremely valuable customer and that it is

good business to forgo the impression of exclusivity in order to make her comfortable. In Las Vegas there are casinos that maintain the illusion of an upper-crust clientele while quietly practicing an egalitarianism that belies any such pretense. By virtue of its economic clout, the slot machine has broadened the comfort zone of the stuffiest casinos and made Las Vegas a friendlier, more pleasant (albeit noisier) place.

THE FEEL OF THE PLACE

LAS VEGAS'S HOTEL-CASINOS have distinctly individual personalities. While all casinos contain slot machines, craps tables, and roulette wheels, the feel of each particular place is unique, a product of the combined characteristics of management, patrons, and design. This feel, or personality, determines a hotel-casino's comfort zone, the peculiar ambience that makes one guest feel totally at home while another runs for the exit.

THE AUTHOR'S BIAS OPENLY ADMITTED As you read the hotel-casino descriptions that follow, you will perhaps intuit that the author is a little claustrophobic. We do not understand why some casinos are dark, noisy, and confining, more like submarines than places of recreation. Why, we'd like to know, isn't there a casino in a nice, rooftop atrium where you can watch the sun set and the birds fly over? Is there a reason why we should be blinded by blinking lights or deafened by clanking coins in gloomy, red-Naugahyde-upholstered tunnels?

Apparently there is some casino marketing theory which postulates that customers will gamble longer and more aggressively if their circadian rhythms are disturbed, their natural clocks unplugged. Zoos confuse nocturnal animals this way to make them rummage around when they should be sleeping. Casino customers, like these animals, are never supposed to know if it is day or night. This is patently ridiculous, of course, because unlike bats and lemurs, almost every gambler has a watch or can tell what time it is by the type of food on the buffet.

Why do we worry about this, you ask? Isn't doubling down on any two cards and re-splitting pairs in blackjack more important than how low the ceiling is? Maybe to you, friend, but not to us. We want to gamble where we can breathe, stand up straight, and not smell the person playing at the next machine. We'd like our pupils to be the same size for more than three consecutive seconds, and we'd like to be able to conduct a conversation without using a megaphone. We'd even like to know whether or not it's raining outside. And while we're aware that it is perfectly possible to play craps in an alley, that's not why we go to Las Vegas. We've got plenty of alleys at home.

This is not to imply that we gamble in the departure concourse at the airport but to warn you about our natural bias against hotels and casinos that feel like velveteen U-boats. If, in the following descriptions, we talk about "ceiling height" a lot, we hope you'll understand.

HOTELS *with* CASINOS

HOW TO AVOID READING THE HOTEL-CASINO DESCRIPTIONS If you don't care how a place "feels" but just want to know whether it has room service and tennis courts, or when checkout time is, you can skip to the alphabetically arranged Hotel Information Chart at the end of this chapter.

Arizona Charlie's Boulder and Decatur (www.arizonacharlies.com)

PATRONIZED PRIMARILY BY LOCALS, Arizona Charlie's are working person's casinos with a southwestern ranch flavor. Everything is informal, a sort of shirtsleeves place. And it's busy. There is an energy, a three-ring circus feel of much going on at once—lots of slots, some table games, a sports book, burgers and beer, and a lounge that often features big-name (OK, medium-name) entertainment. The hotel rooms are passable, but the real reason to patronize Arizona Charlie's is the video poker—they're among the best machines in town, and considering what town you're in, this means they're among the best machines anywhere. The original Arizona Charlie's is on Decatur, west of the Strip. The newer Arizona Charlie's Boulder is on the Boulder Highway.

Bally's (www.ballyslasvegas.com)

BALLY'S BILLS ITSELF AS "the classic Las Vegas experience." Targeted to the gamer of any age, the emphasis is clear when you step inside the main entrance from under the broad, sky-lit porte cochere. On your right, a football-field-long casino stretches beyond you. The casino is immense, open, and elegantly modern—sophisticated in a formal, understated way, like a tuxedo. Active without being claustrophobic, and classy without being stiff, Bally's captures the style of modern European casinos without sacrificing American informality. On the left of the same great room is the registration desk, along with services such as a coffee bar and newsstand conveniently located directly in the lobby area.

Originally themed for Hollywood, now Bally's doesn't bear much of a specific visual motif. This is not at all a shortcoming. Bally's simply carries itself with a certain forthrightness, with a kind of class that says "We are confident to be who we are—timeless Las Vegas." After all, Bally's has the enduring, quintessential, top-quality topless show *Jubilee!* with which it celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2006. Million-dollar sets and Bob Mackie and Pete Menefee costumes, skimpy though they may be, hark back to the days of Sinatra and gang.

A complete resort, Bally's is blessed with exceptional restaurants, one of the better buffets in Las Vegas, and the groundbreaking Sterling Brunch. All of the north tower wings have been renovated, and the south tower is scheduled for renovation. Although quite spread out, Bally's is easy to navigate. Amenities include a 19,000-square-foot health club and spa and a large, diversified shopping arcade. Standard guest rooms are a generous

450 square feet and comfortable. One-bedroom grand suites have king-sized beds and a whirlpool spa. To enjoy this layout you should be physically very comfortable with your traveling partner, as most of the bathroom is exposed to the sleeping area.

For those that drive, the guest parking is all valet out front. There is limited self-parking in the back, but it is mainly for oversized vehicles. The hot tip is to park at Bally's sister property, Paris Las Vegas (the hotels are internally connected). Demonstrating legitimate concern about the traffic congestion on the Strip, Bally's joined with the MGM Grand in constructing a monorail that was the first link in the Las Vegas Monorail line. Subsequently, the monorail was extended north along the Strip all the way to the Sahara, with a loop over to the Las Vegas Convention Center and the Las Vegas Hilton. Bally's also offers airport check-in shuttle service and another free shuttle every 30 minutes to take you to Caesars, Paris, Rio, and Harrah's (all Harrah's properties). In a separate project, Bally's has a series of moving walkways to transport guests from Las Vegas Boulevard into the casino. In a Las Vegas first, Bally's also offers moving walkways *out* of the casino. Maybe this is the only way, short of a forklift, that Bally's could get the bulk loaders out of the coffee shop.

Bally's caters to meetings and conventions and is one of the few hotels where you will not feel out of place in a business suit. Guests are frequently under age 40 here and come from all over, but particularly Southern California, Chicago, and elsewhere in the Midwest. Bally's also has a loyal Spanish-speaking clientele.

Bellagio (www.bellagio.com)

IT'S NO SECRET THAT STEVE WYNN established a new standard for Las Vegas hotel-casinos when he opened the Mirage in 1989. While it's doubtful that Wynn foresaw the impact the Mirage would have on Las Vegas, it's certain that he relishes his role as an instrument of change. Like an author trying to build on the success of an earlier work, Wynn took another shot at bumping up the standard in 1999. The vehicle for Wynn's aspirations this time was the Bellagio, on the site of the old Dunes hotel and golf course. Quite simply, Wynn intended for it to be the best hotel in the world, a hotel intended to rewrite the concept of hospitality. In 2000, however, in a move that took everyone by surprise, Wynn sold the Bellagio, along with his other casino properties, to MGM Grand (now MGM Mirage) for \$6.4 billion in cash. Wynn's latest attempts to rock the Las Vegas status quo are Wynn Las Vegas and Wynn Encore, both opened on the site of the venerable Desert Inn. For now, though, back to the Bellagio.

With its main entrance off the Strip just south of Flamingo Road, the Bellagio is inspired by an Italian village overlooking Lake Como in the sub-Alpine north of Italy. The facade of the Bellagio will remind you somewhat of the themed architecture Wynn employed at T. I., only this time it's provincial Italian instead of Caribbean. The Bellagio village is arrayed along the west and north sides of a man-made lake, where dancing fountains

provide allure and spectacle, albeit more dignified than the Mirage's exploding volcano or T. I.'s buccaneer carnage.

Rising behind the village facade in a gentle curve is the 3,933-room hotel, complete with casino, restaurants, shopping complex, spa, and pool. Added in late 2004 was a 33-story Spa Tower with 819 hotel rooms and 109 suites. Bundled with the tower are a restaurant, four shops, and additional convention space. Imported marble is featured throughout, even in the guest rooms and suites, as are original art, traditionally styled furnishings, and European antiques. Guest rooms and meeting rooms also feature large picture windows affording views of lushly landscaped grounds and formal gardens.

Surprisingly, the Italian village theme of Bellagio's lakefront facade is largely abandoned in the hotel's interior. Though a masterpiece of integrated colors, textures, and sight lines, the interior design reflects no strong sense of theme. In two steps, passing indoors, you go from a provincial village on a very human scale to a monumentally grand interior with proportions reminiscent of national libraries. You've heard it's lovely, and naturally it is, but somehow in a very different way than you might have anticipated. The vast spaces are exceedingly tasteful and unquestionably sophisticated, yet they fail to evoke the fun, whimsy, and curiosity so intrinsic to the Mirage and T. I.

Perhaps because Las Vegas has conditioned us to a plastic, carnival sort of stimulation, entering the Bellagio is like stepping from the midway into the basilica. The surroundings impress but do not engage our emotions—except, of course, for the art, and that is exactly the point. Seen as a rich, neutral backdrop for the extraordinary works of art displayed throughout Bellagio, the lapse of thematic continuity is understandable. No theme could compete, and none should.

Truly the art is everywhere, even on the ceiling of the registration lobby, where a vibrantly colorful blown-glass piece by Dale Chihuly hangs. Some wonderful works are showcased in the Bellagio's restaurants. Original Picassos, for example, are on exhibit in the restaurant of the same name. The Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art is touted as Las Vegas's premier art gallery. Each year the gallery presents world-class exhibitions of artworks and objects drawn from internationally acclaimed museums and private collections, such as an impressive body of Impressionist works and the photographs of Ansel Adams.

Architecturally, Bellagio's most creative and interesting spaces are found in its signature conservatory and botanical gardens and in its restaurants. As you walk in the main entrance the primary garden is straight ahead. Although the opulent and oversized displays do change seasonally, there may be a new permanent resident. Rescued from a Florida development, a once-failing 100-year-old-plus banyan tree (the same kind of tree the Buddha sat under when he gained enlightenment) is a powerful and poised backdrop for the theatrical floral whimsies of the supremely accomplished botanical staff. A recent visit gave witness to fabulously monstrous flowers reminiscent of Audrey, the man-eating plant in *Little Shop of Horrors*.

If you spend time at the Bellagio, visit each of the restaurants for a moment, if only to take in their stunning design. All Bellagio's restaurants, including a Las Vegas branch of Le Cirque, feature panoramic views. Some

offer both indoor and outdoor dining experiences. In addition to the restaurants, Bellagio serves one of Las Vegas's best—and not unexpectedly one of the city's most expensive—buffets. With the exception of the buffet and coffee shop, Bellagio's restaurants require reservations, preferably made a month to six weeks before you leave home.

The Bellagio's showroom hosts a production of the justly acclaimed Cirque du Soleil. Though terribly expensive, the show is one of Cirque's most challenging productions yet, featuring a one-of-a-kind set that transforms seamlessly from hard surface to water. Like Bellagio itself, the Cirque production "O" (from the pronunciation of the French word *eau*, meaning "water") lacks the essential humor and humanness of Cirque's *Mystère* at T. I. but is nonetheless heartrendingly beautiful.

Meant to be luxurious, the Bellagio seeks to establish itself as the prestige address of Las Vegas. Retailers in the shopping venue include Chanel, Hermes, Tiffany, Prada, and Giorgio Armani. Rates for guest rooms and suites are among the highest ever seen on the Strip, and its purported target market includes high rollers and discriminating business travelers who often eschew gaming properties. It's hard, however, to discuss exclusivity and personal service in the same breath with 3,933 rooms. Also, there's a lot of both new and old competition for the upscale market, including Caesars, the Venetian, and Mandalay Bay, to name a few. What's more, Bellagio guests do not have to look far to make comparisons: all north-facing guest rooms peer directly down on the stunning pool complex at Caesars Palace.

Room rates have bounced all over the place in recent years and in the future may bounce to a level that you find acceptable. If you stay at the Bellagio, you will find the same basic informality typical of the rest of the Strip, and, surprisingly, you will encounter in the hotel more people like you than super-rich. Expressed more directly, Bellagio is a friendly place to stay and gamble and not at all pretentious. We did have a funny experience, however, in one of its retail shops. For three days, we passed the same men's clothing shop and never saw a soul in it. Suspecting that it was being avoided because of the Bellagio's reputation for expensive boutique shopping, we ventured in. As a test, we chose a cotton shirt-jacket almost identical in appearance to one we had seen in a Banana Republic catalog for \$68. Not finding a price tag, we inquired of the helpful salesperson and was informed that this garment sold for \$1,490. When we laughed out loud, he explained in all seriousness that the shirt was made in Italy. Indeed, and no doubt hand-delivered via the QE2!

Bill's Gamblin' Hall and Saloon (www.billslasvegas.com)

BILL'S GAMBLIN' HALL AND SALOON, formerly the Barbary Coast, is an old-fashioned casino for real gamblers. Appointed in dark wood embellished with murals in stained glass, this small hotel-casino serves a loyal clientele of locals and serious gamblers. With the feel of an exclusive and tasteful gentlemen's club, Bill's offerings are straightforward and simple. Table games still reign supreme in the casino, and its restaurant, Steakhouse at Bill's, replaced the venerable Michaels when the latter relocated to the South

Point Hotel and Casino. There is no showroom, no swimming pool, no sauna or whirlpool, and most of the 200 hotel rooms (decorated in a style reminiscent of early-1900s San Francisco) are reserved for regular customers. Bill's is centrally located if you're on foot but just about the worst hotel on the Strip to get into and out of by car.

Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel (www.binions.com)

BINION'S GAMBLING HALL IS ONE OF THE ANCHORS of Glitter Gulch. The casino is large and active, with row upon row of slots clanking noisily under a suffocatingly low ceiling. The table games are less congested, occupying an extended vertical space canopied by mirrors. With an Old West theme executed in the obligatory reds and lavenders, Binion's is dark, but not dark enough to slow the enthusiasm of the locals and "real gamblers" who hang out there. One of the city's top spots for poker and craps, Binion's Gambling Hall is famous for not having any maximum bet limitations. You can bet \$1 million on a single roll of the dice if you wish.

On the lower (basement) level is the coffee shop and what may be one of the most pleasant bars in the city; it, too, is dark but for once is paneled in rich woods. Twenty or so stories up from the cellar is the Ranch Steakhouse restaurant and lounge, offering a great view of the city. Also offering a great view is Binion's rooftop pool.

Boulder Station (www.boulderstation.com)

BOULDER STATION IS A CLONE OF PALACE STATION, sharing its railroad theme and emphasis on good food and lounge entertainment. Located on Boulder Highway not far from the Arizona Charlie's Boulder, Boulder Station features a roomy casino with a Western-town motif (more in the image of turn-of-the-century Denver than of Dodge City). Tastefully done, with much attention to detail, the casino includes one of the nicest sports books in Las Vegas. Thirty-three big-screen, high-resolution monitors make the Boulder Station sports book a superb place for spectators. Like its sister properties, Boulder Station is an oasis for the hungry, with a great buffet, several good full-service restaurants, and possibly the best selection of fast food found in any casino. Guest rooms in the 300-room hotel tower are modest but comfortable, with good views. There is a swimming pool, but it is small and stark. Clientele consists primarily of locals and Southern Californians.

Comparing Boulder Station to Palace Station, we like the casino much better at Boulder Station but prefer the guest rooms at Palace Station's tower. The buffets and restaurants run pretty much a dead heat, but Boulder Station is less crowded.

Caesars Palace (www.caesarspalace.com)

IF ROME IS "THE ETERNAL CITY," then its Las Vegas legacy at Caesars is a worthy, long-lived heir. Forty years old in 2006, Caesars Palace was the first of the themed hotels and casinos to realize fully its potential, and it is among the foremost at staying fresh through constant updating and remodeling. The perennial classic that reinvents itself, Caesars is a must-see even if you don't stay there.

An exercise in whimsical fantasy and excess, Caesars' Roman theme has been executed with astounding artistry and attention to detail. Everywhere fine mosaics, handsome statuary, mythological references, famous sculptures (including a Carrera marble copy of Michelangelo's *David*—from Florence, not Rome—but let's don't quibble) delight the eye and mind. Creating an atmosphere of informality in surroundings too pretentious to believe is hard to pull off, but that is exactly what Caesars Palace has done.

If Caesars was on a small scale it would be exquisite kitsch, but it's on a grand scale that elevates you into some kind of time machine where the bustling commerce of ancient Rome lives again. Gambling at Caesars does feel a little like pitching horseshoes in the Supreme Court, but, incredibly, it works. Everywhere the vaulted ceilings, classic statuary, and graceful arches easily accommodate the legions (pun intended) of slots, activity of the pits, shopping, dining, and lolling about in opulent pools surrounded by towering gardens. Truly, here is the grandeur that was Rome with all its desirable excesses and indulgences.

Caesars Palace provides three spacious and luxurious casinos, including a poker room with celebrity events, 26 excellent restaurants and cafes, beautiful landscaping, and top celebrity entertainment. Bette Midler is a staple in the Colosseum showroom Caesars built for Celine Dion, and Elton John or Cher performs when Bette is off. For all of the guests who inhabit its 3,348 superb rooms, Caesars has all of the services and amenities of a world-class resort.

A couple of years ago the more intimate Apollo pool was added to the five-acre swimming complex (with two outdoor whirlpool spas), bringing the total number of pools to four. Other pools include the 10,000-square-foot pool of the Temple which is capped by a rotunda and decorated with marble and mosaics. For lusty sinews there's the Neptune pool with 5,000 square feet for lap swimmers; and for European-style (aka topless) bathers, the Venus pool is neatly tucked away within an evergreen enclave. All the pools have cabanas available for rent with stocked refrigerators, snack and beverage service, soft lounge chairs, and television so you don't have to choose between the big game or the soaps and your tan.

The lobby and guest registration area has been remodeled, too, but you don't have to spend much time in its glory if you use the airport check-in/shuttle feature that delivers you with your room key and your luggage to the hotel for \$6 one-way or \$10 round-trip. Or for extra ease, use the fee-based luggage concierge service that will ferry your bags from your home or office to your hotel room.

In 2003, Caesars finished a complete renovation and face-lift of its original hotel towers. The year 2004 saw the opening of the Roman Plaza, a shopping, dining, and entertainment venue reaching from Caesars' Flamingo Road entrance to the hotel lobby and casino. The 26-story luxury Augustus tower opened in 2005. Besides nine-foot ceilings, the new tower rooms feature spa tubs, televisions in the bathrooms, and great views of the Strip that include the "dancing waters" at the Bellagio or its own Garden of the Gods pool area, a sight to behold, especially from on high.

The Palace Tower, built in late 1997 and renovated in 2006, generally costs \$50 to \$70 more than the standard room price, beginning around \$175 per night in the Forum, Roman, and Centurion towers. With a small sitting area in addition to the traditional marble bathroom, the standard room of 300 to 400 square feet—all with high-speed Internet access—is a great room for the price. Palace Tower rooms have 500 square feet or more, with many amenities, including marble dry bars. The Premiere Palace Tower rooms have his-and-her bathrooms that are connected by a large, sexy, glass walk-in shower. For another kind of grand experience, double bay suites with parlors and dining tables for entertaining are available in the Forum and Roman towers.

Opening in early 2009 is the Octavius Tower, with 665 rooms. Coming on line with the tower are a 263,000-square-foot meeting center, three new swimming pools, a poolside cafe, and a garden wedding venue.

Some say the spa, newly remade and opened in September of 2006, is Caesars' best-kept secret. With the Roman penchant for water joys, it's logical that Caesars would have a full line of luxurious treatments and settings for men and women. Situated on the second floor of the Augustus Tower, the all-new spa has 51 therapy rooms, signature Roman baths with hot, cold, and tepid pools, and sculpted stone chaise longues submerged in heated pools and designed as pre-massage relaxers.

Caesars is on a roll with its nightlife scene, offering four hot lounges. Pure offers three luxurious rooms, including a dance club and a heated outdoor rooftop balcony overlooking the Strip. Pussycat Dolls Lounge is a clean-smelling risqué cabaret with song, dance, and girls popping out of giant Champagne glasses. At Shadow, silhouetted dancers contort to DJ-spun hip-hop. Cleopatra's Barge, a decades-old dance club on a free-floating boat, continues to rock on. Nearby is the Seahorse Lounge, where you can watch the endangered species variety drift by in the aquarium.

For the less nocturnal, there are two shopping venues. At the Appian Way (look for the *David*) you can purchase apparel, gifts, art, and jewelry, including Caesars logo items. The extensive Forum Shops is an entirely different kind of experience. Opened in 1992 and expanded in 1997 and again in 2005, the astonishing adjoining Forum Shops give Caesars Palace the distinction of offering one of the most unusual themed shopping complexes in the United States with 160 mercantile venues as well as 13 restaurants and specialty food shops. Ambling through its gently cobblestoned "streets," replete with slightly sloping gutters, the sightseer and shopper alike can be delighted and charmed by the full-scale fountains featuring Neptune and Bacchus, the building facades topped by second-story "residences," all set against the background of a sweeping Italian sky at sunset. At every turn, you find the perfect blend of old-world commerce and cutting-edge merchandise, including, of course, the famous Italians Versace and Armani. At 3:15 p.m. Monday through Friday, you can take a tour of the Atlantis Aquarium, located at the Neptune Fountain, going underneath the 50,000 gallons of saltwater to learn how the environment is maintained.

Dining at Caesars has been totally revamped with the addition of 8-0-8 (Pacific Rim cuisine), Mesa Grill, and Bradley Ogden, honored by the James Beard

Foundation, that serves “fresh farm” American cuisine. A more recent addition to the lineup is Restaurant Guy Savoy overlooking the Roman Plaza. Headed by Parisian restaurateur Guy Savoy, recently named Chef of the Year in France, the restaurant offers one of the most singular dining experiences in town. Among other choices are authentic Chinese and Japanese (including a sushi bar) and steak and seafood. For casual dining, there’s the 24-hour Café Lago, featuring menu service and buffet, and Cypress Street Marketplace, an all-hours gourmet deli and food court. A good antidote to the interior casino spaces, the fine buffet at Caesars is in a large sun-drenched room with a view of the pool area, also a welcome balm in counterpoint to the constant clamor of the gaming floor. Here is where you can hear the music of pianist David Osborne, who also plays at the White House (we recommend you hear him at Caesars, where he creates his own playlist rather than variations on “The Yellow Rose of Texas”).

Rao’s is a Las Vegas edition of the East Harlem Italian restaurant that’s so popular that neither Madonna nor Bill Clinton could waggle a reservation. Dine in a replica of the New York original or choose the spacious upscale dining room overlooking the pool.

Originally designed for high-rollers, from the beginning Caesars opened its arms to the world, marketing far and wide. Enjoyed by a broad range of clientele from the East, the Midwest, and Southern California, it’s also popular with Asian and Hispanic visitors. Of course, it also hosts meetings and caters to business travelers in its conference center. No matter what the motivation for a visit, each guest—supported by a staff of 6,000—no doubt feels like Caesar.

California (www.thecal.com)

THE CALIFORNIA IS A PLEASANT, DOWNTOWN hotel-casino with excellent, moderately priced restaurants and a largely Hawaiian and Filipino clientele. It is a friendly, mellow place to stay or gamble—unpretentious, and certainly comfortable. The casino rambles but, like most downtown casinos, does not allow much elbow room. The decor is subdued and tasteful, with wood paneling and trim. For a taste of old Las Vegas, try the porterhouse steak special at the Redwood Bar and Grill. The shops, menus, and services work to make visiting Pacific Islanders feel as much at home as visitors from Kansas City or Tampa. While some hotel-casinos are spectacles or happenings, the California is simply a nice, relaxed place to spend some time.

Cannery (www.cannerycasinos.com)

FOUR MILES NORTH OF DOWNTOWN ON CRAIG ROAD, the Cannery opened in January 2003 and expanded in 2004 with the usual locals’ formula: big casino, small hotel. The theme has nothing to do with Steinbeck or fish, though the industrial, 1940s-style structure of corrugated metal and steel beams would be right at home on Cannery Row. Instead, produce, specifically vegetables and fruit, take center stage with murals and paintings of colossal berries, apples, and veggies. Even the red, patterned carpet is festooned with oranges, apples, and pears.

The roomy, uncluttered casino is roughly circular, surrounding a slightly elevated lounge decorated with World War II-era, Betty Grable-style pin-ups.

Restaurants, including a good Mexican eatery, a steak house, fast-food court, and a respectable buffet, are arrayed around the periphery. For entertainment, there's a 14-screen movie theater. A recent expansion added 15,000 square feet to the casino, including a poker room and a race and sports book. Also new are a parking garage and an Italian restaurant.

Guest rooms are smallish, with oak-finish furniture and brightly colored soft goods. Views from guest-room windows are about as uninspiring as it gets.

Casino Royale (www.casinoroyalehotel.com)

LOCATED ACROSS THE STRIP FROM THE MIRAGE, the diminutive Casino Royale has about 150 guest rooms. Small, accessible, and unpretentious, Casino Royale provides bargain lodging in the Strip's high-rent district. While the crowded and slot-heavy casino will make downtown gamblers feel right at home, the Casino Royale's second-floor Outback Steakhouse offers an affordable alternative to the Strip's pricey chophouses. The property's clientele runs the gamut from tour groups to convention-goers on a tight budget to folks who could not get rooms at other hotels on the block.

Circus Circus (www.circuscircus.com)

CIRCUS CIRCUS IS VERY LIKELY THE ONLY hotel on the Strip that has an escalator from within the casino to a McDonald's, and that tells you pretty much what you need to know. Although most hotels do not cater to families with young children, Circus Circus is a notable exception, and it was the first hotel on the Strip to actively pursue the family trade. For parents who must bring their children, it's a good alternative and a bargain to boot.

With so many swarming, milling, and mewing short people, the lobby can sometimes remind you of a day-care center. The main casino has a second level called The Midway with good reason, as it features the simple kinds of games found at a state fair venue (wham a spring-loaded chicken into a moving pot and win a prize-sort-of-thing). At the core of the Midway is a small grandstand that features very competent regular circus acts, also primarily for children. The entire casino affair is obviously designed as an easy hand-off platform for such directives as, "Here, honey, you take the kids for 45 minutes while I go play the quarter slots."

In 1993, Circus Circus launched what is now the Adventuredome, formerly Grand Slam Canyon, a desert-canyon-themed amusement park totally enclosed in a giant pink dome. Here guests can enjoy a roller coaster, a flume ride, robotic dinosaurs, and more. A detailed description of Adventuredome can be found in Part Five, Shopping and Seeing the Sights, on page 404. The meandering hallway to the Adventuredome and the Skyrise Casino is lined with shops catering to the younger set as well. Maps and signs throughout the facility indicate the "Green Zone," where children are allowed to be (because the law against children lingering in the gaming areas is very strictly enforced in Las Vegas). Children can walk through the casino if they must, but the general atmosphere does not encourage this practice.

Perhaps because of price, in addition to families, Circus Circus also attracts some seniors and novice gamblers who don't mind dodging strollers and

jacked-up kids in this ADD paradise. The labyrinthine casino has low ceilings and is frenetic, loud, and always busy, but sometimes in contrast to the main public spaces it can seem like an oasis of sanity. Nickel slots abound, as do table games, including dollar blackjack. The circus theme, both colorful and wholesome, is extended to every conceivable detail of the hotel's physical space and operation. The rooms are adequate, but not luxurious, a sensibility probably enhanced by the garish, raucous circus motif.

Circus Circus has a very good steak house (the only escape from the circus theme); a huge, inexpensive buffet; an RV park; and a monorail shuttle that connects the property's two main buildings. And, to give credit for great innovation, Circus Circus was the first casino to set aside a nonsmoking gaming area. A hotel tower, as well as a shopping and restaurant arcade, adjoin Adventuredome. The arcade restaurants provide Circus Circus with much-needed alternatives to the steak house and the buffet. For parents with children, Circus Circus is a great alternative, but for happily child-free others, it might feel more like a zoo.

El Cortez (www.elcortezhotelcasino.com)

SEVERAL BLOCKS EAST OF THE CENTRAL downtown casino area, El Cortez caters to seniors, motor-coach tours, and blue-collar locals. The large, rambling casino is congested and bustling; the slots are the major draw. The oldest original casino in Las Vegas, El Cortez until 2006 had the aesthetic appeal of a garment factory, with narrow aisles, low ceilings, and slot machines packed into every conceivable crevice. The crowded aisles and low ceilings remain, but El Cortez has undergone a good plussing up, including a top-to-bottom renovation of its guest rooms. It's not Mandalay Bay, but the rooms are very nice and a great bargain. Food and drink are reasonably priced and the loose slots give patrons a lot of play for their money. Also, there is considerable Las Vegas history in El Cortez; one section of the original building appears just as it did when the casino opened in 1941.

Ellis Island (www.ellislandcasino.com)

ELLIS ISLAND, ON KOVAL LANE NEAR HARMON AVENUE just minutes from the Strip, is the most modest casino imaginable, but a treasure for those in the know. Its \$6.95 complete New York Strip steak dinner has been among the best meal deals in town for years. The casino is joined at the hip to an equally modest Super 8 hotel.

Excalibur (www.excalibur.com)

THE EXCALIBUR IS A HOTEL IN TRANSITION, attempting to chunk its family business for a more adult, middle-income market. Although it's difficult to transform a medieval casino the size of an airplane hanger, Excalibur has succeeded to a remarkable degree. The new hotel lobby, as well as the casino, are tasteful, with dark woods and stylish lighting fixtures. Gone are the cheap plastic look rendered in a Wal-Mart color palette and the ridiculous faux Knights of the Round Table artifacts. There are still vestiges of Ozzie and Harriet's decorating touch, but the Excalibur no longer assaults the senses like it did in the good olde days.

The guest rooms likewise are in the process of a makeover. Here the medieval theme has been mercilessly exorcised and replaced by surprisingly luxurious rooms replete with 42-inch plasma television, plush bedding, dark-wood furnishings, and contemporary baths. Though the windows are not huge, the views are great. About 35% of Excalibur's guest rooms will be renovated by the end of 2008.

The Excalibur's restaurants and shops are on the top floor of three levels. On the lower floor is a midway-type games arcade and the Excalibur's showroom, where jousting tournaments are featured. A primitive motion simulator (it was the worst virtual ride in Las Vegas) has been replaced with a zippy *SpongeBob SquarePants* 4-D ride. The cavernous middle level contains the casino.

The Excalibur is (for the moment) the seventh-largest hotel in the world and the fifth-largest in Las Vegas, and it certainly features the world's largest hotel parking lot (so far removed from the entrance that trams are dispatched to haul in the patrons). If you can get past the parking lot commute and the fact that most guest rooms have showers only (no tubs), and you do not object to joining the masses, there is good value to be had at the Excalibur. The food is good and economically priced, as is the entertainment. The staff is friendly and accommodating, and you won't go deaf or blind, or become claustrophobic, in the casino. A high-energy nightclub, a spa, and a workout facility round out Excalibur's product mix. If you need a change of pace, a covered walkway connects the Excalibur with the Luxor next door, pedestrian bridges provide direct access to New York-New York and the Tropicana, and an overhead train runs to Luxor and Mandalay Bay.

Fiesta Henderson (www.fiestacasino.com)

FIESTA HENDERSON'S PARENT COMPANY, Station Casinos, has stripped this property of its stuffed monkeys and lions (it was formerly The Reserve) and made it southwestern/Mexican in flavor. Located southeast of Las Vegas at the intersection of I-515 and West Lake Mead Drive, Fiesta Henderson offers a 37,000-square-foot casino, a 12-screen movie theater, three restaurants, a buffet, a food court, and three up-and-coming bars. As is the case with all Station casinos, the Fiesta Henderson caters primarily to locals.

Fiesta Rancho (www.fiestacasino.com)

THE FIESTA RANCHO, WHICH OPENED IN 1994, was the first of two casinos to be situated at the intersection of Rancho Drive and Lake Mead Boulevard in North Las Vegas (the other is Texas Station). With 100 guest rooms and a video-poker-packed, 40,000-square-foot casino (including the Spin City annex), the Fiesta features an Old Mexico theme. Entertainment includes a lounge, a nightclub, and a \$40-million ice arena. Restaurants specializing in southwestern food are the Fiesta's major draw. An excellent buffet features a mesquite grill. In 1997, the Fiesta finally got around to putting in a swimming pool, and in 1999, it expanded the casino and added a food court. The food court allowed them to expand the southwestern restaurant and add an oyster bar and a tequila bar (300 different margaritas—*olé!*). The Fiesta depends primarily on local clientele.

Fitzgeralds (www.fitzgeraldslasvegas.com)

LOCATED DOWNTOWN, FITZGERALDS ANCHORS the east end of the Glitter Gulch section of Fremont Street. After filing for bankruptcy in 2002, the hotel was purchased by Don Barden, which made him Nevada's first African American casino owner. The casino is large and compartmentalized, with gold press-metal ceilings, mirrored columns, and print carpet. Completely renovated, the casino has largely abandoned its signature "luck of the Irish" theme. While the new look is more consistent with the clean, polished style pioneered by the Golden Nugget, Fitzgeralds has sacrificed much of its traditional warmth and coziness.

Rooms on the upper floors of the Fitz afford some of the best views in town, and corner rooms with hot tubs are a great bargain. Recently, the Fitz added a streetside swimming pool. The Fitz's registered guests tend to be older travelers and retirees from the Midwest. In the casino, the crowd is a mixed bag of regulars and bargain hunters lured by ads for free gifts in the local visitor guides.

Flamingo (www.flamingolasvegas.com)

BUILT WITH GANGSTER MONEY in the 1940s and acquired by the Hilton Hotel chain in 1970, and more recently by Harrah's, the Flamingo is an oasis in the desert. When you're feeling the need for lush green other than the casino kind, head there. True to its name, the Flamingo's nature theme is in full play, especially in the public spaces. With a tropical panorama behind the registration desk, grass-themed bathroom stalls, and real plants lining the escalator, the Flamingo is an organic reprieve from the clanking slot machinery that runs the Strip. Its heart is a 15-acre Caribbean-style water playground adjacent to a large wildlife habitat that is home to Chilean flamingos, swans, ducks, koi, African penguins, turtles, and foliage from around the world. Maybe best of all, you don't have to be a guest to take a stroll through this sliver of paradise.

Begun by notorious "businessman" Bugsy Siegel in 1946, and once a tourist attraction in itself, this venerable hotel was the first super-resort on the Strip. Today, with its 3,500-plus rooms and suites, four towers, and prime location, it is the Queen Mother of the Strip's most prestigious block, surrounded by Bally's, Bill's Gamblin' Hall, the Imperial Palace, Caesars Palace, Harrah's, and the Bellagio. Hilton, as you might expect, curbed the excesses of the colorful previous owners and transformed the Flamingo from a Las Vegas exaggeration into a very dependable hotel. Today, owned by Harrah's, the Flamingo is flashier than Bally's (its sister property that also caters to business travelers). It is also less formal, offering an ambience comfortable to leisure and business travelers.

Bugsy would be very proud of the newly remodeled 77,000-square-foot Caribbean-style casino with more than 1,600 slot machines, 70 gaming tables, and race and sports book broadcasting results on wide-screen television. The large, bustling casino's bright neon pinks, magentas, and tangerines established the Flamingo's identity more than four decades ago, but the rooms (undergoing renovation) and services are standard Hilton. The Flamingo has consistent restaurants, a pretty good buffet, varied showroom productions, and truly creative lounge entertainment—the Flamingo is

home to the famed *Second City* comedy-improvisation show—in addition to boasting one of the top swimming areas in town.

The hotel's clientele comes in all colors and sizes, and from all over the country (but especially Southern California). The Flamingo actively cultivates the Japanese market and also does a strong business with tour wholesalers. Because it has one of the most diverse customer bases of any Las Vegas hotel, the Flamingo likewise has a very broad comfort zone.

Four Queens (www.fourqueens.com)

THE FOUR QUEENS, SITUATED IN THE HEART of downtown, offers good food, respectable hotel rooms, and a positively cheery casino. Joining its neighbor, the Golden Nugget, as a member of the "All Right to Be Bright Club," the Four Queens casino was among the first to abandon the standard brothel red in favor of a glistening, light decor offset by a tropical-print carpet. The result, as at the Golden Nugget, is a gaming area that feels fun, upbeat, and clean. Loyal Four Queens hotel guests tend to be middle-aged or older and come from Southern California, Texas, Hawaii, and the Midwest. The Four Queens also caters to the motor-coach-tour market. In the casino there is a mix of all ages and backgrounds. Locals love Hugo's Cellar restaurant, but the Four Queens' top-quality lounge has been closed by the property's new owner, a local slot-bar operator.

Four Seasons (www.fourseasons.com/lasvegas)

FOUR SEASONS HOTELS AND MANDALAY RESORT GROUP (now MGM Mirage) have combined to introduce a new concept to Las Vegas: the hotel within a hotel. The Four Seasons is an exclusive 424-room, noncasino hotel contained by the greater Mandalay Bay megaresort.

You can get to Four Seasons from within Mandalay Bay, but just barely: You walk almost behind the Mandalay Bay front desk, pass through two sets of double service doors, climb down a spiral staircase, and blunder into the Four Seasons lobby. Signs are few and small. This is the "back" entrance; Four Seasons prefers you to use the main, front, valet entrance, which is right off the Strip, a little south of Mandalay Bay's entrance.

You can access Mandalay Bay from Four Seasons by backtracking or by taking the private elevator to the casino level. You can also walk up the stairs at the Four Seasons elevator bay (the elevators are a pretty long hike from the front desk).

The lobby area has a plush feel, decorated with wood, Victorian sofas and easy chairs, a grand piano, and even a fireplace—a 1930s, New York atmosphere that's very different (and pleasingly so) from Las Vegas in the new millennium. Off the lobby is a 60-seat sitting area and a second lounge that fronts the Charlie Palmer Steak gourmet room. There's also the Verandah Café, the most exclusive coffee shop in town—giant French doors open onto the Four Seasons' private pool area, where you can also dine al fresco. The pool has lush foliage, a spa, and cabanas, which are kept cool and refreshing by misters.

Four Seasons' 424 rooms are on the 35th to 39th floors of the Mandalay Bay tower. Private express elevators deliver guests to the Four Seasons' floors. Rates start at \$360 for a superior king, but if you haggle a little, you can land

a moderate king for less. However, it will still come at a hefty premium over Mandalay Bay's rooms, which are nearly identical. The main difference between the two standard rooms is the Four Seasons' fully stocked "private bar" (you'll pay about \$2.75 for a can of Coke, \$4 for a pack of Life Savers, \$6 for an airline-sized bottle of liquor, and \$19 for a small bottle of wine). Clear out the beverages from the mini-refrigerator and store your own drinks and snacks. Housekeepers provide turndown service before bedtime.

Four Seasons will appeal to ultra-upscale travelers looking for a mini-oasis that insulates them from the hullabaloo of Las Vegas. But it doesn't come cheaply. You're paying for the "brandness" as much as the grandness, and plenty of better values are nearby (even in the same building).

Fremont (www.fremontcasino.com)

THE FREMONT IS ONE OF THE LANDMARKS of downtown Las Vegas. Acquired by the Boyd family in 1985, the Fremont offers good food, budget lodging, and a robust casino. Several years ago they redecorated and considerably brightened the casino, which is noisy and crowded. The table games are roomily accommodated beneath a high ceiling ringed in neon, while the slots are crammed together along narrow aisles like turkeys on their way to market. Locals love the Fremont, as do Asians, Hawaiians, and the inevitable Southern Californians. The Fremont, like all Boyd properties, is friendly, informal, and comfortable.

Gold Coast (www.goldcoastcasino.com)

THE GOLD COAST, A HALF MILE WEST of the strip on Flamingo, is a favorite hangout for locals. A casual inspection of the Gold Coast reveals nothing unique: no fantasy theme, no special decor or atmosphere. But the Gold Coast does pay attention to detail and has the local market wired. It serves one of the best breakfast specials in town, has one of the top buffets for quality and value, provides lounge entertainment at all hours of the day, offers headliners and modest production shows in its showroom, and makes sure it has the locals' favorite kind of slots. To top things off, there is also a huge bowling alley. Free transportation is provided throughout the day to the casino's sister property, the Orleans, as well as the Strip.

Gold Spike (www.goldspikehotelcasino.com)

SITUATED DOWNTOWN AND ABOUT A four-minute walk from the heart of Fremont Street, the Gold Spike is basically a slot joint. Congested, loud, and smoky, with all the ambience of a boiler room, the Gold Spike lures customers with low minimums, cheap food, and \$35 rooms. Recently, the Gold Spike was sold twice in a seven-month period. The current owners are upgrading the casino (no place to go but up) and refurbishing the hotel rooms to the tune of 3.5 million dollars.

Golden Gate (www.goldengatecasino.net)

ANOTHER DOWNTOWN CASINO DEVOTED PRIMARILY to slots, the Golden Gate is crowded and dingy but redeems itself in part by offering one of the best shrimp cocktail specials in Las Vegas. Incongruously, the

Golden Gate has a piano player performing mellow standards. Although odd, his presence takes the edge off the ever-frenetic casino and shrimp cocktail bar. On the western end of Glitter Gulch on Fremont Street, the Golden Gate has 106 budget hotel rooms.

Golden Nugget (www.goldennugget.com)

THE UNDISPUTED FLAGSHIP OF THE DOWNTOWN hotels and one of the most meticulously maintained and managed properties in Las Vegas, the Golden Nugget is smack in the middle of Glitter Gulch. Celebrating its 60th birthday in 2006, the hotel offers newly renovated bright, cheery rooms, a first-rate showroom, plus lounge entertainment, excellent restaurants, a large pool, a first-rate spa, a shopping arcade, and a workout room. The casino is clean and breezy, with white enameled walls and white lights. The feel here is definitely upscale, though comfortable and informal. There is breathing room at the Golden Nugget, and an atmosphere that suggests a happy, more fun-filled approach to gambling. In 2003, previous owners sold the Golden Nugget to 30-somethings Tim Poster and Tom Breitling. The new kids on the block immediately inked a deal with the FOX Network for a 13-episode reality TV series called *The Casino* starring, who else, themselves! In 2005, the whiz kids spun off the Nugget to Landry's restaurant chain (Rainforest Café, Landry's Seafood, Joe's Stone Crab Shack).

The Golden Nugget is undergoing a \$200-million renovation and expansion, the first since 1973 for the perpetual AAA Four-Diamond Award winner. Ground was broken in 2006 for a new hotel tower and a 1,200-seat showroom. Other elements of the makeover include a new covered porte cochere, a new VIP lounge, Vic and Anthony's steak house, and Lillie's Noodle House specializing in Cantonese and Szechuan fare. The current showroom has been enlarged to 650 seats, and the spa and fitness center have likewise been modernized and expanded. The most intriguing touch is the reconfiguration of the swimming complex to surround a 30-foot-deep shark aquarium. Overlooking the aquarium is a revamped buffet. Integrated into the shark tank and pool is Grotto, a trattoria-style Italian restaurant.

Though the Golden Nugget has always been downtown's prestige address, the new hotel tower and top-to-bottom makeover will catapult the Nugget into the rarified atmosphere of the premiere Strip resorts. More, the Golden Nugget's renovation and expansion may well be the investment gamble that triggers the metamorphosis of all of downtown Las Vegas.

If you stay or gamble at the Golden Nugget, you are likely to meet people from New York, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego, as well as visitors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan. Younger travelers (ages 28 to 39) like the Golden Nugget, as do older tourists and retirees, many of whom arrive on motor-coach tours.

Greek Isles (www.greekislesvegas.com)

THE GREEK ISLES IS LOCATED ON CONVENTION CENTER DRIVE within five to seven minutes of the Las Vegas Convention Center by foot. Originally the Paddlewheel, it was purchased by Debbie Reynolds and completely reno-

vated. So extensive were Debbie's improvements that she couldn't pay the mortgage and sold the place to, get this, the World Wrestling Federation (now known as World Wrestling Entertainment). WWE turned out to be (big surprise) clueless about running a hotel and sold it to the current owners, who have turned it into the Greek Isles. Operating with a small, slots-only casino, a combination Greek restaurant/coffee shop, a pool, and a designed-by-Debbie showroom with bizarrely eclectic entertainment, the property offers nice guest rooms at great rates to convention and trade-show attendees.

Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa, and Casino **(www.greenvalleyranchresort.com)**

IF YOU LIKE PAMPERING AND FRESH AIR along with your gambling and dining, you'll love Green Valley Ranch. This Mediterranean-Mission style indulgent retreat, perched on a hill overlooking the distant Strip and the mountains, is in an upscale residential area about 15 minutes southeast of the Strip at the intersection of Green Valley Parkway and the I-215 Beltway. The property offers a 490-room hotel, a casino with 55 table games and more than 2,650 slot and video-poker machines, seven restaurants (including a buffet), a spa, and a 10-screen cinema complex. Like all Station casinos, Green Valley Ranch provides locals with high-pay slots, good dining value, an excellent slot club, and high-quality lounge entertainment.

Unlike most Station casinos, however, Green Valley Ranch is very upscale. The restaurants are trendy, featuring some of Las Vegas's best-known chefs, and the unique Whiskey Bar dance club rivals the best nightspots on the Strip. Other watering holes include the elegant Drop Bar, the Lobby Bar, and Quinn's Irish Pub. The hotel and its enfolding guest rooms, starting at \$130 on the Web site, are truly luxurious, many with great views of the pool and spa areas and/or the desert and Strip beyond. You can get a lot of walking done traversing the many long corridors that are accented by varied lighting and ubiquitous rich textures and patterns.

The eight-acre pool complex is lovely, more resembling a country-club setting than that of a Las Vegas hotel. Features include vanishing-edge pools near the spa and a large centrally located swimming pool that has a sandy beach at one end, perfect for the kids to mess around in. There is also a small grassy playground area for children.

Dining options abound. Hank's is a plush, masculine chophouse and martini bar. Other fine-dining options include Terra Verde, with a menu that reads like a map of Italy, and the ultra-hip Sushi + Sake that specializes in . . . well, take a guess. The Feast Around the World Buffet is one of Las Vegas's best, and for those who like their carbs served with butter and maple syrup, there's an Original Pancake House. An informal Chinese bistro and a food court complete the culinary collage.

The 30,000-square-foot spa is a real star. The curving path from the hotel proper to the relaxation center is lined by a small vineyard offset by red roses. In addition to a wonderful array of treatments, the soothing architectural aesthetics at Green Valley do their part in providing a higher-quality experience. For example, the gym here is filled with light that pours in a window

wall. On the treadmills you can meditate on the Zen sculpture arising from the three-lane lap pool or contemplate the Spring Mountains. The steam room has an outdoor view. Waterfall showers and the Jacuzzi with a waterfall complement the treatment suites with sofas, double or single massage tables, and tubs. Pilates and Ashtanga yoga classes for \$10 are held in a perfect wood, glass, and mirrored high-ceilinged studio.

Located within easy striking distance of Lake Mead, Hoover Dam, the Black Canyon of the Colorado, and Red Rock Canyon, Green Valley Ranch offers a super option for families, the outdoor-oriented traveler, and for those who believe in the healing powers of being pampered.

Hard Rock Hotel (www.hardrockhotel.com)

LOCATED OFF THE STRIP ON HARMON AVENUE near Paradise Road, the Hard Rock is billed as the world's first rock-and-roll hotel and casino. Like the adjoining Hard Rock Café, the 648-room hotel and domed casino are loaded to the gills with rock memorabilia and artifacts. Everywhere it's rock, rock, rock, from lounge music to the casino, which features piano-shaped roulette tables and chandeliers made from gold saxophones. The guest rooms, which offer a nice view, are surprisingly tasteful, with a Danish-modern European feel. The Hard Rock is currently undergoing a \$750-million expansion that will include two hotel towers, several new restaurants and shops, a spa and health club, and 35,000 square feet of additional casino space. When completed, the expansion will more than double the guest-room inventory. In addition, all of the 648 current guest rooms will be renovated. The pool area is comfortable, nicely designed, and was recently enlarged. Other strengths include five restaurants (Nobu, Ago, AJ's Steakhouse, Pink Taco, and Mr. Lucky's); Body English, one of the hottest dance clubs in town; and The Joint, Las Vegas's most intimate venue for live rock. With an off-Strip location, the Hard Rock is removed from the worst traffic, which makes for easy coming and going if you have a car. The Hard Rock Hotel targets baby boomers and younger folks from Southern California, the Midwest, and the big northeastern cities.

Harrah's (www.harrahslasvegas.com)

A LAS VEGAS STAPLE, JAZZY HARRAH'S occupies the middle of the Strip's most prestigious block and is within easy walking distance of Bally's, the Flamingo, the Mirage, Caesars Palace, Paris, Bellagio, the Venetian, and T. I. Unpretentious and upbeat, Harrah's offers 2,500 guest rooms as well as a beautiful showroom, a comedy club, above-average restaurants, a buffet alongside the casino, a hot dance club, a pool, an exercise room, and a spa.

Harrah's theme celebrating carnival and Mardi Gras is evident in the two giant gold-leaf court jesters hefting a 10-ton, 22-foot-diameter globe that first welcome you on either side of the main hotel entrance, and a gold-swirled ceiling above the registration area continues the theme. The casino is decorated with brightly colored confetti-patterned carpet, ceiling murals, and hip fiber-optic lighting. Although the theme treatment is only a few years old, it already sports a somewhat tired feeling, rather like a Mardi Gras dawn.

The L-shaped casino of 87,000 square feet is bright and loud beyond average. It can be entered directly from the Strip alongside an open-air lounge with very talented “show” bartenders and a stage that hosts mostly rock music. This covered amphitheater adds to the raucous, let-loose feeling of Harrah’s, but might interrupt the sleep of some guests.

The staff at Harrah’s, from dealers to desk clerks, is exceptionally friendly and helpful. Though it is hard to imagine anyone not feeling comfortable at Harrah’s, its clientele tends to be older visitors from the Midwest and Southern California, as well as business and convention travelers.

Other enticements include a large but otherwise unremarkable swimming area where you get sound bleed from the outdoor stage, a cozy upscale steak house with a view of the Strip, and an outdoor plaza with fountains. With its “Let the good times roll” spirit, Harrah’s is an interesting blend of modern and vintage Las Vegas.

Hooters Casino Hotel (www.hooterscasinohotel.com)

LET’S GET ONE THING SETTLED AT THE BEGINNING. If you like Hooters—the chain of restaurants featuring hot wings and other pub grub served by waitresses in tight T-shirts and hot pants—then you will love the Hooters Casino Hotel. If you don’t like Hooters restaurants, you won’t much care for this place either, as the Hooters “mystique” is omnipresent from the casino floor to the hotel rooms (the latter even replaces typical hotel chairs with Hooters-style barstools). However, if you’re not constitutionally averse to the brand, you might be surprised how well the restaurateurs transformed the darkly dank San Remo into this bright, happening, and admittedly fun place. The casino floor looks remarkably like a Hooters restaurant, with the same light blonde wood, cheerful lighting, and simple orange accents. A large Hooters-like square bar greets you at the front door. At the gaming tables, rotating shifts of dealers are often attired in full Hooters uniform, right down to the orange hot pants. In addition to a pleasant lounge, coffee shop, and Dan Marino’s steak-and-seafood restaurant, there’s an actual Hooters restaurant inside as well, and it draws huge lines of eager diners at peak times. A decent-sized pool dominates the back of the hotel, complete with waterfall, pool bar, and stage for live music. The reasonable room rates, utter lack of pretension or attitude, and party-hearty atmosphere draw a mix of middle-aged patrons and college kids, with a few families thrown in for good measure. Rooms are vaguely Florida tropical and trimmed in Hooters orange, with moderate-budget amenities (bathrooms are a little on the cheap side). Although Hooters has been a breakout hit, the company tried to sell it in 2008 to Hedwigs, a California investment group. Plans fell through, however, and Hooters is now looking for a new suitor.

Imperial Palace (www.imperialpalace.com)

IMPERIAL PALACE OWNER RALPH ENGELSTAD died in November of 2003. Though most Vegas watchers expected the then-27-year-old resort to go on the auction block, Engelstad’s plucky wife, Betty, not only decided to keep plugging away but also ordered a major renovation. Though

Betty's intentions were good, she sold the property to Harrah's before much of the renovation was completed.

From the Strip, access to the Imperial Palace casino is by way of a shallow reception area that immediately feeds up an escalator. Although you almost have to hunt for the architectural grace amidst the large, active casino, it's still there. Massive wooden beams and carved dragons crowning the ceiling supports whisper a once-grand Eastern elegance. The Teahouse restaurant up a flight from the casino floor does a better job of carrying out the theme, and here in this casual coffeehouse you can stoke up 24-7 on breakfasts of two eggs and a meat selection for \$8.99. Save this staple, in general the Imperial Palace food is decidedly sub-par compared to most neighboring hotels.

The casino has a "Geisha Bar," but the burly bartender will definitely be omitted from the memoirs. The attraction on the casino floor is the dealers, who are fair-to-poor celebrity impersonators, including the likes of Stevie Wonder (would a blind dealer be a good thing?), Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Little Richard, and the perennial Elvis. It's a fun gimmick, even when it's weakly executed. These players are a nod to the excellent impersonators of *Legends in Concert*, one of the hottest shows in Las Vegas that plays nightly at the Imperial Palace's showroom. (The on-site auto museum is a first-rate tourist attraction in its own right.) The Imperial Palace casino is full of action, and the intensity of it is multiplied by the unusual number of mirrored surfaces that nearly pay homage to Orson Welles's famous classic reflection on life's enigmas, *A Touch of Evil*.

The small bank of elevators to the guest rooms is at the back of the casino, and this same relatively narrow hallway feeds the modest shopping area, monorail, and casino-level restaurant. Pity the people also trying to use the pay phones here in this traffic-jam central. The rooms are of modest but adequate size for the budget traveler, but the fluorescent overhead hallway lighting and the buzz of hairdryers and TVs impart a college-dorm feel. High-speed wireless Internet service is available in the rooms, as is a small refrigerator, but both add to the standard room rate.

The single swimming pool and sunbathing area are large but unremarkable by Las Vegas standards. The exercise (five treadmills, two exercise bikes, and so on) and spa spaces (two massage rooms) are small but adequate for the traveler who wants basic service.

The ambitious renovation, on hold for the moment, calls for a new facade for the building, a sidewalk cafe, a glass-walled upscale restaurant, a pedestrian corridor for monorail passengers, and a redo of all the resort's guest rooms in a new design. Many Las Vegas insiders, however, maintain that the renovation will never happen, citing the size and value of the real estate the Imperial Palace sits on. In their opinion, the Imperial Palace's future will more likely involve a lot of dynamite.

JW Marriott Las Vegas/Rampart Casino (www.rampartcasino.com; www.jwlasvegasresort.com)

THE JW MARRIOTT LAS VEGAS IS THE FIRST of several new upscale properties to offer a Scottsdale-Palm Beach resort experience as an alternative to the

madness of the Strip. Situated west of town near Red Rock Canyon, the JW Marriott Las Vegas consists of two southwestern-style hotels built around the Tournament Players Club (TPC) golf course. The JW Marriott officially opened as The Resort at Summerlin in 1999, and a year or so later changed its name to The Regent Las Vegas. Marriott acquired the property in late 2001, and the name changed again. As an added twist, the classy, circular casino has yet another name, Rampart Casino (after the road on which the casino is located). The JW Marriott is operated primarily as a meeting venue with secondary emphasis on golf and the resort's exceptional spa. The casino, operated by an independent contractor, targets the local market.

Standard hotel rooms are huge at 560 square feet. In many rooms, French doors open onto a balustrade overlooking the pools and gardens (11 acres of palms and pines tower over the winding pools, waterfalls, and walkways), or better yet, the mountains to the west, a stirring alternative to the usual neon. Baths feature a whirlpool tub, separate shower, bathrobes, and telephone.

Restaurants serve Italian, Continental, and beef fare. The buffet here is one of the better spreads in town. Although the lounges, including the Irish pub, offer live entertainment, there is no showroom. The JW Marriott is pricey but perfect for those who come to enjoy the beauty and recreational resources of the mountains and valleys west of Las Vegas. Only minutes away are world-class hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, and road biking.

Las Vegas Club (www.vegasclubcasino.net)

THE LAS VEGAS CLUB IS A DOWNTOWN hotel-casino with a sports theme. The corridor linking the casino with the sports bar is a veritable sports museum and has dozens of vintage photos of boxing, baseball, and basketball legends. The casino itself, with its high, mirrored ceilings, is modest but feels uncrowded. It also has some of the more player-friendly blackjack rules around. If you plan to stay at the Las Vegas Club, ask for a room in the new North Tower. The food is good and consistent, and the upscale Great Moments Room is a perfect example of the old-time Las Vegas gourmet rooms. The food? It's great. The Las Vegas Club draws from Hawaii and the Midwest, but also does a big business with bus groups and seniors.

Las Vegas Hilton (www.lv-hilton.com)

IN SOME WAYS LIKE BALLY'S, the Las Vegas Hilton bills itself as a classic, straightforward Vegas experience with comfortable lodging, very good restaurants, a strong casino, and headliner entertainment, but no exotic theme. Lacking a theme hook, the Hilton has the advantage of being adjacent to the Las Vegas Convention Center. What it lacks in convenient access to the Strip (a 10- to 12-minute walk or 5-minute monorail ride away), it makes up for in one-stop partying for the conventioneer who can go to sessions via a hall connecting the hotel and convention center. Consequently, this hotel does more meeting, trade-show, and convention business than any other hotel in town. There are days at the Hilton when it's rare to see someone not wearing a convention badge. Operating under the valid assumption that many of its guests may never leave the hotel during their Las Vegas stay (except to go to

the convention center), the Hilton is an oasis of self-sufficiency. It boasts lounges, a huge pool, an exercise room, a shopping arcade, a buffet, and a coffee shop. It is also next door to a golf course.

The architecture is vintage high-rise—bland, smooth, and unmemorable, but not at all unpleasant. Renovations are underway, and these areas have been completed: the lobby, the large theater where Barry Manilow is the regular headliner, the spa and pool area, the casino, more than half of the guest rooms, and some of the bars (the Tempo, with its small spaces for dancers and intimate parties, has a new facade). Continuing in 2008, renovations on the rest of the 3,000 rooms will be done incrementally. In the meantime, the rooms are more than adequate—accommodating but not glitzy, providing a comfortable, neutral environment for the business clientele.

The Las Vegas Hilton has a decent buffet and some excellent fine dining options with enough ethnic and culinary variety to keep most guests happy. The showroom at the Hilton hosts big-name headliners. *Star Trek: The Experience*, an interactive video and virtual reality amusement center featuring a space-flight simulation ride and a 3-D theater presentation, is one of the top casino-based attractions in the city.

The casino is moderate in size by Las Vegas standards and, like the hotel, tastefully businesslike in its presentation, but by no means formal or intimidating. The Hilton sports book is one of the largest in Las Vegas, and perhaps in the world. It has 30,000 square feet, 300 seats and 28 giant screens, plus one “mondo” puppy for viewing that measures 15x20 feet.

If you can afford it, the Hilton is the most convenient place to stay in town if you are attending a trade show or convention at the Las Vegas Convention Center. If, however, you are in Las Vegas for pleasure, staying at the Hilton is like being in exile. Anywhere you go you will need a cab, a car, or the new monorail that drops you right inside the hotel. If you park in one of the Hilton’s far-flung, self-parking lots, it will take you as long as 15 minutes to reach your car from your guest room. Inside the hotel, the public spaces are only about three minutes apart, another convenience factor for those who do elect to stay at this classic property.

Luxor (www.luxor.com)

THE LUXOR IS ON THE STRIP SOUTH OF TROPICANA AVENUE next to the Excalibur. Representing Mandalay Resort Group’s (now MGM Mirage) first serious effort to attract a more upscale, less family-oriented clientele, the Luxor is among the more tasteful of Las Vegas’s themed hotels. Though originally not believed to be on a par with T. I. and the MGM Grand, the Luxor may well be the most distinguished graduate of the much-publicized hotel class of 1993. While the MGM Grand is larger and T. I. more ostentatious, the Luxor demonstrates an unmatched creativity and architectural appeal.

Rising 30 stories, the Luxor is a huge pyramid with guest rooms situated around the outside perimeter from base to apex. Guest-room hallways circumscribe a hollow core containing the world’s largest atrium. Inside the atrium, inclinator rise at a 39-degree angle from the pyramid’s corners to access the guest floors. While the perspective from inside the pyramid is stun-

ning, it is easy to get disoriented. Stories about hotel guests wandering around in search of their rooms are legend. After reviewing many complaints from readers, we seriously recommend carrying a small pocket compass.

The Luxor's main entrance is from the Strip via a massive sphinx. From the sphinx, guests are diverted into small entryways designed to resemble the interior passages of an actual pyramid. From these tunnels, guests emerge into the dramatic openness of the Luxor's towering atrium. Rising imposingly within the atrium is an ancient Egyptian city.

Proceeding straight ahead at ground level from the main entrance brings you into the casino. Open and attractive, the 120,000-square-foot casino is tasteful by any standard.

One level below the casino and the main entrance is the Luxor's main showroom. One floor above entry level, on a mezzanine of sorts, is an array of structures that reach high into the atrium. These dramatic elaborate buildings and facades transform the atrium. The atrium is home to two exceptional exhibits. *Bodies—The Exhibition* is an extraordinary and riveting introduction to human anatomy through authentic, preserved human bodies. It takes you stepwise through every part of the human body explaining its many systems. The second exhibit is *Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition*, which takes guests on a chronological odyssey from the design and building of the ocean liner to life on board to its sinking. Luxor's 26,000-square-foot LAX nightclub is one of the hottest late-night venues in the city.

Flanking the pyramid are two hotel towers that were part of a \$300-million expansion completed in 1997; the expansion included a new health spa and fitness center, and additional meeting and conference space.

Soft goods play off the mixed wood tones of the furniture to create one of the warmest and most visually appealing guest rooms in Las Vegas. The rich design complements the Egyptian theme in an understated and adult way without recourse to whimsy. In all, the Luxor offers 4,408 guest rooms, which makes it the second largest hotel in Las Vegas.

The Luxor's large, attractive pool complex, surrounded by private cabanas, desperately needs some additional plants and trees. Self-parking is not as much a problem at the Luxor as at most large properties. Valet parking is quick and efficient, however, and well worth the \$1 or \$2 tip. The Luxor is within a 5- to 12-minute walk of the Excalibur, the Tropicana, and the MGM Grand. A moving walkway connects the Luxor to the Excalibur and an overhead "cable liner" (a monorail propelled by a cable à la San Francisco cable cars) connects it with Mandalay Bay.

Main Street Station (www.mainstreetcasino.com)

SITUATED ON MAIN STREET BETWEEN OGDEN and Stewart avenues in downtown Las Vegas, Main Street Station originally opened in 1992 as a paid-admission nighttime entertainment complex with a casino on the side. Owned and managed by an Orlando, Florida, entrepreneur with no casino experience, it took Main Street Station less than a year to go belly-up. The property was acquired several years later by Boyd Gaming, which

used Main Street Station's hotel to accommodate overflow guests from the California across the street. In 1997, the Boyds reopened the casino, restaurants, and shops, adding a brewpub in the process.

The casino is one of the most unusual in town (thanks largely to the concept of the original owner), with the feel of a turn-of-the-20th-century gentlemen's club. Though not as splendid now as in its original incarnation, the casino still contains enough antiques, original art, and oddities to furnish a museum. With its refurbished guest rooms, brewpub, steak house, excellent buffet, and unusual casino, Main Street Station is both interesting and fun, adding some welcome diversity to the downtown hospitality mix.

Mandalay Bay (www.mandalaybay.com)

MANDALAY BAY OPENED ON MARCH 2, 1999, on the site of the old Hacienda, imploded on New Year's Day 1998. It completes the Mandalay Bay "Miracle Mile," which stretches along the Strip south from the Bellagio and includes Project City Center, the Monte Carlo, New York-New York, the Excalibur, Luxor, and finally Mandalay Bay. A cable liner connects Excalibur, Luxor, and Mandalay Bay every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day (it stops at Luxor on the northbound leg only).

Mandalay Bay, with 4,752 rooms (including the on-site Four Seasons Hotel and THEhotel), is a megaresort in the true sense of the overworked word. Within the sprawling complex are the 43-story, three-wing tower; a 12,000-seat arena; a 1,600-seat theater; an 1,800-seat concert venue; two dozen restaurants; an 11-acre water park; three large lounges; and the third-largest convention facility in Las Vegas. Mandalay Bay had Las Vegas's first hotel-within-a-hotel on the property: the 400-room Four Seasons. The whole schmear cost a cool billion plus. Adjoining the main casino is a second on-site hotel, THEhotel at Mandalay Bay, with 1,120 suites. Both the Four Seasons and THEhotel are profiled in this section under their own names.

But that's not the half of it, because Mandalay Bay isn't your standard megaresort. It's clear that the planners and designers set out to take a few risks and appeal to a young, hip, fun-seeking market—as opposed to Bellagio, which has targeted a more refined, sophisticated, older clientele. If Bellagio is the crowning culmination of the Las Vegas of the 20th century, Mandalay Bay might be Las Vegas's first foray into the 21st. All the different ideas jammed into Mandalay Bay might not always add up to a cohesive whole, but so many parts of the sum are unique that you can't help being intrigued.

The signature spectacle is the four-story wine tower at Manhattan celebrity chef Charlie Palmer's restaurant, Aureole. This nearly 50-foot-tall glass-and-stainless-steel structure stores nearly 10,000 bottles of wine. Lovely, athletic women dressed all in black—spandex tights, racing gloves, hard hats—manipulate the motorized cable, one on each of the four sides, that raises them up to retrieve a selected bottle and lowers them back down to deliver it.

The China Grill Café, the bar-and-grill annex to Mandalay Bay's Oriental room, China Grill, has a centerpiece 34-seat bar, which is circled by a rubber conveyor. The belt goes round and round between the bar sitters and the open kitchen, carrying plates of "Zen Sum" appetizers.

Red Square Russian restaurant has a one-of-a-kind refrigerated walk-in showcase, open to the public, which stores 200 different varieties of vodka at 15 degrees. Drinks are served on a long bar top that has a thick strip of ice running its length (basically it keeps the bottom of the glasses chilled and provides a great medium for leaving fingerprints). Red Square also has a 16-foot-tall statue of Vladimir Lenin out front; the howl of criticism over the questionable taste of such a display prompted Mandalay to lop off Lenin's head, and the statue now has a big hole at the neck. Inside, Red Square sports a curious Communist theme, a paean to the Soviet 1930s when Joe Stalin was slaughtering his nation's civilians. Huge heroic posters of Russian intellectuals and professionals carrying shovels and pipe and automatic weapons fill the walls, and plentiful hammer-and-sickles symbolize the former Soviet Union no less than a swastika represents the Third Reich.

Rumjungle, a Polynesian dining and nightclub combo, is fronted by a huge "wall of fire": 80 small gas-fed flames surround two big flames at the entrance. The House of Blues restaurant and entertainment complex serves food (Southern style and Creole/Cajun) and has the world's largest collection of Deep South folk art, as well as a strange dark bar with a crucifix theme. House of Blues also puts on a Sunday gospel brunch and holds rock and pop concerts in its 1,800-seat theater. Wolfgang Puck's Trattoria del Lupo (serving Italian fare), a Mexican restaurant, a noodle room, a coffee shop, a buffet, and ice cream and coffee counters round out the dining possibilities at Mandalay Bay. A main attraction at Mandalay Bay is Shark Reef, a 90,000-square-foot aquarium exhibit with a walk-through acrylic tunnel. The aquarium is home to about 2,000 marine species, including Nile crocodiles, moray eels, stingrays, and, of course, sharks.

Jpop is one of the largest and most interesting bars in Las Vegas. Taking up a good part of an acre of the property, Jpop is surrounded by lush tropical "foliage" (though fake, it's very effective) and has three distinct sitting areas: the 25-seat marble video-poker bar; the lounge itself, with a big stage and good enough acoustics that the bands can crank it up; and a wooden deck away from the main noise, where you sit among the virtual vegetation, rock waterfalls, and lily ponds.

Speaking of acreage, the casino is typically monumental, with plenty of elbowroom between machines and tables. The race and sports book boasts the largest screen in town, which is only right, since the book is so big the screen must be seen from long distances. The 80-seat (each one an oversized, velour-covered easy chair) Turf Lounge and the large poker room are connected.

The pool area is also imaginative. The 11-acre Mandalay Bay Beach has a lazy river, a placid pool, a beachfront cafe and bar, and a wedding chapel. The centerpiece, however, is a huge wave pool. The surf can be cranked up from one to six feet.

Mandalay Place Mall, in the pedestrian passage that connects Mandalay Bay with the Luxor, features 40 boutiques and restaurants, including a superb wineshop and a burger joint where you can purchase a \$60 hamburger.

All in all, Mandalay Bay accomplishes what every mega-casino-hotel sets

out to do—deliver an inventive and hip experience that sets a new standard for all the megajoints that follow.

MGM Grand (www.mgmgrand.com)

WHEN STEVE WYNN OPENED THE MIRAGE, he combined the amenities of a world-class resort with the excitement and visual appeal of a tourist attraction. At the Mirage, T. I., and Bellagio, however, the attraction component is rendered in terms of nonparticipatory visual spectacle: at the Mirage, an exploding volcano; at T. I., a pirate battle; and at Bellagio, dancing fountains. The attraction is peripheral, no more or no less than a powerful and eye-popping way to generate traffic for the casino.

At Kirk Kerkorian's MGM Grand, the evolutionary combination of gambling resort and attraction was carried to the next logical stage, the development of a theme park ostensibly, if not actually, on an equal footing with the casino. This elevation of a nongaming attraction to a position of prominence signaled the first significant tourism product diversification in Las Vegas since the dawn of the luxury resort hotel-casinos in the 1950s. Make no mistake, the purpose of the theme park was to funnel patrons into the casino. But the theme park offered a recreation alternative intended to attract nongamblers as well as gamblers. As it happened, however, the highly publicized theme park was pitifully designed. In 2000, after seven years of limping along, the MGM (not so) Grand Adventures park closed. Probably, in retrospect, the park served its purpose, that is, to draw attention to the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in its opening year.

The MGM Grand claims the distinction of being both the largest hotel in the United States (with 5,044 rooms) and the world's largest casino. Within the 112-acre complex, there is a 16,800-seat special-events arena, 380,000 square feet of convention space, an enormous swimming area, four tennis courts, a health spa, and a multilevel parking facility. There's also a small casino outside the lobby of the Mansion, MGM's ultra-upscale whale digs. Finally, a 6.6-acre pool-and-spa complex took over a chunk of the now-defunct amusement park along with the dedicated convention center.

The MGM Grand is on the northeast corner of Tropicana Avenue and the Strip. The Strip entrance passes beneath a 45-foot-tall MGM Lion atop a 25-foot pedestal, all surrounded by three immense digital displays. The lion entrance leads to a domed rotunda with table games and a Rainforest Café, and from there to the MGM Grand's four larger casinos. All of the casinos are roomy and plush, with high ceilings and a comfortable feeling of openness.

A second entrance, with a porte cochere 15 lanes wide, serves vehicular traffic from Tropicana Avenue. For all practical purposes, this is the main entrance to the MGM Grand, permitting you to go directly to the hotel lobby and its 53 check-in windows without lugging your belongings through the casinos. Just beyond the registration area is the elevator core, with 35 elevators servicing 30 guest floors.

Beyond the elevator core, a wide passageway leads toward five of the MGM Grand's many restaurants. The MGM Grand's supernova restaurant is

Joël Robuchon at the Mansion, a French culinary feast of the highest quality and greatest exclusivity. Other fine dining stars in the hotel's galaxy include L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon, serving more fine French cuisine via counter service (dishes are prepared in front of you); Craftsteak, offering beef and seafood; Nob Hill, serving California-style cuisine; Diego, a Mexican restaurant; SeaBlue, a Mediterranean tapas restaurant; Fiamma, an Italian trattoria; Pearl, a Chinese restaurant; Shibuya, a Japanese restaurant; Emeril's, offering Creole/Cajun dishes; and Grand Wok, featuring Asian specialties from a half-dozen countries. More informal dining is available at the Rainforest Café, the Studio Café, and Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill. The MGM Grand's buffet (disappointing) and pizza kitchen adjoin the casinos between the porte cochere and lion entrances. For fast food there is a food court housing McDonald's, Mamma Ilardo's, and Hamada's Oriental Express.

There are three showrooms at the MGM Grand. The 740-seat Hollywood Theater features headliners, the larger KÁ Theatre is home to Cirque du Soleil's KÁ, and the *Crazy Horse* Cabaret is home to the saucy Frenchy show of the same name. Entertainment is also offered in the casino's four lounges. In addition, the MGM Grand's special-events arena can accommodate boxing, tournament tennis, rodeo, and basketball, as well as major exhibitions.

Amenities at the MGM Grand, not unexpectedly, are among the best in Las Vegas. The swimming complex is huge—23,000 square feet of pool area, with five interconnected pools graced with bridges, fountains, and waterfalls. Other highlights of the complex include an artificial stream to float in, a poolside bar, and luxury cabanas. Adjoining the swimming area are a complete health club and spa and four lighted tennis courts. For those to whom recreation means pumping quarters into a machine, there is an electronic games arcade supplemented by a "games-of-skill" midway. The most exotic addition to the entertainment mix is Lion Habitat, where you can watch live lions. In the transportation department, the MGM Grand is the southern terminus of the Las Vegas monorail.

Guest rooms at the MGM Grand are comfortable, with large baths. Almost all of the rooms have a small sitting area positioned by a large window. Rooms on the higher floors have exceptional views. Part of the old MGM Marina Hotel was incorporated into the new MGM Grand. Rooms in the old structure have been renovated but are not comparable in size or quality to the new rooms.

A rare enclave of peace and privacy are MGM Grand's Signature condo-hotel towers, which opened in 2007. Located a five-to-seven-minute walk east of the main casino, the towers offer suite accommodations with floor-to-ceiling windows, full kitchens, plasma televisions, Jacuzzi tubs, and high-speed Internet connections. Conspicuous by its absence is on-site gambling. Signature's suites are not especially large but are beautifully appointed, and some units have private balconies. Each tower has its own pool, 24-hour concierge service, and a private entrance with valet parking. The private entrance makes for easy coming and going if you have a car.

Drawing from a wide cross-section of the leisure market, the MGM Grand gets the majority of its business from individual travelers and tour and travel

groups, but with a rising percentage coming from trade-show and convention attendees. Midrange room rates make the MGM Grand accessible to a broad population. Geographically, the MGM Grand targets Southern California, Phoenix, Denver, Dallas, Houston, Chicago, and the Midwest.

Mirage (www.mirage.com)

THE MIRAGE HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON THE LAS VEGAS tourist industry that will be felt for years to come. By challenging all the old rules and setting new standards for design, ambience, and entertainment, the Mirage precipitated the development of a class of super-hotels in Las Vegas, redefining the thematic appeal and hospitality standard of hotel-casinos.

Exciting and compelling without being whimsical or silly, the Mirage has demonstrated that the public will respond enthusiastically to a well-executed concept. Blending the stateliness of marble with the exotic luxury of tropical greenery and the straightforward lines of polished bamboo, the Mirage has created a spectacular environment that artfully integrates casino, showroom, shopping, restaurants, and lounges. Both lavish and colorful, inviting and awe-inspiring, the Mirage has avoided cliché. Not designed to replicate a famous palace or be the hotel version of "Goofy Golf," the Mirage makes an original statement.

An atrium rain forest serves as a central hub from which guests can proceed to all areas of the hotel and casino. Behind the hotel's front desk, a 60-foot-long aquarium contains small sharks, stingrays, and colorful tropical fish. In the entranceway from Las Vegas Boulevard is a natural-habitat zoological display housing rare white Bengal tigers. Outside, instead of blinking neon, the Mirage has a 55-foot-tall erupting volcano that disrupts traffic on the Strip every half hour. There is also a live dolphin exhibit and a modern showroom that is among the most well designed and technologically advanced in Las Vegas.

The Mirage boasts several fine-dining opportunities, including Japonais, a concept restaurant featuring Japanese and "old style" European cuisine; Fin, serving contemporary Chinese; Kokomo's, a chop, seafood, and lobster house; STACK, an American grill; Samba, a Brazilian *churrascaria*; and Onda, one of the city's better Italian restaurants. For bulk eaters, there is an excellent and affordable buffet. LOVE, a Cirque du Soleil production based on the music of the Beatles, plays in one of two showrooms. Impressionist Danny Gans performs in the other. Amenities include a swimming and sunning complex with waterfalls, inlets, and an interconnected series of lagoons; a shopping arcade; and a spa with exercise equipment and aerobics instruction. The casino is huge and magnificently appointed, yet informal, with its tropical motif and piped-in Jimmy Buffett music. Guest rooms at the Mirage have been completely renovated and are now among the nicest in town.

Though registered guests pay premium prices for the privilege of staying at the Mirage, the hotel is not an exclusive retreat of the wealthy. With its indoor jungle, live tigers and sharks, and traffic-snarling volcano, the Mirage remains one of Clark County's top tourist attractions. Whether by

foot, bus, cab, or bicycle, every Las Vegas visitor makes at least one pilgrimage. The Mirage has become the Strip's melting pot and hosts the most incredible variety of humanity imaginable. Visitors wander wide-eyed through the casino at all hours of the day and night.

Monte Carlo (www.montecarlo.com)

THE MONTE CARLO OPENED IN 1996. With 3,002 guest rooms, the Monte Carlo ranks as one of the larger hotels in Las Vegas. The megaresort is modeled after the Place du Casino in Monte Carlo, Monaco, with ornate arches and fountains, marble floors, and a Gothic glass registration area. If the Monte Carlo fails as a resort, the building will be a perfect place to relocate the Nevada State Capitol.

In an effort to pep things up, however, the resort hatched an idea that turned the dull Monte Carlo theme on its head. Astonishingly, the Monte Carlo tacked a Diablo's Cantina restaurant onto the south corner of the resort, with a wildly colorful Strip-side exterior complete with an eye-popping, scantily clad she-devil statue straddling the roof. The cantina effectively drains the stuffiness of the namesake theme and achieves a contrast (or dissonance) that could only be matched by grazing yaks in the casino.

On the surface, it's yet another huge hotel in the Las Vegas Age of the Megaresort. But scratch the surface just a little and you glimpse the future of Monopoly-board Las Vegas and the gambling business in general.

The guest rooms, furnished with marble entryways and French period wall art, are mid- to upper-priced. There is an elaborate swimming complex with slides, a wave pool, and a man-made stream. There is also an exceptional health and fitness center, an interesting shopping arcade, and a brewpub with live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights from 11 p.m. until 2 a.m. The casino, about a football field long and similarly shaped, is capped with simulated skylights and domes. The showroom is designed especially for illusionist Lance Burton, who signed a long-term contract to perform there. Restaurants cover the usual bases, offering steak, Italian, and Asian specialties, with the brewpub thrown in for good measure.

Compared to the powerful themes of New York-New York, T. I., and the Luxor, the Monte Carlo's turn-of-the-century Monegasque theme fails to stimulate much excitement or anticipation. Besides being beyond the average tourist's frame of reference, the theme lacks any real visceral dimension. The word *grand* comes to mind, but more in the context of a federal courthouse or the New York Public Library.

MonteLago Village Resort at Lake Las Vegas (www.montelagovillage.com)

PART OF THE LAKE LAS VEGAS DEVELOPMENT 17 miles east of the Strip, MonteLago Village Resort took its place in 2004 alongside the Ritz-Carlton and the Hyatt Regency. An Intrawest Resort real estate property, MonteLago Village brings a Mediterranean village ambience, with winding cobblestone streets, to complement the neighboring golf and meeting hotels. Specialty

shops, galleries, small cafes, and restaurants line the plazas and narrow avenues. Como's Steakhouse, the flagship eatery when MonteLago Village opened, has since been augmented by additional restaurants. The Tuscan-inspired casino, adjacent to the village, offers the usual, plus a large number of penny, two-cent, and nickel slot machines. Tenuta, located in the casino, serves as the resort's 24-hour restaurant.

The resort offers one-, two-, and three-bedroom condominiums, all with DVD players and high-speed Internet access. Light carpets and wall colors contrast with rich burgundy upholstery and dark hardwoods in the rooms. The full kitchens offer countertop dining. Lower units provide patios, most upper units balconies. Resort amenities include a marina, a fitness center, two swimming pools, and a games room.

The New Frontier

LAS VEGAS FINALLY SAID GOOD-BYE TO THE NEW FRONTIER. The legendary hotel-casino was imploded on November 13, 2007, to make way for the Elad Group, owner of New York's Plaza Hotel, to bring their venerable Plaza brand to Las Vegas. The \$5-billion development will include a Plaza hotel, private residences, a casino, and a retail-and-entertainment complex. The project is scheduled to open in 2011.

New York–New York (www.nynyhotelcasino.com)

WHEN IT OPENED IN JANUARY 1997, this architecturally imaginative hotel-casino set a new standard for the realization of Las Vegas megaresort themes. It's a small joint by megaresort standards ("only" around 2,000 rooms), but the triumph is in the details. The guest rooms are in a series of distinct towers reminiscent of a mini-Big Apple skyline, including the Empire State, Chrysler, and Seagram's buildings. Though the buildings are connected, each offers a somewhat different decor and ambience.

A half-size Statue of Liberty and a replica of Grand Central Station lead visitors to one entrance, while the Brooklyn Bridge leads to another. The interior of the property is broken into themed areas such as Greenwich Village, Wall Street, and Times Square. The casino, one of the most visually interesting in Las Vegas, looks like an elaborate movie set. Table games and slots are sandwiched between shops, restaurants, and a jumble of street facades.

The street scenes are well executed, conveying both a sense of urban style and tough grittiness. New York–New York sacrificed much of its visual impact, however, by not putting in an imitation sky. At Sunset Station, by way of contrast, the Spanish architecture is augmented significantly by vaulted ceilings, realistically lighted and painted with clouds. This sort of finishing touch could have done wonders for New York–New York.

Like its namesake, New York–New York is congested in the extreme, awash day and night with curious sightseers. There are so many people just wandering around gawking that there's little room left for hotel guests and folks who actually came to gamble. Because aisles and indoor paths are far too narrow to accommodate the crowds, New York–New York succumbs periodically to a sort of pedestrian gridlock.

Manhattan rules, however, do not apply at New York–New York: it's OK here to make eye contact and decidedly rude to shove people out of the way to get where you want to go. If you find yourself longing for the thrill of a New York cab ride, go hop on the roller coaster. New York–New York's coaster is the fourth one on the Strip, but it's the only one where you can stand on the street and hear the riders scream.

There are two showrooms, one featuring Cirque du Soleil's *Zumanity* and one hosting famous stand-up comics. Lounges include a raucous Irish pub, a dueling pianos club, and a Coyote Ugly bar. Based on the movie of the same name, the bar features a platoon of dancing female bartenders with enough attitude to stop a real New Yorker dead in his tracks.

Guest rooms at New York–New York have been renovated and upgraded. However, the swimming area and health and fitness center are just average. Full-service restaurants are a little better than average, though Gallagher's Steakhouse, a real Big Apple import, can hold its own with any beef place, in or out of Las Vegas. Counter-service fast food is quite interesting, if not altogether authentic New York.

Orleans (www.orleanscasino.com)

OPENED IN 1997, ORLEANS IS JUST WEST of I-15 on Tropicana Avenue and owned by Coast Casinos, which also run the Suncoast and the Gold Coast. Marketed primarily to locals, Orleans has a New Orleans–bayou theme executed in a hulking cavern of a building. The casino is festive with bright carpets, high ceilings, a two-story replication of a French Quarter street flanking the table games, and a couple of nifty bars. Orleans has a celebrity showroom that is attracting great talent (Engelbert Humperdinck, Gladys Knight, George Carlin, Four Tops, Kenny Rogers, Dennis Miller) and several restaurants that have little to do with the Louisiana theme. The buffet, which does serve Creole/Cajun dishes, is good but can't quite match Louisiana standards. Upstairs, over the slots and buffet area, is a 70-lane bowling complex. The Orleans arena is a 9,000-seat facility and home to the Las Vegas Wranglers pro hockey team. Two hotel towers with a total of 1,886 large guest rooms complete the package.

Orleans has expanded steadily since its first year, adding restaurants, a movie complex, more casino space, the arena, a games arcade, and a child-care center.

Palace Station (www.palacestation.com)

LOCATED FOUR MINUTES OFF THE STRIP on West Sahara Avenue, Palace Station is a local favorite that also attracts tourists. With great lounge acts, a first-rate buffet, dependable restaurants that continuously offer amazing specials, a tower of Holiday Inn–caliber guest rooms, good prices, and a location that permits access to both downtown and the Strip in less than ten minutes, Palace Station is a standard setter for locals' casinos. Decorated in a railroad theme, the casino is large and busy and places heavy emphasis on the slots (which are supposedly loose—that is, having a high rate of payoff). There is also first-rate lounge entertainment.

Palms (www.palms.com)

LOCATED WEST OF THE STRIP ON FLAMINGO ROAD, the Palms is one of the primo hangouts for well-heeled youth. Consisting of two high-rise hotel towers and a 50-story luxury hotel-condo, the Palms offers solid four-star guest rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows and some of the best views of the Strip.

Though the casino is roomy, at 95,000 square feet, it's the Palms nightlife mix that sets the hotel apart. Atop the 55-story original tower is Ghostbar with panoramic views of the entire Las Vegas Valley. On the ground level of the same tower is Rain, a high-energy dance club with pulsing fountains and high-tech special effects. Small and intimate is Moon at the top of the newer Fantasy Tower (so called because of the tower's fantastic high-roller suites featuring such amenities as basketball courts). Like Ghostbar, Moon offers incredible views. Unlike Ghostbar, Moon has a retractable roof. One floor down from Moon is the Playboy Club, the only such club in existence and the first new Playboy Club to open in decades. The club features table games, knock-out views, and a lot of cleavage. A show lounge; a 14-screen cinema; and Pearl, a very cool concert venue, complete the mix. All of the clubs, as well as Pearl, attract a hip under-30 crowd that keeps the Palms jumping until the wee hours.

Also very cool is the two-acre pool complex featuring three bars, including one situated beneath a glass-bottom pool. Strong drinks relieve the pain of sprained necks. At the pools you can swim, of course, but mostly they're used as a party or concert venue or as an additional nightspot.

The restaurant lineup, equally impressive, leads off with Alizé, serving gourmet French cuisine; N9NE, a steak house imported from Chicago; and NOVE Italiano, an elegant room graced by topiaries in the form of classic nudes. Rounding out the dining mix are an Asian fusion restaurant, a Mexican restaurant, a good buffet, a 24-hour coffee shop, and a food court.

Palms is too far from the Strip for most guests to feel comfortable walking. For those with a car, however, the coming and going is easy, and the hotel location on West Flamingo Road facilitates accessing Strip casinos via alternate routes rather than joining the gridlock on Las Vegas Boulevard. Both in design and target market, Palms is very much like the Hard Rock Hotel. You can bet that the two will compete head-to-head for the trend-conscious, affluent, young adult market. Older guests may feel like relics at Palms' nightspots but will otherwise find the property friendly, accessible, and convenient.

Paris (www.parislasvegas.com)

ON THE STRIP NEXT TO BALLY'S AND ACROSS from Bellagio, Paris trots out a French Parisian theme in much the same way New York–New York caricatures the Big Apple. Paris has its own 50-story Eiffel Tower (with a restaurant halfway up), and an Arc de Triomphe. Thrown in for good measure are the Champs-Élysées, Parc Monceau, and the Paris Opera House.

Like New York–New York, Paris presents its iconography in a whimsical way, contrasting with the more realistic Venetian or the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace. The casino resides in a parklike setting roughly arrayed around the base of the Eiffel Tower, three legs of which protrude through

the roof of the casino. The video-poker schedules are lackluster, but the casino offers all of the usual table games.

Flanking the tower and branching off from the casino are dining and shopping venues designed to re-create Parisian and rural *petit village* street scenes. Though spacious, the casino and other public areas at Paris are exceedingly busy, bombarding the senses with color, sound, and activity. While at the Venetian you have the sense of entering a grand space, at Paris the feeling is more of envelopment.

The hotel towers, with almost 3,000 guest rooms, rise in an L shape framing the Eiffel Tower. The rooms are quite stunning and rank along with the dining as one of Paris's most outstanding features.

Like at the Venetian, the pool complex is on the roof. The facility is spacious but rather plain and underdeveloped in comparison with the rest of the property. One of the better spas and health clubs in Las Vegas connects both to the pool area and to the hotel.

The dining scene at Paris is a work in progress, with the homogenization mandated by the parent company, Harrah's, adversely impacting the quality of Paris's better restaurants. The flagship Eiffel Tower Restaurant is situated 11 stories above the Strip in the, of course, Eiffel Tower. Several other restaurants, closer to the ground, and including the buffet, also feature French cuisine. Options include Ah Sin, presenting the flavors of the Pacific Rim; the Italian/French Le Provençal; Les Artistes Steakhouse; Mon Ami Gabi, serving French bistro fare on an outdoor terrace overlooking the Strip; and Le Café Île St. Louis, a sidewalk cafe serving classic French and American cuisine 24/7.

Back inside, you'll find two shopping venues: The Paris-Bally's Promenade offers French jewelry, women's accessories, an art gallery of French and French-inspired work, and more. The shops at Le Boulevard house boutiques, a home-and-garden store, a gourmet food shop, and a newsstand, among other shops. Risqué, with balconies overlooking the Strip, is the happening nightspot. And, of course, if you don't mind a little waiting, you can take an elevator ride to the top of the Eiffel Tower for a knockout view of the Strip.

Planet Hollywood (www.planethollywoodresort.com)

PLANET HOLLYWOOD IS THE LATEST AND BEST INCARNATION of the Aladdin. The Aladdin opened in 1963 as the Tally Ho but was renamed the King's Crown in 1964. In 1966, the King's Crown was purchased by Milton Prell, who gave the property a \$3-million face-lift with an Arabian Nights theme and dubbed it the Aladdin. For the next 30 years, the Aladdin changed ownership many times, which resulted in an eclectic, constantly changing identity. Each new owner of the Aladdin tacked on a wing, changed the carpeting, or removed the wall art inherited from the previous owner.

While the Aladdin was choking on its own mixed metaphors, the real estate it occupied became increasingly more valuable. In the late 1990s, the Aladdin was once more acquired and promptly blown up to make way for a brand-new Aladdin, where the exotic Arabian Nights theme could realize its

full potential and where there was room for a Middle Eastern bazaar-themed mall to compete with Caesars Forum Shops and the Venetian's Grand Canal Shops. Though the vision of the new Aladdin was executed with flair and imagination, it failed to attract enough patrons to offset the considerable debt. After passing into receivership, the Aladdin was sold in 2003 to Planet Hollywood and Starwood Hotels.

From the beginning, Planet Hollywood, or PH as they bill themselves now, were committed to throwing the exhausted Arabian Nights under the bus in favor of a youthful, upscale, Hollywood look. PH, however, took their own sweet time in making the change and it wasn't until fall of 2007 that the casino and all of the public spaces were completed. Guest-room renovations should be complete by spring 2009.

The new look, clubby and masculine with dark woods and rich textiles, is drop-dead gorgeous. Carpet patterns and stone works capture the feel and beauty of a desert canyon and integrate them into a whole that is both sophisticated and relaxing. Face it, there are dozens of casinos that awe and overwhelm the senses, but only a handful that are artful and soothing.

Placement of the hotel lobby separates quite distinctly the bustle of guests and baggage from the casino, eliminating the flow of almost all transitory traffic in the casino. The casino floor, at almost three acres, offers the usual slots and table games but feels more exclusive. In fact, the whole casino has the ambience of sequestered high-roller gaming areas in other hotels. As for theme, there are some strictly Hollywood touches, but in the public areas it's very much understated.

The new guest rooms are created around a focal object of Hollywood memorabilia and a room-long combination wardrobe and entertainment center with a flat-screen plasma television. The furniture is a little large and plentiful for the size of the room, but the distinctly masculine overall effect is one of luxury and great attention to ergonomic detail.

Planet Hollywood has three showrooms, including the 7,000-seat Theatre for the Performing Arts. An additional two showrooms in the adjoining Miracle Mile Mall (formerly Desert Passage) make PH one of the most happening entertainment venues in Las Vegas. Speaking of the shopping venue, it's undergoing a multimillion-dollar makeover focusing on de-theming the original Middle Eastern Bazaar design and transitioning it into a more contemporary look.

Retained from the Aladdin is the highly acclaimed Spice Market Buffet. Fine-dining options include Koi, serving a sort of Japanese-California fusion fare, and the clone of New York City's Strip House restaurant. The PH has a rooftop pool with a less-than-optimal layout, but this too is being redesigned and upgraded.

PH targets an under-50 market from the southwestern United States and is also active in the European, Asian, and Latin American markets.

Plaza (www.plazahotelcasino.com)

THE PLAZA HAS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY hotel in Las Vegas with its own railroad station (though the passenger trains no longer

run on this stretch of track). Not too long ago, the hotel was run-down and about what you would expect for a downtown property attached to a train terminal. However, the Plaza renovated its tower rooms and now offers nice but simple accommodations at very good prices. The only downtown hotel to provide on-site tennis, the Plaza also has one of the few downtown Las Vegas showrooms featuring production shows and, periodically, live theater (invariably comedy). The property houses a domed ultra sports lounge, with a view straight down the middle of Glitter Gulch and the Fremont Street Experience. If you go, reserve a table by the window.

The casino's table-gaming area is dated but pleasant, with a high, dark-green ceiling punctuated by crystal chandeliers. Patrons include downtown walk-ins, attendees of small meetings and conventions, and Southern Californians.

The Plaza is not associated with the Plaza Hotel of New York, which will be building a hotel on the Strip at the site currently occupied by the New Frontier.

Red Rock Casino Resort Spa (www.redrocklasvegas.com)

THE STATION CASINOS CONTINUE THE UPSCALE evolution begun with Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa, creating a very similar and even tonier property in the Red Rock Casino Resort Spa. Set about ten miles west of the Strip on Charleston Boulevard and isolated from any other property of similar stature, Red Rock attempts to make itself a destination worth the trip. It's an impressive place, with a low, curving, monolithic roofline meant to echo the desert landscape and slopes of the nearby Red Rock Canyon. Inside, the decor and layout represent the continuing Station mission to fuse the "wow" factor with the practical desires of their local fan base. Stone, wood, and glass predominate, more casually attractive and subtle than austere or intimidating; again, forms and colors are often meant to echo the surrounding geography. The overall impression is reminiscent of an accessible, upscale desert spa hotel, as opposed to the more glitzy palaces on the Strip. The casino's arrangement is similar to that of Green Valley Ranch—wide alleys between banks of slots and rings of table games—and the two casinos even share some of the same restaurants. Swarovski crystal is a favorite design element, with the finer restaurants and bars sporting hundreds or even thousands of individual crystals built into light fixtures or chandeliers. Several of the restaurants open onto the pool area, which, while not staggeringly huge, is quite elegant. Tiers of outdoor lounges and patios look over smaller wading pools and rentable cabanas, plus the inevitable pool bar. As you proceed further through the casino, the feel gets more and more "local"; the entrance on the far end is in fact specifically geared to locals, with close parking on the outside and local-friendly assortments of games right inside the door. This is also where you find the attached movie theater and Kids Quest children's complex, making it convenient to drop off the offspring en route to the casino.

Red Rock Resort takes advantage of its location by offering a number of outdoor adventure programs, including guided rock climbing, hiking, and mountain biking outings, among others. The spa at Red Rock Resort can hold its own with any on the Strip, and in variety of treatments and amenities offered it surpasses most.

Rooms and suites are extremely mod in appearance and in amenities, mixing chocolate browns and other earth tones with high-tech gadgetry and high-end appointments. Best of all, however, are the guest-room views. West-facing rooms look out onto Red Rock Canyon while east-facing rooms peer down the valley to the Las Vegas Strip.

Dining at Red Rock Resort is predominantly casual, except for T-Bones Chophouse. Other options include Terra Rossa for Italian cuisine, Salt Lick BBQ, Cabo Mexican Restaurant, Tides Oyster Bar, Hachi for Japanese fare, a top-notch buffet, and several cafes and sandwich shops. In the entertainment department, Cherry Nightclub is the place for wee-hour dancing, while the Onyx Bar, the Lucky Bar, and Rocks Lounge provide stunning settings for a drink. Finally, for the sedentary there's a 16-screen cinema, and for the more active a 72-lane bowling complex.

Finally, a navigation note. Although Red Rock Resort is located at the West Charleston Boulevard exit off I-215, it's faster to commute to the Strip and downtown on West Charleston. Under most circumstances it's about a 25-minute trip.

Rio (www.riolasvegas.com)

THE RIO IS ONE OF LAS VEGAS'S GREAT TREASURES. Vibrantly decorated in a Latin American carnival theme, the Rio offers resort luxury at local prices. The guest rooms (all plush one-room suites) offer exceptional views and can be had for the price of a regular room at many other Las Vegas hotels. The combination of view, luxury, and price makes the Rio a great choice for couples on romantic getaways or honeymoons.

On Flamingo Road, three minutes west of the Strip, the Rio also allows easy access to downtown via I-15. The Rio's dining scene is headed by fine dining at Antonio's Italian Ristorante, Buzio's Seafood Restaurant, and Café Martorano, another Italian eatery, this time under the direction of Fort Lauderdale legend Steve Martorano. Unique is Gaylord India Restaurant, the only Indian restaurant located in a casino-hotel. The VooDoo Steakhouse and the more casual All-American Bar Grille are the Rio's chophouses, and McFadden's Restaurant and Saloon (a famous New York City Irish pub) specializes in traditional Irish fare. The Rio has two buffets that are perennially at the top of everyone's hit parade. The Carnival World Buffet offers 300 dishes from a dozen cuisines prepared fresh daily, while the Village Seafood Buffet stands alone as the best seafood buffet in Las Vegas.

With five showrooms plus the free *Masquerade Show in the Sky* pageant and a high-energy stage show in the casino, the Rio's entertainment mix is one of the most varied and extensive in Las Vegas. Long-running shows include the Penn & Teller comedy-magic show; *Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding*, an audience-participation dinner show; and the *Chippendales* beefcake revue. Nightspots include the rooftop VooDoo Lounge, one of the city's most dynamic and enduring clubs; and Lucky Strike, a combination plush bowling alley and a lounge. Factoring in an extensive shopping arcade, a workout room, and an elaborate multipool swimming area, the Rio offers excep-

tional quality in every respect. Festive and bright without being tacky or overdone, the casino is so large that it's easy to get disoriented.

Masquerade Village—a retail, restaurant, and specialty shopping venue that rings the casino—is home to *Show in the Sky*, a parade featuring floats and performers suspended from tracks high above the casino floor. Embracing the maxim that sex sells, the Rio has turned up the heat on *Show in the Sky*, with emphasis less on carnival than lingerie.

In a phased expansion over the past eight years, the Rio has quadrupled its guest-room inventory, doubled the size of its swimming complex, beefed up its lineup of restaurants, and in the process turned into a true destination resort.

The Rio staff ranks very high in terms of hospitality, warmth, and an eagerness to please. The Rio is one of the few casinos to successfully target both locals and out-of-towners, particularly Southern Californians.

Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas

www.ritzcarlton.com/resorts/lake_las_vegas

OPENED IN EARLY 2003, this is the first Ritz-Carlton in Nevada. The nongaming, Mediterranean-themed hotel is set on Lake Las Vegas across from the Hyatt Regency (accessible by boat or gondola). Both hotels are part of the larger Lake Las Vegas hotel-golf-residential-retail development, though the Ritz-Carlton is, of course, on the ritzier side. Geared primarily to golf, spa, and corporate business, this resort area is a pleasant change from the frenetic pace of the Strip. Emphasis is placed on relaxation rather than frenzied activity. The hotel's public spaces are sumptuously comfortable without being intimidatingly ornate (even though a Florentine high tea takes place in the lobby).

The hotel's 349 guest rooms include 35 suites and 64 Club Level concierge rooms. Warm colors, premium fabrics and furnishings, and oversized marble bathrooms meet and exceed the luxurious standards established by the chain at large. A decent percentage of the rooms sport terraces or balconies with views of the lake or pool area. One arm of the hotel, modeled after the Ponte Vecchio bridge in Florence, spans a corner of the lake and does in fact serve as a transit across the water (reaching a future retail development zone). The upper levels of the bridge host the Club Level rooms.

The Spa Vita di Lago offers the full-court press of pampering, including a dizzying array of massages, baths, beauty treatments, and therapies. Private spas and saunas, a state-of-the-art fitness center, and an upscale salon round out the possibilities. Resort packages are available, combining various spa regimens with local touring and excursions, golfing arrangements, or water recreation on the lake. The hotel has a sheltered pool area as well as a sand beach on the lake itself. With 32,000 square feet of reconfigurable meeting space, this property has the most meeting space per guest room of any Ritz-Carlton.

Dining options include the "elegant yet relaxed" (let's not say casual) Medici Café and Terrace, which offers American cuisine for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and Sunday brunch. Health-oriented and "spa" cuisine can also be had poolside or in the spa. The adjacent Monte Lago Village continues the

prevalent Florentine theme and decor, with shops and restaurants nestled along cobblestone streets. The Village also features a casino that is modest in size but opulent in appointments, modeled after those found in the French Riviera. Set under an Italianate bell tower and decorated to match its surroundings, the casino has the inevitable slots, plus craps, roulette, blackjack, and mini-baccarat, among other games.

Riviera (www.rivierahotel.com)

EXTENDING FROM THE STRIP HALFWAY TO PARADISE ROAD (and the Las Vegas Convention Center), the Riviera is well positioned to accommodate both leisure and business travelers. Though not isolated, the Riviera provides so much in the way of gambling, entertainment, and amenities that many guests never feel the need to leave the property. The Riviera has more long-running shows (seven) than any other hotel in Las Vegas and offers a highly varied entertainment mix. These include a comedy club, a topless revue, a female-impersonator show, a hypnotist, and celebrity entertainers and lounge acts.

Guests on the move can choose from a number of fast-food restaurants in the Food Court or go for the Riviera's buffet. More upscale restaurants round out the package and supply ethnic diversity. As for amenities, the Riviera provides a spacious pool and sunbathing area, tennis courts, a shopping arcade, and a wedding chapel. Guest rooms, particularly in the towers, are more comfortable than the public areas suggest. The guest rooms are currently undergoing an extreme makeover and upgrade. If you book, ask for a renovated room.

The casino is large (big enough for guests to get lost in on the way to the restroom) and somewhat of a maze. There is always a lot of noise and light, and a busy, unrelenting flurry of activity. Walk-in traffic mixes with convention-goers, retirees on "gambling sprees," and tourists on wholesaler packages. Asians, Asian Americans, and Southern Californians also patronize the Riviera.

Sahara (www.saharavegas.com)

THE SAHARA, SPORTING A MOROCCAN THEME after an extensive renovation, is at the far north end of the Strip (toward downtown). A complex of buildings and towers, the Sahara offers a casino, a convention hall, two showrooms, a decent buffet, a shopping arcade, and a swimming pool. The House of Lords restaurant is one of the few remaining old Las Vegas gourmet rooms. Dining there transports you back to the days of the Rat Pack. Fronting the building along the Strip are two attractions worth noting: Cyber Speedway, a virtual-reality racecar "ride," and Speed, a roller coaster. The Sahara is a little remote for anyone who wants to walk, but if you have a car or take the Las Vegas Monorail (a station is on-site), it is nicely positioned in relation to the Strip, downtown, and the convention center.

The Sahara is comfortable but not flashy. Guest rooms are modern, and the new casino, with its Moroccan styling, is both tasteful and visually appealing. The Casbar Lounge is one of the most dependable lounges in Las Vegas for great live music. Best of all, there's no cover. For the most part, the

Sahara caters to businesspeople attending meetings or conventions and to leisure travelers from Southern California and the Southwest.

Sam's Town (www.samstowntlv.com)

ABOUT 20 MINUTES EAST OF THE STRIP on Boulder Highway, Sam's Town is a long, rambling set of connected buildings with an Old West mining-town motif. In addition to the hotel and casino, there is a bowling alley, a very good buffet, one of Las Vegas's better Mexican eateries, a steak house, a cafe, and two RV parks. The lounge is popular with both locals and visitors and features live country-and-western music and dancing. An events center and an 18-screen movie theater round out the mix.

Other pluses include a free-form pool, a sand volleyball court, and a spa. Joining the "let's be an attraction" movement, Sam's Town offers an atrium featuring plants, trees, footpaths, waterfalls, and even a "mountain." A waterfall in the atrium is the site of a free but very well-done fountains-and-light show (keep your eye on the robotic wolf). Frequent customers, besides the locals, include seniors and cowboys.

Santa Fe Station (www.santafestationlasvegas.com)

SANTA FE STATION IS ABOUT 20 minutes northwest of Las Vegas, just off US 95. Like Sam's Town, the Rio, and the Suncoast, Santa Fe Station targets both locals and tourists. Bright and airy, with a warm southwestern decor, Santa Fe Station is one of the more livable hotel-casinos in Las Vegas.

Santa Fe Station offers a spacious casino with a poker room and sports book. Restaurants include the upscale Charcoal Room steak house, as well as an oyster bar, a Mexican restaurant, Salt Lick BBQ, and Station Casino's signature Feast buffet. The Chrome showroom features an eclectic mix of country and rock headliners, and there is also entertainment in the lounge. In addition to a pool, there is a bowling alley and a movie theater. Guest rooms, also decorated in a southwestern style, are nice and a good value.

Silverton (www.silvertoncasino.com)

SOUTHWEST OF LAS VEGAS AT THE Blue Diamond Road exit off I-15, Silverton opened in 1994 as Boomtown, with a nicely executed Old West mining-town theme. The casino has since removed or replaced much of the mining paraphernalia, however. The Silverton just might be the best-kept secret in Las Vegas. Its newly remodeled guest rooms feature dark hardwood furniture, leather couches, pillow-top mattresses, and tile bathrooms. Thick drapes and good soundproofing insulate the rooms from nearby highway noise. At rack rates of about \$60, Silverton hotel rooms are among the best values going.

As concerns dining, the Twin Creeks Steakhouse can hold its own with any chophouse in town, and the 24-hour Sundance Grill, aside from serving excellent food, is a gorgeous room, reminiscent in decor of the celebrity chef restaurants at Bellagio or Mandalay Bay. On the quirky side is the Shady Grove Lounge, with a 1967 Airstream trailer and a couple of bowling lanes worked into the theme. There's also a Mexican restaurant and an excellent buffet. And good lounge entertainment is a Silverton's tradition.

In 2004, the casino was doubled in size and designed around \$5 million worth of freshwater and saltwater aquariums. And speaking of fish, an adjacent retail development includes a 145,000-square-foot Pro Bass Shops Outdoor World megastore with an indoor archery, a putting range, a driving range, and a stuffed specimen of every mammal on Earth. There are whales, dolphins, and game fish dangling from the ceiling, and Earthbound creatures from every continent placed fetchingly around the store. There's probably more dead stuff in the Pro Bass Shop than in many cemeteries. Even if you're not outdoorsy, this veritable natural history museum is worth a visit.

Ten minutes from the Strip, Silverton is in a great position to snag Southern Californians. Silverton also targets the RV crowd with a large, full-service RV park.

South Point (www.southpointcasino.com)

ACQUIRED BY MICHAEL GAUGHAN, THE SOUTH POINT sits almost alone in a huge desert plot off the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard, well away from the Strip. Rising up with nothing of comparable size anywhere nearby, South Point Hotel Casino looks gigantic. This isn't just a trick of perspective, as South Point holds 1,350 large rooms, an 80,000-square-foot casino, two lounges, an enormous bingo auditorium, and a unique equestrian center. The latter, already being touted as one of the better indoor horse facilities in the country, includes a 4,400-seat arena and 1,200 climate-controlled horse stalls. The equestrian center hosts a number of prestigious equestrian events each year. For those without a horse, there's a 64-lane bowling alley, a 500-seat showroom that doubles as a dance club, a spa and fitness center, and a manicured swimming pool complex complete with sand volleyball court. Restaurants include Michael's, a longtime Las Vegas culinary standard setter, recently relocated from Bill's Gamblin' Hall; the Silverado Steakhouse; an Italian bistro; an oyster bar; and a better-than-average buffet.

The decor of public spaces is ostensibly inspired by design accents from Southern California and the Pacific Coast, but the overriding visual theme is lots and lots and lots of yellow—deep golds to light wheats to every other shade in the crayon box. It's attractive and soothing, though not particularly memorable or impressive. Locals and regional guests are much beloved, and the roomy casino floor is a vast, open rectangle designed for their enjoyment. You only need walk along the walls to find the restaurants and lounges; the bowling alley and bingo hall are up an escalator. The South Point rooms are quite large and have nicer-than-average beds, plus a few tech treats like big plasma TVs and high-speed Internet.

Stratosphere (www.stratospherehotel.com)

THE STRATOSPHERE TOWER IS THE BRAINCHILD of Vegas World owner Bob Stupak, the quintessential Las Vegas maverick casino owner. Vegas World had been one of the last sole-proprietorship casinos in Las Vegas, but the lack of financing to complete the tower forced Stupak to sell 75% of his company to Lyle Berman and Grand Casinos of Minnesota and Mississippi (not to be confused with Las Vegas's MGM Grand). Stupak's

original idea was to attach a tourist attraction (the tower) to Vegas World. Berman, however, ultimately realized that such a juxtaposition would be like locating the Washington Monument next to a Texaco station and insisted that Vegas World be bulldozed. The resort that has risen from the rubble happily combines Stupak's vision with Berman's taste.

The Stratosphere hotel-casino opened on April 30, 1996, and Las Vegas hasn't been the same since. At 1,149 feet, Stratosphere Tower is the tallest building west of the Mississippi—taller than the Eiffel Tower (the real one). It houses indoor and outdoor observation decks, the 360-seat Top of the World revolving restaurant, and meeting rooms. The 360-degree view is breathtaking day (a life-size relief map of Las Vegas Valley and beyond) and night (the shimmering blaze of a billion bulbs).

Also at the top (hang on to your hats!) are three thrill rides. X Scream is a vacuous ride that essentially lifts the gondola-thingy you're in over the side of the tower and pretends it's going to drop you. A much better ride is Insanity, where you're not only dangled but also spun at speeds approaching three g's. The third ride, a gravity-thrill experience called The Big Shot, is a monster: It rockets you straight up the tower's needle with a force of four g's, then drops you back down with no g's. And it all happens, mind you, at 1,100 feet in the air!

Stage entertainment includes a celebrity impersonator show, a topless production featuring vampires, and, for the ladies, a beefcake revue. Polly Ester's, a four-clubs-in-one venue, celebrates the music of the past 40 years, with each of the clubs spotlighting a different decade. In addition to the revolving restaurant mentioned above, there is an Italian restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a coffee shop, and a buffet.

Suncoast (www.suncoastcasino.com)

LIKE MOST OF THE COAST CASINOS, SUNCOAST is designed to attract locals. Located west of Las Vegas in Summerlin near some of the area's best golf courses, Suncoast offers high-return slots and video poker, a surprisingly good (for a locals joint) fitness center, 64 lanes of bowling, and a 16-screen movie complex. In the food department, there's a decent buffet as well as restaurants serving Italian, Mexican, and big slabs of meat respectively. The casino is open and uncrowded, rendered in a southwestern Mission style. A 500-seat showroom that features name bands and a pool round out the offerings. For its size (427 rooms/80,000-square-foot casino), the Suncoast offers a pretty amazing array of attractions and amenities. Perhaps the Suncoast's most extraordinary yet unheralded feature is the breathtaking view of the mountains to the west as seen through floor-to-ceiling windows in every guest room. And, speaking of mountains, the Suncoast is a perfect location for anyone interested in hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, or road biking in the nearby canyons and valleys.

Sunset Station (www.sunsetstation.com)

SUNSET STATION OPENED IN JUNE 1997, the fourth Station Casino (after Palace, Boulder, and Texas), just off I-215 in far southeast Las Vegas Valley

about a 20-minute drive from the Strip (depending on traffic). Known as the “Henderson high-rise,” the 21-story tower presides over a fast-growing residential neighborhood; with 457 rooms, Sunset is large for a locals’ casino. It’s also one of the classiest, most highly themed and architecturally realized of the Station Casinos, decorated to replicate a Spanish village. The casino’s centerpiece is the Gaudí Bar; with its tiled floors and stained-glass ceilings, it reflects the eccentric vision of Barcelona architect Antoni Gaudí.

Station’s formula of good food, lounge entertainment and movies, child care, and extra touches prevails. It boasts a steak house; Italian, Mexican, and Mediterranean seafood restaurants; as well as a Hooters, the Feast Buffet, a 24-hour coffee shop, and fast food galore. There’s also a Kid’s Quest child-care center, the 500-seat Club Madrid lounge, a 13-screen movie theater, and a \$26-million bowling center—the largest in Las Vegas. Extras include a pool and plaza area featuring two sandy volleyball courts, a badminton court, and a 5,000-seat outdoor-concert amphitheater.

All in all, it’s worth staying in the slightly oversized and moderately priced rooms at Sunset Station if you’re visiting friends and relatives in Henderson or want to be close to Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, or Valley of Fire.

Terrible’s (www.terriblescasinosa.com/casinos)

TERRIBLE’S IS THE PRODUCT OF A WELL-DONE \$65-million renovation of the dilapidated old Continental Hotel and Casino. Located a couple of blocks off the Strip at the intersection of Paradise and Flamingo roads, Terrible’s offers excellent value with totally refurbished guest rooms, a good buffet, and a casino that’s clean, bright, and busy. Terrible, by the way, is a person, Terrible Herbst to be exact. The Herbst family is well known locally for their gas stations and for auto racing. Terrible’s targets locals but is a good choice, by virtue of its location and easy parking, for anyone who has a car and intends to use it.

Texas Station (www.texasstation.com)

OWNED BY STATION CASINOS, WHICH ALSO OWNS and operates Palace Station, Sunset Station, Boulder Station, Green Valley Ranch, the two Fiestas, and the new Red Rock Resort, Texas Station has a single-story full-service casino with 91,000 square feet of gaming space, decorated with black carpet sporting cowboy designs such as gold, boots, ropes, revolvers, covered wagons, etc. The atmosphere is contemporary Western, a subtle blend of Texas ranch culture and Spanish architecture. This property offers four full-service restaurants, one of Las Vegas’s better buffets, plenty of fast-food options, two bars, a dance hall, a 60-lane bowling center, child-care facilities, and an 18-screen theater showing first-run movies. Texas Station caters to locals and cowboys and is at the intersection of Rancho Drive and Lake Mead Boulevard in North Las Vegas.

THEhotel at Mandalay Bay (www.mandalaybay.com)

LIKE THE FOUR SEASONS AT MANDALAY BAY, THEhotel is another “hotel within a hotel.” Situated on the west side of the main casino,

THEhotel can be accessed through a connecting corridor or through a dedicated porte cochere. While the Four Seasons is designed to blend with and reinforce the general style of Mandalay Bay, THEhotel, very much a boutique property, offers a starkly contrasting experience. THEhotel is clubby and masculine with rich dark woods, modern furnishings, and a style that mixes empire, Art Deco, and Asian influences. The public areas achieve a feeling of both spaciousness and intimacy, while the suites are cozy in the way of a private library or reading room. Elegant and sophisticated—descriptors often applied indiscriminately—are words that fit THEhotel perfectly.

Though multibedroom suites are available, the standard one-bedroom suite at 725 square feet is the largest of any hotel in Las Vegas. The suites offer a separate sitting room with slate-colored walls and oversized upholstered couch and side chair. These are complemented by a polished-wood contemporary desk and side tables. The overall effect is totally congruent and extremely striking. A large plasma television, a wet bar, and simple yet arresting Asian wall art complete the picture. The bedroom is more conventional with earth-toned soft goods, but includes a dark-colored accent wall behind the bed. The bathrooms, appointed in granite, marble, and chrome, are large, with separate glass-enclosed tub and shower. Because THEhotel targets business travelers, all suites are equipped with high-speed Internet connections and a fax/printer/copier.

On the top, 43rd floor of the hotel tower is Mix, offering fine dining and panoramic views of the Strip. Adjoining the restaurant is a lounge. An informal 24-hour restaurant on the ground floor rounds out the dining options. Also on the ground floor is THEbar. One floor up is a full-service spa and a fitness center.

T. I. (www.treasureisland.com)

RECENTLY, TREASURE ISLAND BECAME THE HIPPER T. I. It's one of three mega-casino resorts that opened during the fall of 1993. On the southwest corner of the Strip at Spring Mountain Road next door to the Mirage, T. I. is Caribbean in style. Management thought the original buccaneer theme was juvenile and Disneyesque, and further believed that it was responsible for luring thousands of unwanted families with children to the resort. So down came all the pirate hats, sabers, skulls, crossbones, and all the other grisly skeletal parts that were the, shall we say, backbone of the joint's decor. The new adult version is fine but a little dull by comparison. The only vestige of the buccaneer days is the streetside battle where pirates now fight very adult, full-bosomed "sirens" instead of the frumpy English Navy. As you would expect, all the cleavage and leg ensures about twice as many kids in the audience as before. Though similar in amenities and services, T. I. targets a younger, more middle-class family clientele than the Mirage.

T. I. is an attraction as well as a hotel and casino. Crossing the Sirens' Cove from the Strip on a plank bridge, guests enter a seaside village. Colorful and detailed, the village (which serves as the main entrance to the hotel and casino) is sandwiched between rocky cliffs and landscaped with

palms. Every 90 minutes a pirate ship sails into the harbor and engages the sirens in a raging battle (firing over the heads of tourists on the bridge). Exceptional special effects, pyrotechnics, and a cast of almost two dozen pirates and sirens per show ensure that any Strip traffic not snarled by the Mirage's volcano (next door) will most certainly be stopped dead by T. I.'s battle of the sexes. The pirates are always defeated, of course, but have a lot more fun losing to the sirens than they ever did beating the British.

Passing through the main sally port, you enter the commercial and residential area of the village, with shops, restaurants, and, of course, the casino. The casino continues the old Caribbean theme, with carved panels and whitewashed, beamed ceilings over a black carpet, punctuated with fuchsia, sapphire blue, and emerald green. The overall impression is one of tropical comfort: exciting, but easy on the eye and spirit. In addition to the usual slots and table games, a comfortable sports book is provided.

The main interior passageway leads to a shopping arcade, restaurants, and the buffet. Dining selections include Isla, thought by many to be the best Mexican restaurant in Las Vegas; the Italian bistro Francesco's; Social House, specializing in sushi and sake; Steak House; and Kahunaville, a sort of Parrot Head joint serving Bahamian and Caribbean dishes.

T. I. amenities include a beautifully landscaped swimming area. The Caribbean theme gives way to luxury and practicality in the well-equipped health club and spa. Larger than that of the Mirage, the facility features weight machines, free weights, a variety of aerobic workout equipment, large whirlpools, steam rooms, and saunas.

T. I. is home to Cirque du Soleil's extraordinary *Mystère*, which is performed in a custom-designed 1,629-seat theater. Nightlife options include Kahunaville, a Jimmy Buffet Margaritaville clone, and Mist, a chic, alluring, intimate lounge where the music is usually too loud to permit conversation.

Guest rooms at T. I. are situated in a Y-shaped, coral-colored tower that rises directly behind the pirate village. Decorated in soft, earth-toned colors, the rooms provide a restful retreat from the bustling casino. Additionally, the rooms feature large windows affording a good view of the Strip or (on the east side) of the mountains and sunset. The balconies that are visible in photos of T. I. are strictly decorative and cannot be accessed from the guest rooms. Self-parking is easier at T. I. than at most Strip hotels. Valet parking is fast and efficient. An elevated tram connects T. I. to the Mirage next door.

Tropicana (www.tropicanalv.com)

AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE STRIP, the Tropicana sits across Las Vegas Boulevard from the Excalibur and opposite MGM Grand on Tropicana Avenue. With its Paradise and Island Towers and 1,910 rooms, the Tropicana is the oldest of the four hotels at the intersection of the Strip and Tropicana. It offers a full range of services and amenities, including an exercise room, meeting and convention space, and a shopping arcade. The Tropicana is also home to one of Las Vegas's most celebrated swimming and sunbathing complexes. This facility, a system of lagoons and grottoes embellished with flowing water, is less a swimming pool than a water park.

The Trop's parent company declared bankruptcy in May 2008. The resort will stay open pending negotiations with creditors, but its future is murkier than ever. Check it out while you can—there's a lot of Las Vegas history there.

The Tropicana, while it lasts, has four restaurants of merit that specialize, respectively, in steak and prime rib, Italian food, and Japanese teppan-grill combinations. Entertainment offerings consist of a comedy club; the *Folies Bergere*, a long-running production show; and lounge acts. The Tropicana's casino is bustling and bright, with multicolored floral carpeting and a stunning, 4,000-square-foot stained-glass canopy over the table games. Both festive and elegant, the Tropicana casino is an attraction in its own right and ranks as one of the city's more pleasant places to gamble, especially for table players.

Guest rooms in the Island Tower are furnished in an exotic, tropical bamboo motif. Guest rooms in the Paradise Tower are more conventional, with bright tropical yellow soft goods and blond furniture. Views from the upper rooms of both towers are among the best in town.

The Tropicana does a thriving business with the travel wholesalers and motor-coach tours, and also aggressively targets the Japanese and Hispanic markets. In the casino, you will find a more youthful than average clientele, including a lot of guests from the nearby Excalibur enjoying the Trop's more luxurious and sophisticated style. The Tropicana's domestic market draws, not unexpectedly, from Southern California. It is particularly popular with slot players.

Tuscany (www.tuscanylasvegas.com)

TUSCANY IS AN ITALIAN-THEMED HOTEL AND casino located on East Flamingo Road between Koval Lane and Paradise Road, just far enough from the Strip to make commuting on foot problematic. After years of railing against low-ceilinged, noisy, claustrophobic casinos and big, hyperthemed, whimsical megaresorts, you'd think the open, sedate, and tasteful Tuscany would be the answer to a travel writer's prayer. Wrong. The Tuscany is none of the things we hate, and at least physically embodies all of the features we admire, but . . . it's B-O-R-I-N-G! Wide aisles in the casino, multiple shades of decorator beige, tasteful carpet, and shiny tile floors (also beige) combine to send you yawning back to your room (more about that in a minute). It's the quietest casino we've ever experienced by far, and there's nothing—repeat, *nothing*—to excite you or even catch your eye.

The casino markets primarily to locals and has succeeded in pleasing them with its choice of slots and good video-poker schedules. Table games, like most everything else, are understated. As for restaurants, there's a nice Italian restaurant in the adjoining hotel, a coffee shop with good 24-hour steak specials, and a Mexican cantina.

Now speaking of the adjoining hotel, it's what saves the Tuscany. A beautiful exposed-beam lobby with an inviting hearth leads to a cozy lounge-showroom and the aforementioned Italian eatery. Guest rooms are large, with a plush sofa and armchair, pine-finish furniture, round dining table with

chairs, wet bar, and fridge. The bath offers a separate, glass-door shower, a roomy tub, large vanity, and a private toilet enclosure. The windows are small, which is fine because there's not much of a view. Hotel parking (easy and conveniently adjoining the various guest-room buildings) coupled with comfy guest rooms make the Tuscany a nice place to stay and an easy place to leave when you want to go somewhere more exciting.

The Venetian (www.venetian.com) and **The Palazzo** (www.palazzolasvegas.com)

THE VENETIAN On the site of the fabled Sands hotel across the Strip from T. I., the Venetian is a gargantuan development constructed in two phases. The first phase, the Venetian, drawing its theme from the plazas, architecture, and canals of Venice, Italy, opened in spring 1999. The second phase, including a 1,000-guest-room tower, opened in the summer of 2003. The Venetian follows the example of New York–New York, Mandalay Bay, Luxor, and Paris Las Vegas in bringing the icons of world travel to Las Vegas.

Visiting the Venetian is like taking a trip back to the artistic, architectural, and commercial center of the world in the 16th century. You cross a 585,000-gallon canal on the steep-pitched Rialto Bridge, shadowed by the Campanile Bell Tower, to enter the Dodge's Palace. Inside, reproductions of famous frescoes, framed by 24-karat-gold molding, adorn the 65-foot domed ceiling at the casino entrance. The geometric design of the flat-marble lobby floor provides an M. C. Escher–like optical illusion that gives the sensation of climbing stairs—a unique and thoroughly delightful touch. Behind the front desk is a large illustrated map of the island city, complete with buildings, landmarks, gondolas, and ships. Characters in period costumes from the 12th to 17th centuries roam the public areas, singing opera, performing mime, and jesting.

Although the Venetian claims that its bread-and-butter customers are business travelers and shoppers, it hasn't neglected to include a casino in its product mix. In fact, the Venetian casino, at 116,000 square feet, is larger than that of most Strip competitors. When the Lido Casino came on line with the completion of Phase II, the overall resort topped out at more than 200,000 square feet of casino; the MGM Grand weighs in at 175,000 square feet. The Venetian casino is styled to resemble a Venetian palace with architecture and decor representative of the city's Renaissance era. Period frescoes on recessed ceilings over the table games depict Italian villas and palaces. The huge and stupefyingly ornate casino offers 139 table games and 1,700 slot and video poker machines. The perimeter of the casino houses a fast-food court, along with French, Italian, and southwestern restaurants, and what could be the fanciest coffee shop in town.

Upstairs are the Grand Canal Shoppes, with 64 stores, mostly small boutiques. The Escher-like floor design continues throughout the shopping venue, with different colors and shapes providing variations on the theme. The centerpiece of the mall is the quarter-mile Grand Canal itself, enclosed by brick walls and wrought-iron fencing and cobbled with small change. Gondolas ply the waterway, steered and powered by gondoliers who serenade their passengers (\$15 per ride). Passing beneath arched bridges, the

canal ends at a colossal reproduction of St. Marks Square. Like The Forum Shops, the Grand Canal Shoppes are arranged beneath a vaulted ceiling painted and lighted to simulate the sky. The Venetian adjoins its sister property, The Palazzo, via a shopping mall that connects the Grand Canal Shoppes to the Shoppes at Palazzo, which offer an additional 53 stores and four restaurants.

The Venetian's 19 restaurants, most designed by well-known chefs, provide a wide range of dining environments and culinary choice. Wolfgang Puck's Postrio, Joachim Splichal's Pinot Brasserie, Emeril Lagasse's Delmonico Steakhouse, the David Burke restaurant for modern American cuisine, Piero Selvaggio's Valentino, Thomas Keller's Bouchon, Tom Moloney's AquaKnox, Zefferino Belloni's Zefferino, and Mario Batali's B&B Ristorante are some of the culinary power-hitters represented.

An all-suite hotel, the Venetian offers guest accommodations averaging 700 square feet and divided into sleeping and adjoining sunken living areas. The living-room areas contain adequate space for meetings, work, or entertaining and feature combination fax machines—copiers with dedicated phone lines. The development plan calls for two Y-shaped hotel towers—each with 3,000 suites—that connect directly to the Sands Expo and Convention Center.

The five-acre swimming complex and spa area are situated on the rooftop over the shopping venue and are well insulated from the bustle of the Strip. You'll find two standard pools, one lounge pool, and a hot tub. One of the largest of its kind in the country, the ultra-upscale bilevel Canyon Ranch Spa offers fitness equipment and classes, therapies, and sauna and steam rooms, as well as a 40-foot indoor rock-climbing wall, medical center, beauty salon, and cafe.

The Venetian targets the convention market with its mix of high-end business lodging, power restaurants, unique shopping, and proximity to Sands Expo and Convention Center (second in size only to the Las Vegas Convention Center). The Venetian will certainly welcome tourists and gamblers, who come mostly on the weekend, but the other five days will be monopolized by the trade-show crowds.

THE PALAZZO It's a testament to the Palazzo's designers to see tourists who've already walked past replica pyramids, New York City skyscrapers, and million-dollar fountain displays still whip out their cell-phone cameras the first time they see the Palazzo's lobby. Much more pedestrian-friendly than the neighboring (and similarly ultra-luxe) Wynn or down-the-Strip Bellagio, the Palazzo is arguably the best combination of shopping, dining, and lodging in Las Vegas.

Opened in December 2007, the Palazzo is owned by the same parent company as the Venetian and connected to the Venetian by walkways and the Grand Canal waterway. Like the Venetian, the architecture of Palazzo's public spaces employs arched passageways, Doric columns, fountains, and painted ceilings in neutral beige, yellow, and brown hues. Even with a three-story lobby, however, the Palazzo's decor is more subtle than that of the Venetian. That subtlety extends to the Palazzo's 105,000-square-foot casino, where the

tables and slots seem to have slightly more walking room between them than at, say, the Bellagio. The net effect is a quieter, more relaxed feel. Depending on your preference (and your luck), you might consider this either a welcome relief or boring beyond words.

The Palazzo has 15 restaurants covering everything from Italian to Peruvian, including three steak houses associated with celebrity chefs: Mario Batali's Carnevino, Wolfgang Puck's CUT, and Eric Bauer's Morel's French Steakhouse and Bistro. Asian restaurants are also well represented, with Jade Noodle Dim Sum and Sushisamba as the fine-dining options, and Mainland and Woo as more casual choices. If you're in the mood for Italian, Dal Toro is the fancy place, and Espressamente Illy is the cafe. Several generic American restaurants round out the offerings. In-room dining has an equally wide variety of choices and isn't as expensive as one might think, given the setting.

Shopping options abound at The Shoppes at Palazzo, with 35 upscale stores, including Barneys New York and Michael Kors. Shoe aficionados can debate the merits of Jimmy Choo and Christian Louboutin at their namesake stores, and there's no lack of jewelry and other designer-clothing options, especially for women. Slightly more affordable options are available at the Venetian's Grand Canal Shoppes, which connect to the Palazzo's stores and together provide hours of window-shopping opportunities.

A Canyon Ranch Spa, the largest spa in the United States, opened in the summer of 2008 and provides everything from massages, facials, and a full health club to simple haircuts. While reservations for all-day treatments are recommended, we didn't have any trouble getting a walk-in hair appointment on 15 minutes' notice during one of the busier times of the year.

The Palazzo's 3,066 rooms are all suites. Rooms come in 720-, 940-, or 1,280-square-foot configurations. All have sunken living rooms and two flat-screen televisions; most have a single king bed, but some 940-square-foot rooms also have two queen beds. Bathrooms are spacious, with marble tile, another television (with remote), a dressing table, plenty of counter space, and separate bathtub and glass-door shower. The shower boasts multiple massage heads with enough water pressure to work out the knots your spine acquires after a long day hunched over the slots; it's one of the best showers we've had in any hotel in the United States. If you can't decide whether you're in the mood for that or a bath, a consultant is available to help you decide and provide options such as a rubber-ducky theme, a chocolate option, a rose-petal motif, and so on.

Service at the Palazzo is excellent: the staff is prompt and easy to find, without giving the impression that you're being watched. When we asked for directions, more often than not an employee walked us to our destination rather than describe how to get there. On our last night at the Palazzo, one of us came down with a cold and spent the night in the room. It might have been the medicine we were taking, but we swear that when we called for an extra blanket and pillow, the employee who answered asked whether their standard, down-filled or cashmere blanket would make us feel better, and what kind of pillow filling we preferred. If you have to spend an evening convalescing, this is the place to do it.

Westin Casuarina (www.starwoodhotels.com/westin)

TALK ABOUT PHOENIX RISING. Westin acquired the old Maxim hotel, a place where business travelers reluctantly stayed when they couldn't get into Bally's, and transformed it into a high-end boutique hotel. Both the casino and showroom are modest by Las Vegas standards, but the guest rooms are exceptionally nice. The Westin caters to business travelers, so each room is equipped with dual-line telephones, a cordless phone, and high-speed Internet access by request. There is ample meeting space for small meetings and conventions. If you travel with Fido, he's welcome at the Westin (they even supply a special dog bed), though you will have to pay a \$35 cleaning fee and a \$150 pet deposit. Travelers with some downtime can enjoy the pool, full-service spa, and fitness center. As for dining, the Westin offers Suede, a 24-hour venue that serves an excellent breakfast buffet. Situated about a block from the heart of the Strip, the Westin is within easy walking distance of dozens of shows and hundreds of restaurants. If you have a car, the Westin has ample parking and is easy to enter and exit. Finally, in case you're interested, a casuarina is a type of tree that is native to the Cayman Islands. If you want to see one, the Cayman Islands is where you'll have to go: there are no casuarina trees at the Casuarina.

Wild Wild West (www.wildwildwesthotelcasino.com)

LOCATED JUST WEST OF THE STRIP AT Exit 37 off I-15 at Tropicana Avenue, Wild Wild West is a small, 260-room hotel and casino that is convenient to the Strip, downtown, and the airport. Its guest rooms are very basic but clean and comfortable. For east-facing rooms, however, there is a lot of road noise from I-15. The casino offers mostly slots and video poker, with a few table games and a sports book thrown in to keep up appearances. There is a lounge, a 24-hour bar and restaurant serving a quarter-pound burger and fries for \$2.99, a pool and Jacuzzi, and in case you're packing a pig, a barbecue pit. The adjacent Wild Wild West Truck Plaza offers more than 15 acres of paved and lighted parking, designated drop pads, security patrol, and easy access from I-15. Also available are diesel and unleaded fuel, a truck wash, convenience store, and weigh station. Wild Wild West markets to locals and truckers. Sometime in the near future, the Wild Wild West will be razed to make room for a new Station Casinos flagship hotel.

Wynn Las Vegas (www.wynnlasvegas.com) and **Wynn Encore** (www.encorelasvegas.com)

TO ENTER THE NEW SIGNATURE WORLD OF Steve Wynn, approach the hotel's sleek, sienna-colored curving facade, a model of restraint in a city known for its design excesses, and look for the Ming lions. Within and without, a garden of delights invites you into the cool sophistication of Wynn Las Vegas. Inside, drift toward the registration desk for a view of the water wall, one of five waterfalls gracing the complex. Along the way you won't be assaulted by the money-charged energy of the casino on the other side of the conservatory, for this is a resort first and a fine casino second. If you must wait to register, take in the stunningly original, arresting floral designs

by Paige Dixon. Feasting your eyes on Wynn's personal Matisse, Cezanne, and Picasso paintings that hang behind the backlit amber agate registration counter will soothe your road weariness. Matisse-inspired floral glass mosaics swirl under your feet. Rounding corridors, brightly beaded figurative folk art, quiet French garden photographs, tall sandstone Shivas, peaceful larger-than-life Buddhas, and shimmering Rajastani textiles await you. All this and more even before you reach your room.

With each property he develops on the Las Vegas Strip, Wynn's vision for the ultimate megaresort-casino becomes more sophisticated. Wynn Las Vegas opened in May 2005 and did so without whumping volcanoes, jets of water undulating to Frank Sinatra tunes, or pirate-versus-siren skirmishes. The handsome swoosh of the sunlit-copper glass facade stands in stark contrast to the immediate, raucous fun of traditional Las Vegas hotel-casinos. Up close, the building positively looms, and there's no attraction, no show, no kitsch visible to the passerby from any vantage point. That is the point. This megahotel-casino wasn't designed to lure visitors in from the sidewalk. Instead, it is internally focused, stylish, and mysterious. It's grown-up, and it's for grown-ups in the best sense of the word.

Wynn Las Vegas is all about exclusivity—and tiers of exclusivity within exclusivity. From the sidewalk, the cards are held tight to the chest. The resort offers nothing but its stark canyon wall of a facade. Step through the main entrance as a visitor, and you're privy to perhaps three of five cards. Guests are shown all five cards, with guest-only pools, spa, golf, and lounges. But to see the dealer's hand, you must be a guest in the exclusive (and pricey) South Tower or Villa Suites, where guests have access to VIP check-in, private elevators, and a separate swimming terrace. (Guests staying in the South Tower will find the baccarat and high-limit gaming rooms conveniently located immediately adjacent to their private elevator bank.)

This appearance of exclusivity is purposeful. WLV was ostensibly designed to bring to mind the exclusive boutique hotels of New York City, but with 2,716 rooms, 233,000 square feet of meeting space, a 110,000-square-foot casino, 76,000 square feet of shopping, an 18-hole golf course, an art gallery, and 22 places to have a meal or whet your whistle, that's one hell of a boutique. The trick, and it's done well, is to create intimate spaces within the larger whole. If Wynn's Bellagio is an ocean with one sweeping vista all the way to the horizon, then Wynn Las Vegas is a mountain river with a delightful surprise and changing view around every twist and turn.

This is also the resort that bears Steve Wynn's name, and the man's flourish of a signature is on absolutely everything—from the building itself to the poker chips to the mini-bar snacks in guest rooms. (If you're a free-souvenir hunter tired of lugging around an armful of bulky slots cups or crushed matchbooks, Wynn Las Vegas is going to make you very happy indeed.) That's not the way it started, though. The original name for the resort was *Le Rêve* (now the name of WLV's *Cirque du Soleil*-style show), but it didn't resonate well with the public and was discarded. It took two years of collaboration between a New York design firm and the Wynns to come up with the branding concept, and it includes everything from color palette (warm

browns, rusty reds, amber yellow, and the occasional shock of chartreuse green) to typography to the logo and crest. Every detail of the experience at Wynn Las Vegas has been thoughtfully considered, and it shows. Likewise, each detail has been approved by Steve Wynn, whose reach extends from personally testing mattresses for comfort to designing 18 holes of golf with Tom Fazio so that no tee off faces into the sun. Longtime collaborator and interior designer Roger Thomas was on board here, too, creating with Wynn the immensely comfortable and well-appointed guest rooms.

But don't think that the exclusivity means that tourists and visitors aren't made very welcome at Wynn Las Vegas. Just the opposite. We found the staff to be one of the most courteous and helpful of any major resort on the Strip. The cocktail servers make frequent passes on the casino floor, the front desk and concierge are pleased to answer questions, and the security staff monitoring who goes where is kind and not in the least condescending.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this resort is that entering visitors aren't immediately shunted through a brain-rattling casino cavern, as is typical in most hotel-casinos. This adds to the impression that WLV is a resort first, and a casino second. From both the main entrance, off the Strip, and the south entrance, off Sands Avenue, visitors are welcomed with a spacious, verdant atrium lobby. The ceiling is a high, domed skylight above an elaborate indoor garden where balls of flowers dangle like over-size Christmas ornaments from the branches of trees overhead. In addition to these two main entrances, the South Tower entrance, reserved for guests staying in the Tower, shares a drive with the south entrance.

In the casino proper, just to the left of the lobby, ceilings are raised over aisles and walkways and lowered over the gaming tables, instead of the other way around, as is common in many casino designs. We at the *Unofficial Guide* have lamented for years the suffocating atmosphere in most casinos and are pleased as punch to find a casino that provides gamblers with natural light and room to breathe. Another gaming amenity at WLV is a poolside casino (guests only) where you can work on your tan while you empty your wallet. Of course, there is the usual run of slots and gaming tables in the casino area, a 26-table poker room, sports book, keno, baccarat, and so on. The poker area is just across from the Ferrari/Maserati dealership, should you win really, really big.

The resort is loaded with exclusive brands like Ferrari and nowhere-else-in-Vegas shopping, most positioned along the shopping Esplanade, which begins across the main entrance lobby from the casino. Boutiques include perfumier Jo Malone, couturiers Jean Paul Gaultier and Chanel, Manolo Blahnik for the serious shoe diva, and the requisite Louis Vuitton, Cartier, and many others. Then there are the shops exclusive to WLV: The Gallery Shop, where you can purchase reproductions of artwork from the gallery; Wynn & Company Jewelry; Wynn & Company Watches; Wynn Las Vegas Chocolat; and the Wynn Signature Shop. By all means check out the shopping on the Esplanade, but be aware that unlike the Forum Shops at Caesars, there aren't any retailers here you're likely to find in the mall at home. If you're prepared to drop \$500 (and up) for a pair of fabulous heels, this is

your place. If you need an extra pair of khakis or flip-flops for the trip, head across the street to the Fashion Show Mall.

There are many upscale options for a drink or a meal at WLV, all under the guidance of executive chef Grant MacPherson. But even at the (comparatively) modest Zoozacrackers, a Reuben sandwich runs \$10.95 plus tax. It was outstanding, but it smarted to part with such a sum for a sandwich. A selection of WLV restaurants are discussed in the dining chapter of this guide.

“Water features” are an integral part of creating intimate spaces at Wynn Las Vegas. The five different water features are keyed to various viewing areas such as registration, night clubs, and restaurants. For example, grab an outdoor table at Parasol Up/Parasol Down (before you head outside, look up and you’ll see where the name comes from) to watch the nightly light-and-water show (age 21 and up only). If you can’t make it by in the evening, the lake, with a 150-foot waterfall, is still mesmerizing and worth stopping for during the day. Statues placed in the water to resemble waders gaze thoughtfully at a wall of water at the far end of the lake and impart a meditative (and welcome) sense of peace.

Probably the ultimate WLV water feature is *Le Rêve*. Under the creative direction of Franco Dragone, creator of Cirque du Soleil’s watery “O,” *Le Rêve* is an aquatic Cirque-style show performed in the round. The claim is that no seat is more than 40 feet from the performance, which may well be true. On the Wynn Las Vegas Web site, the following warning is issued: “You will get wet in rows A through C of every section. In row A you may get soaked.”

If *Le Rêve* inspires you to get wet, wade into the dog-bone shaped swimming pool, the long stretch of which will give lap swimmers just about 100 yards for stroking. The water’s kept at a constant 82 degrees and the landscaping surrounding you will delight and soothe when you come up for air. The complete spa has massages beginning at \$145 and more, and the gym has Cybex equipment with plenty of amenities, such as one of the best free-weight training areas we’ve seen.

Aim high, if you can, in your choice of rooms, for the elevators are speedy, gentle, and quiet. Your reward will be an exhaling view of the Strip, the golf course, or the mountains through your room’s floor-to-ceiling window wall. When it’s finally time to rest, you can leave on the gentle glow of the soft lights installed *under* the bathroom vanities—the perfect solution for a kind orientation in the middle of the night.

Unexpected pluses include the self-parking garage that is closer to the guest elevators than valet parking. There’s not a large hotel in Las Vegas that matches it for convenience. An unexpected minus was the signature nightclub Tryst, where we found it impossible to get in without proffering a serious bribe to the gatekeepers.

Steve Wynn, who is back to doing what he does best—planning his next grand project—has again definitely raised the bar with WLV. Overall, critics notwithstanding, WLV delivers as promised the innovative touches the city has come to expect from Steve Wynn. It’s a resort for the 21st century, and its neighbors are going to have to get busy if they intend to keep up with the Wynns.

And speaking of his next grand project, Wynn launched construction on a second hotel tower on the first anniversary of Wynn Las Vegas. The new 2,034-suite hotel, to be called Wynn Encore, is similar in size and design to the original hotel and is scheduled to open in late 2008 or early 2009. More than an expansion of Wynn Las Vegas, Encore will be a full-scale resort with a 74,000-square-foot casino, an elaborate pool complex, five fine-dining venues, a half dozen lounges and bars (including a very hot and très chic nightclub), a showroom, an upscale shopping venue, and, of course, a spa and fitness center. Standard accommodations at Encore will be 700-square-foot suites with separate sleeping and sitting areas. According to Steve Wynn, the casino will be modeled on Wynn's Macau casino (www.wynnmacau.com).

In addition to Wynn Encore, plans are afoot to develop the land occupied by the Wynn Golf Course. On tap are a 1.5-million-square-foot convention center flanked by two additional hotels with a total of 5,200 guest rooms. The new hotels and convention center would be situated closer to Paradise Road and be separated from Wynn Las Vegas and Wynn Encore by a 20-acre lake similar to that of Bellagio. At last word, construction was scheduled to begin sometime in 2009 at the earliest.

NAVIGATING *the* LAND *of the* GIANTS

GRAND HOTELS OF LAS VEGAS are celebrated on television, in film, and, of course, in countless advertisements. These are the prestige properties in a town that counts more hotel rooms than any other city in the world. Located along the center and southern end of the Strip, these hyperthemed mammoths beckon with their glamour and luxury. Specifically we're talking about:

Bellagio
Caesars Palace
Luxor

Mandalay Bay/
Four Seasons/
THEhotel

MGM Grand
Mirage
Monte Carlo
New York–New York
Paris Las Vegas
Planet Hollywood

T. I.
Venetian/Palazzo
Wynn Las Vegas

But can so many hotels actually mean less choice? From a certain perspective, the answer is yes. The Strip, you see, is suffering a paroxysm of homogeneity. After you've chosen your preferred icon (Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, pyramid, pirate ship, volcano, etc.), you've done the heavy lifting. Aside from theme, the big new hotels are pretty much the same. First, they're all so large that walking to the self-park garage is like taking a hike. Second, there are high-quality guest rooms in all of the new properties, as well as at Caesars Palace, an older hotel that has kept pace. This is a far cry from ten years ago, say, when only a handful of hotels offered rooms comparable to what

you'd find at a garden-variety Hyatt or Marriott. Third, all of the megahotels are distinguished by designer restaurants, each with its big-name chef, that are too expensive for the average guest to afford. Ditto for most of the showrooms.

So let's say you're a person of average means and you want to stay in one of the new, glitzy super-hotels. Location is not important to you as long as it's on the Strip. How do you choose? If you have a clear preference for gondolas over pirate ships, or sphinx over lions, simply select the hotel with the theme that fires your fantasies. If, however, you're pretty much indifferent when it comes to the various themes, make your selection on the basis of price. Using the Internet, your travel agent, and the resources provided in this guide, find the colossus that offers the best deal. Stay there and venture out on foot to check all the other hotels. Believe us, once you're ensconced, having the Empire State Building outside your window instead of a statue of Caesar won't make any difference.

As it happens, there are also a number of livable, but more moderately priced, hotels mixed in among the giants, specifically:

Bally's	Excalibur	Imperial Palace
Bill's Gamblin' Hall	Flamingo	Tropicana
Casino Royale	Harrah's	

Many of these hotels were the prestige addresses of the Strip before the building boom of the past decade. They are still great places, however, and properties where you can afford to eat in the restaurants and enjoy a show. Best of all, they are located right in the heart of the action. It's cool, of course, to come home and say that you stayed at Wynn Las Vegas, but you could camp at the Excalibur for a week for what a Wynn Las Vegas weekend would cost.

SUITE HOTELS

SUITES

THE TERM *SUITE* IN LAS VEGAS covers a broad range of accommodations. The vast majority of suites are studio suites consisting of a larger-than-average room with a conversation area (couch, chair, and coffee table) and a refrigerator added to the usual inventory of basic furnishings. In a one-bedroom suite, the conversation area is normally in a second room separate from the sleeping area. One-bedroom suites are not necessarily larger than studio suites in terms of square footage but are more versatile. Studio and one-bedroom suites are often available in Las Vegas for about the same rate as a standard hotel room.

Larger hotels, with or without casinos, usually offer roomier, more luxurious multiroom suites. Floor plans and rates for these premium suites can be obtained for the asking from the hotel sales and marketing department.

There are some suite hotels that do not have casinos. Patronized primarily by business travelers and nongamblers, these properties offer a quiet alternative to the glitz and frenetic pace of the casino hotels. Because there is no gambling to subsidize operations, however, suites at properties without casinos are usually (but not always) more expensive than suites at hotels with casinos.

While most hotels with casinos offer suites, only the Rio, the Tuscany, Signature at MGM Grand, THEhotel at Mandalay Bay, and the Venetian/Palazzo are all-suite properties. The basic studio suite is a plush, one-room affair with a wet bar and a sitting area but no kitchen facilities. The Rio, on Flamingo Road just west of the I-15 interchange, sometimes makes its suites available at \$110 per night and is one of the best lodging values in town. Suites at the Venetian and Palazzo average about 700 square feet, divided into a sunken living room, an adjacent sleeping area, and a bathroom. The suite configuration at the Venetian is rectangular, while the suites at the Rio and Tuscany are more square in layout. In both cases the sleeping area is open to the living area. THEhotel offers suites with a sitting room and a separate bedroom. At Signature at MGM Grand, you can choose among studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom suites. All feature a kitchenette or full kitchen and may offer a private balcony. In addition, Signature is by far the easiest to get in and out of if you have a car.

SUITE HOTELS *without* CASINOS

Alexis Park Resort and Villas (www.alexispark.com)

THE ALEXIS PARK RESORT IS THE BEST KNOWN of the Las Vegas one- and two-room suite properties. Moderately priced by comparison, the Alexis offers most of the amenities of a large resort hotel, including lovely pools and an exercise room. Suites are roomy and comfortable, with a southwestern decor. The hotel's staff is extremely friendly and not at all pretentious. Alexis Resort's clientele includes executive-level business travelers and a good number of Southern California young professionals.

Atrium Suites (www.atriumsuiteshotel.com)

THE ATRIUM SUITES IS FOUR MINUTES by cab to both the Strip and the Las Vegas Convention Center. There is a pool and a cafe, and a fine selection of ethnic restaurants is within easy striking distance. Suites are mostly of the two-room variety and are nicely, but not luxuriously, appointed.

Best Western Mardi Gras Inn (www.mardigrasinn.com)

THE MARDI GRAS OFFERS SPARTAN SUITES at good rates. Quiet, with a well-manicured courtyard and a pool, the Mardi Gras is only a short walk from the Las Vegas Convention Center. There is a coffee shop on the property, and a number of good restaurants are less than half a mile away. Though a sign in front of the property advertises a casino, there is only a small collection of slot machines.

Clarion Hotel and Suites Emerald Springs

(www.choicehotels.com)

LOCATED THREE BLOCKS EAST OF THE STRIP on Flamingo Road is the Clarion Hotel and Suites, offering moderately priced one- and two-room suites. Featuring pink stucco, marble, and large fountains both inside and out, the lobby, common areas, and rooms are tranquil and sedate by Las Vegas standards. The Veranda Café is the in-house coffee shop, and there is also a lounge, heated pool, and spa.

Hyatt Place Las Vegas (www.hyatt.com)

AT PARADISE ROAD AND HARMON AVENUE, Hyatt Place Las Vegas offers contemporary one-room suites at good prices. In addition to a small fitness center, an outdoor pool, and a few small meeting rooms, Hyatt Place serves a complimentary Continental breakfast. By taxi, Hyatt Place is about four minutes from the Strip and five minutes from the Las Vegas Convention Center. A complimentary airport shuttle is offered.

Las Vegas Marriott Suites (www.marriott.com)

WITH AN OUTDOOR POOL AND HOT TUB, a fitness center, a full-service restaurant, and room service, the Marriott Suites offers the amenities you would expect from a Marriott. And the small building and easy access to parking make the Marriott Suites easy to navigate. Suites are tastefully decorated, though not as plush as some Marriott properties. The Marriott Suites is directly across from the convention center, with a monorail station adjacent, and two blocks from the Strip.

Residence Inn (www.residenceinn.com)

ACROSS FROM THE LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER, the Residence Inn by Marriott offers comfortable one- and two-bedroom suites with full kitchens. Patronized primarily by business travelers on extended stays, the Residence Inn provides a more homelike atmosphere than most other suite properties. While there is no restaurant at the hotel, there is an excellent selection within a half-mile radius. Amenities include a pool, hot tubs, and a coin laundry. A second Residence Inn is about a mile away at the Hughes Center.

St. Tropez (www.sttropezlasvegas.com)

THE ST. TROPEZ OFFERS BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED one- and two-room suites at rates often less than \$100 per night. Adjoining a small shopping mall, the St. Tropez provides a pool, an exercise room, and a complimentary Continental breakfast. The St. Tropez is within five minutes of the Strip and the airport, and about seven minutes from the convention center. Most guests are upscale business and convention travelers.

The Signature at MGM Grand (www.signaturemgmgrand.com)

THE SIGNATURE CONDO/HOTEL TOWERS OPENED in 2007. Located a five-to-seven-minute walk east of MGM's main casino, the towers provide a welcome respite from the frantic action of Las Vegas yet still offer proximity to

that action and the endless amenities and entertainment options at MGM Grand. Suite accommodations feature floor-to-ceiling windows, full kitchens, flat-screen televisions, Jacuzzi tubs, and high-speed Internet connections. Signature's suites are not especially large but are beautifully appointed, and many units have private balconies. Each tower has its own pool, 24-hour concierge service, lounge, deli, fitness center, business center, and a private entrance with valet parking. The private entrance on Harmon Avenue makes for easy coming and going if you have a car.

Trump International Hotel and Tower Las Vegas (www.trumpllasvegas.com)

OPENED IN 2008, TRUMP LAS VEGAS is a nongaming all-suite hotel located on Fashion Show Drive about 600 yards west of the Strip. It's a hotel, not a tourist attraction, offering studios and 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom suites. Its 64-story tower is situated to provide good views in every direction through floor-to-ceiling windows. While there is no showroom or nightclub, there is gourmet dining at the DJT (Donald J. Trump) restaurant, libations at the H2(eau) lounge, an adequate pool, and an excellent spa and fitness center. When we inspected Trump Las Vegas we were immediately struck by the quiet of the place. From the lobby to the restaurants to the guest suites, it was restful and relaxing. The suites provide all the connectivity a business traveler could want, as well as full kitchens in the 1- to 3-bedroom units. Furnishings are Scandinavian contemporary, mixing dark and blond wood tones and restful pastel soft goods. Though a ten-minute walk to the Strip, Trump is directly across Fashion Show Drive from the Fashion Show Mall, Las Vegas's largest shopping venue. The Las Vegas Convention Center is about ten minutes away by cab, and the Sands Convention Center is about ten minutes distant by foot.

LAS VEGAS MOTELS

BECAUSE THEY MUST COMPETE with the huge hotel-casinos, many Las Vegas motels offer great rates or provide special amenities such as a complimentary breakfast. Like the resorts, motels often have a very specific clientele. La Quinta Inn, for instance, caters to government employees, while the Best Western on Craig Road primarily serves folks visiting Nellis Air Force Base.

For the most part, national motel chains are well represented in Las Vegas. We have included enough chain and independent motels in the following ratings-and-rankings section to give you a sense of how these properties compare with hotel-casinos and all-suite hotels. Because chain hotels are known entities to most travelers, no descriptions are provided beyond the room-quality ratings and summary charts. After all, a Comfort Inn in Las Vegas is pretty much like a Comfort Inn in Louisville, and we are all aware by now that Motel 6 leaves the light on for you.

HOTEL-CASINOS *and* MOTELS:

Rated and Ranked

WHAT'S IN A ROOM?

EXCEPT FOR CLEANLINESS, state of repair, and decor, most travelers do not pay much attention to hotel rooms. There is, of course, a discernible standard of quality and luxury that differentiates Motel 6 from Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn from Marriott, and so on. In general, however, most hotel guests fail to appreciate that some rooms are better engineered than other rooms.

Contrary to what you might suppose, designing a hotel room is (or should be) a lot more complex than picking a bedspread to match the carpet and drapes. Making the room usable to its occupants is an art, a planning discipline that combines both form and function.

Decor and taste are important, certainly. No one wants to spend several days in a room where the furnishings are dated, garish, or even ugly. But beyond the decor, there are variables that determine how “livable” a hotel room is. In Las Vegas, for example, we have seen some beautifully appointed rooms that are simply not well designed for human habitation. The next time you stay in a hotel, pay attention to the details and design elements of your room. Even more than decor, these are the things that will make you feel comfortable and at home.

ROOM RATINGS

TO SEPARATE PROPERTIES according to the relative quality, tastefulness, state of repair, cleanliness, and size of their standard rooms, we have grouped the hotels and motels into classifications denoted by stars. Star ratings in this guide apply to Las Vegas properties only and do not necessarily correspond to ratings awarded by Mobil, AAA, or other travel critics. Because stars have little relevance when awarded in the absence of commonly recognized standards of comparison, we have tied our ratings to expected levels of quality established by specific American hotel corporations.

Star ratings apply to *room quality only* and describe the property's standard accommodations. For almost all hotels and motels, a “standard accommodation” is a hotel room with either one king bed or two queen beds. In an all-suite property, the standard accommodation is either a studio or one-bedroom suite. Also, in addition to standard accommodations, many hotels offer luxury rooms and special suites, which are not rated in this guide. Star ratings for rooms are assigned without regard to whether a property has a casino, restaurant(s), recreational facilities, entertainment, or other extras.

In addition to stars (which delineate broad categories), we also employ a numerical rating system. Our rating scale is 0 to 100, with 100 as the best possible rating and zero (0) as the worst. Numerical ratings

are presented to show the difference we perceive between one property and another. Rooms at the Riviera, Monte Carlo, and Orleans, for instance, are all rated as ★★★½ (three-and-a-half stars). In the supplemental numerical ratings, the Riviera and the Monte Carlo are rated 82 and 81, respectively, while the Orleans is rated 75. This means that within the three-and-a-half-star category, the Riviera and the Monte Carlo are comparable, and both have somewhat nicer rooms than the Orleans.

HOW THE HOTELS COMPARE

HERE IS A COMPARISON of hotel rooms in town. We've focused on room quality only and excluded any consideration of location, services, recreation, or amenities. In some instances, a one- or two-room suite can be had for the same price or less than that of a hotel room.

If you used an earlier edition of this guide, you will notice that many of the ratings and rankings have changed. These changes are occasioned by such positive developments as guest-room renovation, improved maintenance, and improved housekeeping. Failure to properly maintain guest rooms and poor housekeeping affect the ratings negatively. Finally, some ratings change as a result of enlarging our sample size. Because we cannot check every room in a hotel, we inspect a number of randomly chosen rooms. The more rooms we inspect in a particular hotel, the more representative our sample is of the property as a whole. Some of the ratings in this edition have changed as a result of extended sampling.

The guest rooms in many Las Vegas hotels can vary widely in quality. In most hotels the better rooms are situated in high-rise structures known locally as "towers." More modest accommodations, called "garden rooms," are routinely found in one- and two-story outbuildings. It is important to understand that not all rooms in a particular hotel are the same. When you make inquiries or reservations, always define the type of room you are talking about.

Finally, before you begin to shop for a hotel, take a hard look at this letter we received from a couple in Hot Springs, Arkansas:

We canceled our room reservations to follow the advice in your book [and reserved a hotel room highly ranked by the Unofficial Guide]. We wanted inexpensive, but clean and cheerful. We got inexpensive, but [also] dirty, grim, and depressing. I really felt disappointed in your advice and the room. It was the pits. That was the one real piece of information I needed from your book! The room spoiled the holiday for me aside from our touring.

Needless to say, this letter was as unsettling to us as the bad room was to our reader. Our integrity as travel journalists, after all, is based on the quality of the information we provide to our readers. Even with the best of intentions and the most conscientious research, however, we cannot inspect every room in every hotel. What we do, in statistical terms, is take a sample: we check out several rooms

How the Hotels Compare in Las Vegas

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas	★★★★★	97	\$\$\$\$\$\$	Henderson
Signature at MGM Grand (all suites)	★★★★★	96	\$\$\$\$\$+	East of Strip
THEhotel at Mandalay Bay (all suites)	★★★★★	96	\$\$\$\$\$\$	South Strip
Trump International Hotel & Tower Las Vegas (all suites)	★★★★★	96	\$\$\$\$\$+	North Strip
Bellagio	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$	Mid Strip
Caesars Palace	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$	Mid Strip
Four Seasons at Mandalay Bay	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$+	South Strip
JW Marriott Las Vegas	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$	Summerlin
The Palazzo (all suites)	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Palms (Palms Tower)	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Wynn Las Vegas	★★★★½	95	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$	Mid Strip
The Venetian	★★★★½	94	\$\$\$\$	Mid Strip
Mandalay Bay	★★★★½	92	\$\$\$\$+	South Strip
Paris	★★★★½	91	\$\$\$\$	Mid Strip
Red Rock Resort	★★★★½	91	\$\$\$\$+	Summerlin
Mirage	★★★★½	90	\$\$\$-	Mid Strip
Montelago Village Resort	★★★★½	90	\$\$\$+	Henderson
Renaissance Las Vegas	★★★★½	90	\$\$\$	East of Strip
Flamingo	★★★★	89	\$\$\$	Mid Strip
Palms (Fantasy Tower)	★★★★	89	\$\$\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Embassy Suites Convention Center	★★★★	88	\$\$\$+	North Strip
Hard Rock Hotel	★★★★	88	\$\$\$\$	East of Strip
Loews Lake Las Vegas	★★★★	88	\$\$\$\$+	Henderson
New York-New York	★★★★	88	\$\$\$	South Strip
Silverton	★★★★	88	\$\$+	South of Las Vegas
St. Tropez All Suites	★★★★	88	\$\$-	East of Strip
Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa	★★★★	87	\$\$\$\$\$-	Henderson
MGM Grand	★★★★	87	\$\$\$\$	South Strip
Planet Hollywood	★★★★	87	\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Sunset Station	★★★★	87	\$\$\$+	Henderson
Embassy Suites in Las Vegas	★★★★	86	\$\$\$+	East of Strip

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
Las Vegas Marriott Suites	★★★★	86	\$\$\$	East of Strip
Palace Station (tower rooms)	★★★★	86	\$\$\$–	North Strip
Residence Inn by Marriott Las Vegas South	★★★★	86	\$\$\$+	South Strip
Rio	★★★★	86	\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Bally's	★★★★	85	\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Las Vegas Hilton	★★★★	85	\$\$\$\$\$–	East of Strip
Luxor	★★★★	85	\$\$\$–	South Strip
Harrah's	★★★★	84	\$\$\$–	Mid Strip
T. I.	★★★★	84	\$\$\$–	Mid Strip
Residence Inn by Marriott Las Vegas Convention Center	★★★★	83	\$\$\$+	East of Strip
Westin Casuarina	★★★★	83	\$\$\$+	Mid Strip
Circus Circus (tower rooms)	★★★½	82	\$–	North Strip
Riviera	★★★½	82	\$+	North Strip
Suncoast	★★★½	82	\$\$\$	Summerlin
Monte Carlo	★★★½	81	\$\$\$–	South Strip
Siegel Suites Tropicana	★★★½	81	\$	South Strip
South Point Hotel-Casino-Spa	★★★½	81	\$+	South of Las Vegas
Holiday Inn Express	★★★½	80	\$+	South Strip
Terrible's	★★★½	80	\$–	East of Strip
Candlewood Suites	★★★½	79	\$+	East of Strip
Courtyard by Marriott Paradise Road	★★★½	79	\$\$\$+	East of Strip
Fitzgeralds	★★★½	79	\$–	Downtown
Manor Suites	★★★½	79	\$+	South of Las Vegas
Sam's Town	★★★½	79	\$–	Boulder Highway
Stratosphere	★★★½	79	\$–	North Strip
Boulder Station	★★★½	78	\$–	Boulder Highway
Golden Nugget	★★★½	78	\$	Downtown
Main Street Station	★★★½	78	\$–	Downtown
Royal Resort	★★★½	78	\$\$\$–	North Strip
Artisan Hotel and Spa	★★★½	75	\$\$\$–	North Strip
Atrium Suites Las Vegas	★★★½	75	\$\$\$–	East of Strip
Courtyard by Marriott Las Vegas South	★★★½	75	\$\$\$+	South Strip

How the Hotels Compare (continued)

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
Fairfield Inn & Suites Las Vegas South	★★★½	75	\$\$\$–	South Strip
Orleans	★★★½	75	\$\$+	South Strip
Plaza	★★★½	75	\$\$\$+	Downtown
Arizona Charlie's Boulder	★★★	74	\$+	Boulder Highway
Clarion Hotel and Suites	★★★	74	\$\$\$–	East of Strip
Palace Station (courtyard)	★★★	74	\$\$+	North Strip
Best Western Mardi Gras Inn	★★★	73	\$\$–	East of Strip
Bill's Gamblin' Hall and Saloon	★★★	73	\$\$\$–	Mid Strip
Hooters Casino Hotel	★★★	73	\$\$	South Strip
Imperial Palace	★★★	73	\$\$+	Mid Strip
Santa Fe Station	★★★	73	\$\$+	Rancho Drive
Tropicana	★★★	73	\$\$	South Strip
Tuscany	★★★	73	\$\$\$–	East of Strip
Vegas Club (north tower)	★★★	73	\$\$\$	Downtown
El Cortez	★★★	72	\$	Downtown
Fairfield Inn Las Vegas Airport	★★★	72	\$\$\$	East of Strip
Fiesta Henderson	★★★	72	\$\$+	Henderson
Hampton Inn Tropicana	★★★	72	\$\$\$–	South Strip
Hilton Garden Inn Las Vegas Strip South	★★★	72	\$\$	South of Las Vegas
Hyatt Place	★★★	72	\$\$	East of Strip
Alexis Park Resort and Villas	★★★	71	\$\$\$+	East of Strip
Best Western McCarran Inn	★★★	71	\$\$+	East of Strip
Four Queens	★★★	70	\$\$	Downtown
Fremont	★★★	70	\$\$	Downtown
Texas Station	★★★	70	\$\$+	Rancho Drive Area

selected at random in each hotel and base our ratings and rankings on those rooms. The inspections are conducted anonymously and without the knowledge of the management. Although it would be unusual, it is certainly possible that the rooms we randomly inspect are not representative of the majority of rooms at a particular hotel. Another possibility is that the rooms we inspect in a given hotel are representative but that by bad luck a reader is assigned a room that is inferior. When we rechecked the hotel our reader disliked, we discovered that our rating was correctly representative, but that he and his

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
La Quinta Las Vegas Airport	★★★	69	\$	East of Strip
Sahara	★★★	69	\$\$\$-	North Strip
Comfort Inn Paradise Road	★★★	68	\$	East of Strip
California	★★★	67	\$	Downtown
Arizona Charlie's Decatur	★★★	66	\$	West Las Vegas
Excalibur	★★★	66	\$	South Strip
Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel (east wing)	★★½	64	\$+	Downtown
Cannery	★★½	64	\$	North Las Vegas
Casino Royale	★★½	64	\$+	Mid Strip
La Quinta Tropicana	★★½	64	\$\$\$	South Strip
Fiesta Rancho	★★½	62	\$	Rancho Drive
Circus Circus (manor rooms)	★★½	59	\$\$\$-	North Strip
Gold Coast	★★½	58	\$	Mid Strip
Vegas Club (south tower)	★★½	58	\$\$\$-	Downtown
Wild Wild West	★★	54	\$	South Strip
Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel (west wing)	★★	53	\$+	Downtown
Motel 6 Downtown	★★	53	\$\$\$-	Downtown
Motel 6 Tropicana	★★	53	\$\$\$-	East of Strip
Knight's Inn	★★	52	\$-	South Strip
Super 8	★★	52	\$\$\$-	East of Strip
Sahara Westwood	★★	50	\$	North Strip
Ambassador Strip Inn Travelodge	★½	43	\$\$\$	South Strip
America's Best Value Inn	★	33	\$\$\$-	South Strip
Gold Spike	★	31	\$-	Downtown

wife had unfortunately been assigned to one of a small number of threadbare rooms scheduled for renovation.

The key to avoiding disappointment is to snoop around in advance. We recommend that you check out the hotel's Web site before you book. Be forewarned, however, that some hotel chains use the same guest room photo for all hotels in the chain; a specific guest room may not resemble the brochure photo. When you or your travel agent call, ask how old the property is and when your guest room was last renovated. If you arrive and are assigned a room inferior to that which you

had been led to expect, demand to be moved to another room deserving of your expectations.

Cost estimates are based on the hotel’s published rack rates for standard rooms, averaged between weekday and weekend prices. Each “\$” represents \$50. Thus a cost symbol of “\$\$\$” means a room (or suite) at that hotel will cost about \$150 a night.

THE TOP 30 BEST DEALS IN LAS VEGAS

HAVING LISTED THE NICEST ROOMS in town, let’s reorder the list to rank the best combinations of quality and value in a room. As before, the rankings are made without consideration of location or the availability of restaurants, recreational facilities, entertainment, and/or amenities.

A reader recently complained to us that he had booked one of our top-ranked rooms in terms of value and had been very disappointed in the room. We noticed that the room the reader occupied had a quality rating of ★★½. We would remind you that the value ratings are intended to give you some sense of value received for dollars spent. A ★★½ room at \$30 may have the same value rating as a ★★★★★ room at \$85, but that does not mean the rooms will be of comparable quality. Regardless of whether it’s a good deal or not, a ★★½ room is still a ★★½ room.

The Top 30 Best Deals in Las Vegas

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
1. Terrible’s	★★★★½	80	\$–	East of Strip
2. Main Street Station	★★★★½	78	\$–	Downtown
3. Siegel Suites Tropicana	★★★★½	81	\$	South Strip
4. El Cortez	★★★	72	\$	Downtown
5. St. Tropez All Suites	★★★★	88	\$–	East of Strip
6. Arizona Charlie’s Boulder	★★★	74	\$+	Boulder Highway
7. Stratosphere	★★★★½	79	\$–	North Strip
8. Sam’s Town	★★★★½	79	\$–	Boulder Highway
9. Sunset Station	★★★★	87	\$+	Henderson
10. Circus Circus (tower rooms)	★★★★½	82	\$–	North Strip
11. Fitzgeralds	★★★★½	79	\$–	Downtown
12. Boulder Station	★★★★½	78	\$–	Boulder Highway
13. Silverton	★★★★	88	\$+	South of Las Vega
14. Golden Nugget	★★★★½	78	\$	Downtown
15. Renaissance Las Vegas	★★★★½	90	\$\$\$	East of Strip
16. Palace Station (tower rooms)	★★★★	86	\$\$\$–	North Strip

Listed below are the best room buys for the money, regardless of location or star classification, based on averaged rack rates. Note that sometimes a suite can cost less than a hotel room.

WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO

THE TROUBLE WITH PROFILES is that details and distinctions are sacrificed in the interest of brevity and information accessibility. For example, while dozens of properties are listed as having swimming pools, we've made no qualitative discriminations. In the alphabetized profiles, a pool is a pool.

In actuality, of course, though most pools are quite basic and ordinary, a few (Wynn Las Vegas, Mirage, Tropicana, Flamingo, Monte Carlo, MGM Grand, Planet Hollywood, Mandalay Bay, Bellagio, Venetian, JW Marriott Las Vegas, and the Rio) are pretty spectacular. To distinguish the exceptional from the average in a number of categories, we provide a best-of list on pages 142–143.

HOTEL	STAR RATING	ROOM RATING	COST (\$ = \$50)	LOCATION
17. Knight's Inn	★★	52	\$–	South Strip
18. Manor Suites	★★★½	79	\$\$+	South of Las Vegas
19. Holiday Inn Express	★★★½	80	\$\$+	South Strip
20. Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel (east wing)	★★½	64	\$+	Downtown
21. Flamingo	★★★★	89	\$\$\$	Mid Strip
22. Best Western Mardi Gras Inn	★★★★	73	\$\$–	East of Strip
23. Riviera	★★★½	82	\$\$+	North Strip
24. Candlewood Suites	★★★½	79	\$\$+	East of Strip
25. Harrah's	★★★★	84	\$\$\$–	Mid Strip
26. South Point Hotel-Casino-Spa	★★★½	81	\$\$+	South of Las Vegas
27. New York–New York	★★★★	88	\$\$\$	South Strip
28. Casino Royale	★★½	64	\$+	Mid Strip
29. Embassy Suites Convention Center	★★★★	88	\$\$\$+	North Strip
30. Hooters Casino Hotel	★★★	73	\$\$	South Strip

Best Dining
(Expense No Issue)

1. Wynn Las Vegas
2. Venetian/Palazzo
3. Bellagio
4. MGM Grand
5. Caesars Palace
6. Mandalay Bay
7. Mirage
8. Paris Las Vegas

Best Dining
(For Great Value)

1. Orleans
2. Suncoast
3. Main Street Station
4. Gold Coast
5. Palace Station
6. California
7. Excalibur
8. Fiesta Rancho
9. Boulder Station
10. Sam's Town

Best Sunday Brunches

1. Sterling Brunch, Bally's
2. The Steakhouse at Circus Circus
3. Bellagio Sunday Champagne Brunch
4. Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa
5. Rio Champagne Brunch

Best Buffets

1. Wynn Buffet
2. Bellagio Buffet
3. Planet Hollywood Spice Market Buffet
4. Mirage Cravings Buffet
5. T.I. Buffet
6. Rio Carnival World

7. Paris Le Village Buffet

8. Red Rock Feast Buffet

9. Green Valley Ranch Feast Buffet

10. Orleans French Market Buffet

Most Visually Interesting Hotels

1. Venetian

2. Caesars Palace

3. Wynn Las Vegas

4. Bellagio

5. Mandalay Bay

6. Luxor

7. Red Rock Resort

8. Mirage

9. New York-New York

10. Paris Las Vegas

11. Rio

12. Sunset Station

13. Planet Hollywood

Best for Bowling

1. Gold Coast

2. Sam's Town

3. Orleans

4. Santa Fe Station

5. Sunset Station

6. Rio

Best Spas
(listed alphabetically)

Bellagio

Caesars Palace

Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa

Mandalay Bay/THEhotel/
Four Seasons

MGM Grand

Mirage

Monte Carlo

Palazzo

Paris Las Vegas

Red Rock Resort

T. I.

Trump Las Vegas

Venetian

Wynn Las Vegas

Best for Golf

(listed alphabetically)

Hyatt Regency Lake Las Vegas

JW Marriott Las Vegas

Las Vegas Hilton

MonteLago Village Lake Las Vegas

Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas

Wynn Las Vegas

Best for Tennis

(listed alphabetically)

Bally's

Flamingo

JW Marriott Las Vegas

Las Vegas Hilton

Monte Carlo

Riviera

**Best for Shopping On-site or within
an Eight-minute Walk**

1. Caesars Palace

2. Venetian

3. Mirage

4. Wynn Las Vegas

5. T. I.

6. Planet Hollywood

7. Trump Las Vegas

Hotel Information Chart

Alexis Park Resort and Villas ★★☆☆

375 E. Harmon Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-796-3300
FAX 702-796-4334
TOLL FREE 800-582-2228

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	71
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	Gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	495
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	Limited
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Continental
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	Breakfast
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Ambassador Strip Inn Travelodge ★½

5075 Koval Ln.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-736-3600
FAX 702-736-0726
TOLL FREE 888-844-3131

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	43
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior, military
NO. OF ROOMS	106
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

America's Best Value Inn ★

167 E. Tropicana Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-795-3311
FAX 702-795-7333
TOLL FREE 888-315-2378

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	33
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	256
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Atrium Suites Las Vegas ★★☆☆½

4255 S. Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-369-4400
FAX 702-369-4330
TOLL FREE 800-330-7728

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	201
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Bally's ★★☆☆

3645 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-739-4111
FAX 702-967-4405
TOLL FREE 800-634-3434

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	85
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,814
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Continental, Steak, Sushi, Italian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, celebrity headlines
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Bellagio ★★☆☆½

3600 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89177
☎ 702-693-7444
FAX 702-693-8546
TOLL FREE 888-987-6667

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	3,933
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Continental
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Arizona Charlie's Boulder ★★

4575 Boulder Hwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89121
☎ 702-951-9000
FAX 702-951-1046
TOLL FREE 888-236-9066

RACK RATE	\$+
ROOM QUALITY	74
LOCATION	Boulder Highway
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military
NO. OF ROOMS	301
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Arizona Charlie's Decatur ★★

740 S. Decatur Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89107
☎ 702-258-5111
FAX 702-258-5192
TOLL FREE 888-236-8645

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	66
LOCATION	West Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military
NO. OF ROOMS	258
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Local bands
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (seasonal)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Artisan Hotel and Spa ★★½

1501 W. Sahara Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89102
☎ 702-214-4000
FAX 702-733-1571
TOLL FREE 800-554-4092

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	64
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

**Best Western
Mardi Gras Inn** ★★

3500 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-731-2020
FAX 702-731-4005
TOLL FREE 800-634-6501

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	314
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	slots
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

**Best Western
McCarran Inn** ★★

4970 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119
☎ 702-798-5530
FAX 702-798-7627
TOLL FREE 800-626-7575

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	71
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	Gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	99
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

**Bill's Gamblin' Hall
and Saloon** ★★

3595 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-737-2100
FAX 702-894-9954
TOLL FREE 866-245-5745

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	197
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Continental
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel ★★½/★★★

128 E. Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-382-1600
FAX 702-384-1574
TOLL FREE 800-937-6537

RACK RATE	\$+
ROOM QUALITY	64/53*
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	355/390*
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

*east wing/west wing

Boulder Station ★★½

4111 Boulder Hwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89121
☎ 702-432-7777
FAX 702-432-7730
TOLL FREE 800-683-7777

RACK RATE	\$S—
ROOM QUALITY	78
LOCATION	Boulder Highway
DISCOUNTS	AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	300
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak/Seafood, Italian, Mexican, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Caesars Palace ★★½

3570 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-731-7110
FAX 702-866-1700
TOLL FREE 800-634-6661

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	3,348
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Asian, French, Japanese, Italian, Continental, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Celebrity headliner
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Casino Royale ★★½

3411 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-737-3500
FAX 702-650-4743
TOLL FREE 800-854-7666

RACK RATE	\$+
ROOM QUALITY	64
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	152
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Italian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Circus Circus ★★½/★★★

2880 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-734-0410 FAX 702-794-3896
TOLL FREE 800-634-3450

RACK RATE	\$S—
ROOM QUALITY	82/59*
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	3,773
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Italian, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Circus acts, free theme park
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

*tower rooms/manor rooms

Clarion Hotel and Suites ★★

325 E. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-732-9100
FAX 702-731-9784
TOLL FREE 800-732-7889

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	74
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	150
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

California ★★

12 E. Ogden Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-385-1222
FAX 702-388-2670
TOLL FREE 800-634-6255

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	67
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	781
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Pasta, Seafood, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Candlewood Suites ★★½

4034 S. Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-836-3660
FAX 702-836-3661
TOLL FREE 888-299-2208

RACK RATE	\$5+
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	276
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Cannery ★★½

2121 E. Craig Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89032
☎ 702-507-5700
FAX 702-507-5750
TOLL FREE 866-999-4899

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	64
LOCATION	North Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	200
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Mexican, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Comfort Inn Paradise Road ★★

4350 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89169
☎ 702-938-2000
FAX 702-938-2001
TOLL FREE 866-847-2001

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	68
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military, gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	199
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

**Courtyard by Marriott
Las Vegas South** ★★½

5845 Dean Martin Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-895-7519
FAX 702-895-7568
TOLL FREE 800-321-2211

RACK RATE	\$55+
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	146
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	• (breakfast only)
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

**Courtyard by Marriott
Paradise Road** ★★½

3275 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-791-3600
FAX 702-796-7981
TOLL FREE 800-321-2211

RACK RATE	\$55+
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	149
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	• (breakfast only)
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

El Cortez ★★

600 E. Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-385-5200
FAX 702-474-3726
TOLL FREE 800-634-6703

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	300
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Family/Steak, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Embassy Suites

Convention Center ★★★★★

3600 S. Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-893-8000
FAX 702-893-0378
TOLL FREE 800-EMBASSY

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	286
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Embassy Suites

in Las Vegas ★★★★★

4315 Swenson St.
Las Vegas, NV 89119
☎ 702-795-2800
FAX 702-795-1520
TOLL FREE 800-EMBASSY

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	86
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	220
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Fiesta Henderson ★★

777 W. Lake Mead Pkwy.
Henderson, NV 89015
☎ 702-558-7000
FAX 702-567-7373
TOLL FREE 888-899-7770

RACK RATE	\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	224
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Steak, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Fiesta Rancho ★★½

2400 N. Rancho Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89130
☎ 702-631-7000
FAX 702-638-3605
TOLL FREE 888-899-7770

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	62
LOCATION	Rancho Drive
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	100
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Mexican, Seafood, Italian, Steak, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Fitzgeralds ★★½

301 Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-388-2400
FAX 702-388-2181
TOLL FREE 800-274-LUCK

RACK RATE	\$—
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	638
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, American, International
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	•
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Excalibur ★★

3850 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-597-7777 FAX 702-597-7163
TOLL FREE 800-937-7777

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	66
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military
NO. OF ROOMS	3,991
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Continental, Steak, Italian, Prime Rib
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, King Arthur's Tournament
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Fairfield Inn & Suites**Las Vegas South ★★½**

5775 Dean Martin Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-895-9810
FAX 702-895-9310
TOLL FREE 800-228-2800

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	142
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Fairfield Inn Las Vegas**Airport ★★**

3850 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-791-0899
FAX 702-791-2705
TOLL FREE 800-228-2800

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	129
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Flamingo ★★

3555 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-733-3111 FAX 702-733-3353
TOLL FREE 800-732-2111

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	89
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	3,642
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors/ part of casino
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Asian, Seafood, Continental
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, musical comedy
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Four Queens ★★

202 Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-385-4011
FAX 702-387-5133
TOLL FREE 800-634-6045

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	70
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	Senior, military
NO. OF ROOMS	690
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	•
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Four Seasons at**Mandalay Bay ★★½**

3960 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119
☎ 702-632-5000
FAX 702-632-5195
TOLL FREE 877-632-5000

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	424
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Continental
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	•
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health and fitness spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

Fremont ★★★

200 E. Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-385-3232
FAX 702-388-2660
TOLL FREE 800-634-6182

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	70
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	447
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Ribs, Chinese, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Gold Coast ★★½

4000 W. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89103
☎ 702-367-7111
FAX 702-367-8575
TOLL FREE 888-402-6278

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	58
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	711
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Italian, Seafood, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Dancing
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	• (heated)
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Gold Spike ★

400 E. Ogden Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-384-8444
FAX 702-382-5242
TOLL FREE 877-467-7453

RACK RATE	\$—
ROOM QUALITY	31
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	110
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hard Rock Hotel ★★★★★

4455 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-693-5000
FAX 702-693-5021
TOLL FREE 800-HRD-ROCK

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	648
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Japanese, Continental, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Harrah's ★★★★★

3475 S. Las Vegas Blvd.; Las Vegas, NV 89109; ☎ 702-369-5000
FAX 702-369-5008
TOLL FREE 800-HARRAHS

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	84
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,579
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors/part of casino
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak/Seafood, Italian, Asian, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, comedy show, magic show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hilton Garden Inn

Las Vegas Strip South ★★★

7830 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89123
☎ 702-453-7830
FAX 702-453-7850
TOLL FREE 877-STAY-HGI

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	South of Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	155
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	• (evening only)
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	• (breakfast only)
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Golden Nugget ★★½

129 E. Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101
☎ 702-385-7111
FAX 702-386-8244
TOLL FREE 800-634-3454

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	78
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	1,907
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Chinese, Continental, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Visiting headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa ★★★★★

2300 Paseo Verde Pkwy.
Henderson, NV 89052
☎ 702-617-7777
FAX 702-617-7778
TOLL FREE 866-782-9487

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	87
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	490
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Steak, Seafood, American, Asian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	• (heated)
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hampton Inn Tropicana ★★★★★

4975 S. Dean Martin Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-948-8100
FAX 702-948-8101
TOLL FREE 800-426-7866

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp.
NO. OF ROOMS	322
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Holiday Inn Express ★★½

5760 Polaris Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-736-0098
FAX 702-736-0084
TOLL FREE 800-288-4595

RACK RATE	\$5+
ROOM QUALITY	80
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, corp., gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	139
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hooters Casino Hotel ★★★★★

115 E. Tropicana Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-739-9000
FAX 702-736-1120
TOLL FREE 866-LV-HOOTS

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	696
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Steak/Seafood, Wings
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hyatt Place ★★★★★

4520 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89169
☎ 702-369-3366
FAX 702-369-0009
TOLL FREE 888-492-8847

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	72
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	202
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

Imperial Palace ★★

3535 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-731-3311 FAX 702-735-8328
TOLL FREE 800-634-6441

RACK RATE	\$5+
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	Gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,700
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Seafood, Chinese, Ribs, Pizza, Southwestern
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Impersonator show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

JW Marriott Las Vegas ★★★★★½

221 N. Rampart Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89145
☎ 702-869-7777 FAX 702-869-7339
TOLL FREE 877-869-8777

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	Summerlin
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	548
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Health Food, Mediterranean, Irish, Japanese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Knights Inn Airport ★★

5100 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119
☎ 702-798-2777
FAX 702-736-8295
TOLL FREE 800-634-6439

RACK RATE	\$—
ROOM QUALITY	52
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	325
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	Coffee
FINE DINING/TYPES	Deli
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
CASINO	video poker
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	•
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Las Vegas

Marriott Suites ★★★★★

325 Convention Center Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-650-2000
FAX 702-650-9466
TOLL FREE 800-228-9290

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	86
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	278
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Loews Lake Las Vegas ★★★★★

101 MonteLago Blvd.
Henderson, NV 89011
☎ 702-567-1234 FAX 702-567-6067
TOLL FREE 877-285-6397

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., gov't, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	493
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Pacific, Mediterranean
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	•

Luxor ★★★★★

3900 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119
☎ 702-262-4000 FAX 702-262-4137
TOLL FREE 800-288-1000

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	85
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	Military
NO. OF ROOMS	4,408
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Seafood, Steak, Asian, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live entertainment, production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

La Quinta**Las Vegas Airport** ★★ ★

3970 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-796-9000

FAX 702-796-3537

TOLL FREE 800-753-3537

RACK RATE	\$5
ROOM QUALITY	69
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, corp., gov't, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	251
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

La Quinta Tropicana ★★ ★½

4975 S. Valley View Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

☎ 702-798-7736

FAX 702-798-5951

TOLL FREE 800-531-5900

RACK RATE	\$55
ROOM QUALITY	64
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, corp., gov't, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	59
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	—
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Las Vegas Hilton ★★ ★★

3000 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-732-5111

FAX 702-262-5089

TOLL FREE 888-732-7117

RACK RATE	\$55555—
ROOM QUALITY	85
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,956
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Asian, Mexican, Italian, Deli
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Main Street Station ★★ ★½

200 N. Main St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101

☎ 702-387-1896

FAX 702-388-2660

TOLL FREE 800-465-0711

RACK RATE	\$—
ROOM QUALITY	78
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	406
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Brewery
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Mandalay Bay ★★ ★★½

3950 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119

☎ 702-632-7777 FAX 702-632-7108

TOLL FREE 877-632-7800

RACK RATE	\$555+
ROOM QUALITY	92
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	3,211
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Russian, Chinese, French, Southern, Italian, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners, live music, sports
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Manor Suites ★★ ★½

7230 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89119

☎ 702-939-9000

FAX 702-939-9014

TOLL FREE 800-691-7169

RACK RATE	\$5+
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	South of Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	258
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

MGM Grand ★★★★★

3799 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-891-1111 FAX 702-891-3036
TOLL FREE 800-929-1111

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	87
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	5,044
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak/Seafood, Cajun, Italian, Chinese, French, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, visiting headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Mirage ★★★★★½

3400 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-791-7111 FAX 702-791-7414
TOLL FREE 800-627-6667

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	90
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	3,044
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Asian, Steak/Seafood, Italian, Brazilian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, celebrity headliner
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Monte Carlo ★★★★★½

3770 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-730-7777
FAX 702-730-7250
TOLL FREE 800-311-8999

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	81
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, military
NO. OF ROOMS	3,002
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Asian, Italian, French, Seafood, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Magic show, comedy
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

New York-New York ★★★★★

3790 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-740-6969 FAX 702-740-6700
TOLL FREE 866-815-4365

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	Gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	2,024
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, Irish, Deli
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, comedy
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Orleans ★★★★★½

4500 W. Tropicana Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89103
☎ 702-365-7111 FAX 702-365-7500
TOLL FREE 800-ORLEANS

RACK RATE	\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	1,886
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Steak, Cajun, Chinese, Mexican, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	Pub
SHOWROOM	Celebrity headliners on weekends, sports
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Palace Station ★★★★★/★★★★*

2411 W. Sahara Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89102
☎ 702-367-2411 FAX 702-221-6510
TOLL FREE 800-634-3101

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—/\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	86/74*
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	1,028
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Seafood, Chinese, Mexican, Italian, Irish, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

*tower rooms/garden rooms

MonteLago Village**Resort ★★★★★½**30 Strada di Villaggio
Henderson, NV 89118

☎ 702-564-4700

FAX 702-564-4777

TOLL FREE 866-564-4799

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	90
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	Senior
NO. OF ROOMS	347
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	• (complimentary)
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Irish, Steak, Italian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Motel 6 Downtown ★★

707 E. Fremont St.

Las Vegas, NV 89101

☎ 702-388-1400

FAX 702-388-9622

TOLL FREE 800-4-MOTEL-6

RACK RATE	\$S—
ROOM QUALITY	53
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	Gov't., military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	147
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Motel 6 Tropicana ★★

195 E. Tropicana Ave.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-798-0728

FAX 702-798-5657

TOLL FREE 800-4-MOTEL-6

RACK RATE	\$S—
ROOM QUALITY	53
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	Corp., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	608
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	Coffee
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

The Palazzo ★★★★★½

3355 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-414-1000 FAX 702-414-1100

TOLL FREE 877-883-6423

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	3,000
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Italian, Gourmet, French, Asian, Mexican, Japanese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	• (heated)
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Palms ★★★★★½/★★★★★

4321 W. Flamingo Rd.

Las Vegas, NV 89103

☎ 702-942-7777 FAX 702-942-7001

TOLL FREE 866-942-7777

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	95/89
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	455/347*
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Asian, French, Steak, Mexican, Seafood
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners, DJs
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	• (heated)
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Paris ★★★★★½

3655 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-946-7000 FAX 702-946-4405

TOLL FREE 888-266-5687

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	91
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,916
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	French, American, Asian, Steak/Seafood, Caribbean
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Dancing
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	• (rooftop)
POOL	• (rooftop)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

Planet Hollywood ★★☆☆

3667 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-785-5555

FAX 702-785-5558

TOLL FREE 877-333-9474

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	87
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	2,567
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	large
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	International, Steak, Tapas
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Plaza ★★☆☆½

One Main St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101

☎ 702-386-2110

FAX 702-386-2378

TOLL FREE 800-634-6575

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	75
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	1,052
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Continental
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, comedy
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (rooftop)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Red Rock Resort ★★☆☆½

11011 W. Charleston Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89135

☎ 702-797-7777 FAX 702-797-7745

TOLL FREE 866-767-7773

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	91
LOCATION	Summerlin
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	816
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Steak, Mexican, Italian, Barbecue
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Piano bar, live entertainment, dancing
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Rio ★★☆☆

3700 W. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89103

☎ 702-252-7777 FAX 702-967-3890

TOLL FREE 800-PLAYRIO

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	86
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't., senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,563
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Chinese, Southwestern, Indian, French
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live entertainment, headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Ritz-Carlton

Lake Las Vegas ★★★★★

1610 Lake Las Vegas Pkwy.
Henderson, NV 89011

☎ 702-567-4700

FAX 702-567-4777

TOLL FREE 800-241-3333

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	97
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	349
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	coffee
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, spa fare
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	•

Riviera ★★☆☆½

2901 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-734-5110 FAX 702-794-9451

TOLL FREE 800-634-6753

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	82
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	2,100
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak/Seafood, Chinese, Italian, Barbecue, Deli
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, female impersonators, comedy club
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Renaissance Las Vegas ★★☆☆½

3400 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89169
☎ 702-733-6533
FAX 702-735-3130
TOLL FREE 866-352-3434

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	90
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	548
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Residence Inn by Marriott Las Vegas Convention Center ★★☆☆

3225 Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-796-9300
FAX 702-796-9562
TOLL FREE 800-331-3131

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	83
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	192
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Residence Inn by Marriott Las Vegas South ★★☆☆

5875 Dean Martin Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-795-7378 FAX 702-7953288
TOLL FREE 800-331-3131

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	86
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, corp., gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	160
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	(dinner from local restaurant)
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

Royal Resort ★★☆☆½

99 Convention Center Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-735-6117
FAX 702-735-2546
TOLL FREE 800-634-6118

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	78
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, corp., gov't, military
NO. OF ROOMS	191
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Sahara ★★☆☆

2535 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-737-2111 FAX 702-791-2027
TOLL FREE 888-696-2121

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	69
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	Gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	1,720
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Mexican, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production shows, variety
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Sam's Town ★★☆☆½

5111 Boulder Hwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89122
☎ 702-456-7777 FAX 702-454-8014
TOLL FREE 800-897-8696

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	Boulder Highway
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	648
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Italian, American, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Western dance hall, occasional headliners
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

Santa Fe Station ★★

4949 N. Rancho Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89130
☎ 702-658-4900 FAX 702-658-4919
TOLL FREE 866-767-7771

RACK RATE	\$5+
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	Rancho Drive
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	200
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	Breakfast
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Mexican, Steak, Barbecue, Seafood, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music, tribute show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Siegel Suites Tropicana ★★½

3890 Graphic Center Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89118
☎ 702-507-9999
FAX 702-507-9998
TOLL FREE 466-663-9836

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	81
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, gov't., military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	225
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Signature at MGM Grand

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
145 E. Harmon Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-797-6000 FAX 702-891-1275
TOLL FREE 877-612-2121

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	96
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	1,728
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak/Seafood, Cajun, Italian, Chinese, French, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Stratosphere ★★½

2000 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89104
☎ 702-380-7777 FAX 702-380-7732
TOLL FREE 800-998-6937

RACK RATE	\$5-
ROOM QUALITY	79
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	2,444
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Asian, Seafood, Steak, Italian, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Suncoast ★★½

9090 Alta Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89145
☎ 702-636-7111
FAX 702-636-7288
TOLL FREE 877-677-7111

RACK RATE	\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	82
LOCATION	Summerlin
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	427
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, American, Mexican, Seafood, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners, dancing
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Sunset Station ★★½

1301 Sunset Rd.
Henderson, NV 89014
☎ 702-547-7777 FAX 702-547-7744
TOLL FREE 888-SUNSET-9

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	87
LOCATION	Henderson
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	457
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Italian, Steak/Seafood, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live entertainment, concerts
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Silverton ★★★★★

3333 Blue Diamond Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89139

☎ 702-263-7777

FAX 702-896-5635

TOLL FREE 800-588-7711

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	South of Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, military
NO. OF ROOMS	300
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Seafood, Steak, American,
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

South Point ★★★★★½

9777 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89123

☎ 702-796-7111

FAX 702-797-8041

TOLL FREE 866-796-7111

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	81
LOCATION	South of Las Vegas
DISCOUNTS	Senior
NO. OF ROOMS	1,350
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	•
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Mexican, Seafood, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

St. Tropez ★★★★★

455 E. Harmon Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-369-5400

FAX 702-369-8901

TOLL FREE 800-666-5400

RACK RATE	\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	88
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't, military, senior
NO. OF ROOMS	150
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	•
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Super 8 ★★

4250 Koval Ln.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-794-0888

FAX 702-794-3504

TOLL FREE 800-800-8000

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	52
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP, gov't.
NO. OF ROOMS	300
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	Coffee
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Terrible's ★★★★★½

4100 S. Paradise Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-733-7000

FAX 702-691-2484

TOLL FREE 800-640-9777

RACK RATE	\$—
ROOM QUALITY	80
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	330
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Chinese
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Texas Station ★★★★★

2101 Texas Star Ln.
Las Vegas, NV 89030

☎ 702-631-1000

FAX 702-631-8120

TOLL FREE 800-654-8888

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	70
LOCATION	Rancho Drive Area
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	200
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Seafood, Italian, Mexican, Steak
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Live entertainment nightly
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Hotel Information Chart (continued)

THEhotel at Mandalay Bay

(all suites) ★★★★★

3950 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89118

☎ 702-632-7777 FAX 702-632-7228

TOLL FREE 877-632-7800

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	96
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	1,117
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	• (complimentary)
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	French, Asian, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	Nearby
BUFFET	Nearby
CASINO	Nearby
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, live music
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

T.I. ★★★★★

3300 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-894-7111 FAX 702-894-7414

TOLL FREE 800-288-7206

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	84
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	2,900
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Seafood/Steak, American, Caribbean, Japanese, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Tropicana ★★

3801 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-739-2222 FAX 702-739-3648

TOLL FREE 800-634-4000

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	1,874
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Steak, Caribbean, Japanese, Italian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show, comedy club, magic
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Vegas Club ★★/★★½*

18 E. Fremont St.

Las Vegas, NV 89101

☎ 702-385-1664 FAX 702-386-2378

TOLL FREE 800-634-6532

RACK RATE	\$+
ROOM QUALITY	73/58*
LOCATION	Downtown
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	410
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Italian
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Occasional lounge entertainment
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	Tennis

*north tower/south tower

The Venetian ★★★★★½

3355 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-414-1000 FAX 702-414-1100

TOLL FREE 877-883-6423

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	94
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	4,027
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Gourmet, French, Asian, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Headliners, live music, production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Westin Casuarina ★★★★★

160 E. Flamingo Rd.

Las Vegas, NV 89109

☎ 702-836-9775

FAX 702-836-9776

TOLL FREE 866-716-8132

RACK RATE	\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	83
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	826
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	• (breakfast only)
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Trump Int'l Hotel and Tower Las Vegas ★★★★★

2000 Fashion Show Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-982-0000 FAX 702-476-8450
TOLL FREE 866-939-8786

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$+
ROOM QUALITY	96
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	1,282
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American, Mediterranean
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	24-hour in-suite dining
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	• (heated)
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Tuscany ★★★

255 E. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-893-8933
FAX 702-947-6053
TOLL FREE 877-TUSCAN-1

RACK RATE	\$\$\$—
ROOM QUALITY	73
LOCATION	East of Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, AARP
NO. OF ROOMS	716
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	Italian, Mexican
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	•
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Sahara Westwood Hotel ★★

2601 Westwood Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-733-0001
FAX 702-312-9611
TOLL FREE NONE

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	50
LOCATION	North Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA, senior, military
NO. OF ROOMS	92
CHECKOUT TIME	11
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	• (coffee & bagels)
FINE DINING/TYPES	—
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	—
BUFFET	—
CASINO	—
LOUNGE	—
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	—
POOL	—
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Wild Wild West ★★

3330 W. Tropicana Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89103
☎ 702-740-0000
FAX 702-736-7106
TOLL FREE 800-634-3488

RACK RATE	\$
ROOM QUALITY	54
LOCATION	South Strip
DISCOUNTS	AAA
NO. OF ROOMS	262
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	•
CONCIERGE	—
CONVENTION FACIL.	—
MEETING ROOMS	—
VALET PARKING	—
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	—
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	American
COFFEE SHOP	—
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	—
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	—
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	—
TENNIS & RACKET	—

Wynn Las Vegas ★★★★★½

3131 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
☎ 702-770-7000
FAX 702-770-1571
TOLL FREE 877-321-WYNN

RACK RATE	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
ROOM QUALITY	95
LOCATION	Mid-Strip
DISCOUNTS	—
NO. OF ROOMS	2,700
CHECKOUT TIME	Noon
NONSMOKING	Floors
CONCIERGE	•
CONVENTION FACIL.	•
MEETING ROOMS	•
VALET PARKING	•
RV PARK	—
ROOM SERVICE	•
FREE BREAKFAST	—
FINE DINING/TYPES	French, Italian, Seafood, Asian, American
COFFEE SHOP	•
24-HOUR CAFE	•
BUFFET	•
CASINO	•
LOUNGE	•
SHOWROOM	Production show
GIFTS/DRUGS/NEWS	•
POOL	•
EXERCISE ROOM	Health spa
TENNIS & RACKET	—