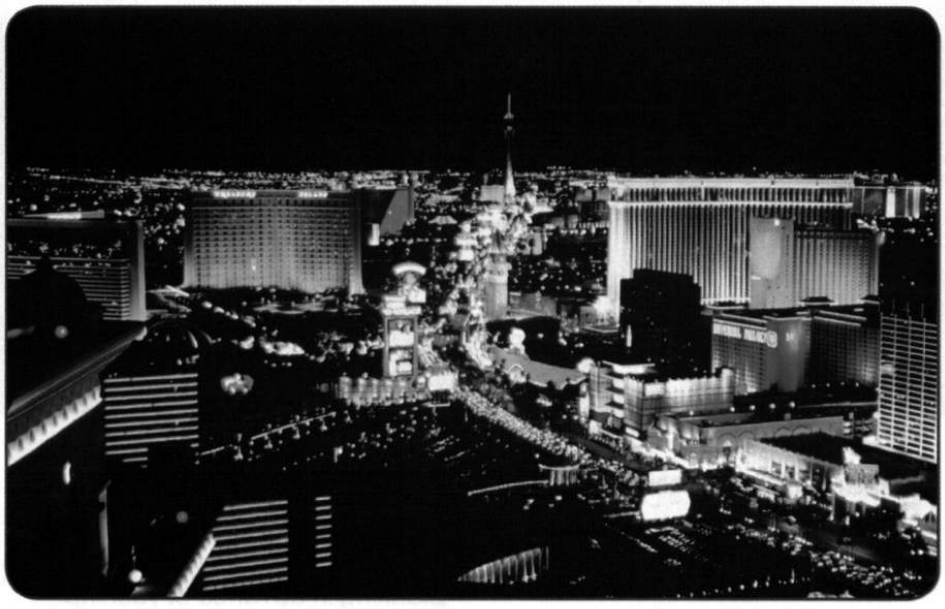
Glitter, Glitz and Glamour: Las Vegas
Larry Gore

As the sun begins to set behind the Charleston Peak, but before the darkness can settle in over the city, the Las Vegas Strip lights up in a neon sea. This is *truly* a city that never sleeps.

"The Strip" encompasses an area that is roughly eight miles long and hosts some of the most impressive theme structures found anywhere - rivaling even Disney. The sheer number of things to do and to see can be overwhelming so it's best to do some planning in advance of your trip.

Almost 40 million visitors enjoy the city each year. They stay in some of the most glamorous and most unique hotels in the world, eat at five-star restaurants with lavish buffets. They play in huge pools, relax in health spas and make rounds of renowned golf courses. They win money. They lose money. They marry each other and they divorce each other.

Las Vegas, an ever-changing fantasyland of a city, has seen unbelievable expansion since it emerged from the desert 100 years ago. Nevada legalized gambling during the construction of the Hoover Dam as a way to provide entertainment for the construction workers. The real boom began in the 1940's when mobster Bugsy Siegel envisioned what this small desert railroad town might become and persuaded mobsters in New York to invest. Siegel's casino, The Flamingo, opened in March of 1947 giving birth to the myths of the



city. Cost overruns and the suspicion that Bugsy was embezzling led to his gangland style execution later that year.

The success of The Flamingo and the popularity of Las Vegas opened the door for the development of the large casinos and firmly established Las Vegas as a mecca for gamblers. From the beginning each casino has tried to outdo the others with more glitz, more glamour, big name stars, special events and, of course, the ubiquitous lights. The dazzling lights of The Strip have become an art form. But gambling is not all there is to do in Las Vegas. Even for the non-gambler Las Vegas is an interesting tourist destination.

Las Vegas is surrounded by a whole world of natural beauty. Hike the Red Rock Canyon, ski on Mt. Charleston and cool off in the biggest of all desert oases, Lake Mead.

The Grand Canyon, the Valley of Fire, Zion National Park, and Death Valley are all just short day rides from the Strip. Also within a short distance

is Laughlin, home to the annual Laughlin River Run motorcycle rally. Regardless of what brand of motorcycle you ride, be sure to visit the incredibly huge Las Vegas Harley Davidson store. It is a tourist destination in itself.

Las Vegas' Neon Museum is dedicated to preserving and restoring many of the original signs. Their results are on display as a walking tour on Fremont Street. The first sign to be put on display on Fremont Street was The Hacienda Horse and Rider, originally installed in 1967 at the Hacienda Hotel, formerly located at 3950 Las Vegas Boulevard South. You can also find the original Aladdin's Lamp that began its life in 1966 at the Aladdin Hotel, The 1961 Flame Restaurant sign originally installed on the roof of the restaurant at #1 Desert Inn Road. It was restored through a generous donation from Rich Travis.

During the last few years Las Vegas has experienced a resurgence in growth as many of the iconic casinos that were so much a part of Las Vegas have been torn down to make room for lavish new super casinos. Las Vegas seems to compete with itself with each new casino and hotel being bigger and flashier than the last.

So when you plan your ride to Nevada, be sure to include a visit to Las Vegas and know that after you take a nighttime tour along the Strip, there's more to see than the slot machines!

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