

Viva Las Vegas

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The devastation visited by Hurricane Katrina forced the AAO to relocate its 2006 annual session, originally scheduled for New Orleans. With 17 of the 20 largest hotels in the world, Las Vegas was uniquely equipped to take over the hosting duties on short notice. The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and the adjoining Sands Expo and Convention Center will be the center of activities May 5-9.

Gambling is, of course, the major industry in Sin City. JCO's annual AAO convention preview will leave the gaming tips to others—many of the casinos even offer free classes—and focus on restaurants, shows, shopping, and recreational activities.

Travel Information

Days should be warm and sunny in early May, with average highs in the 80s. It's a good idea to pack sweaters and jackets, however, because nights can be cool in the high desert.

McCarran International Airport is modern and user-friendly; a light-rail line connects the main terminal to the outer concourses, as in Denver and Orlando. The airport is so close to the city that taxis cost only about \$10 to the Strip and \$18 to downtown, each way (note that credit cards are not accepted). Rental car counters are in the middle of baggage claim, with the companies operating their own shuttles to reach the lots. Cabs, shuttles, and limousines pick up outside the baggage claim area, but some hotels have complimentary vans that pick up below baggage claim, at "level zero".

Although taxis are readily available in the city, cab lines can be long at the hotels. A public bus, operated by Citizens Area Transit (information: 228-7433), runs around the clock on the Strip for \$2 one way, and costs somewhat less in other parts of town. The four-mile Las Vegas Monorail (699-8299), traveling from the Sahara Hotel to the MGM Grand Hotel all day except early mornings, is another option on the east side of the Strip; a single ride is \$5, and discount ticket books and multiple-day passes are available. Two free mono-



Las Vegas at night (photos: Las Vegas News Bureau).

rails operate on the west side of the Strip—one running a loop to the Excalibur, Luxor, and Mandalay Bay hotels, the other between Treasure Island and the Mirage.

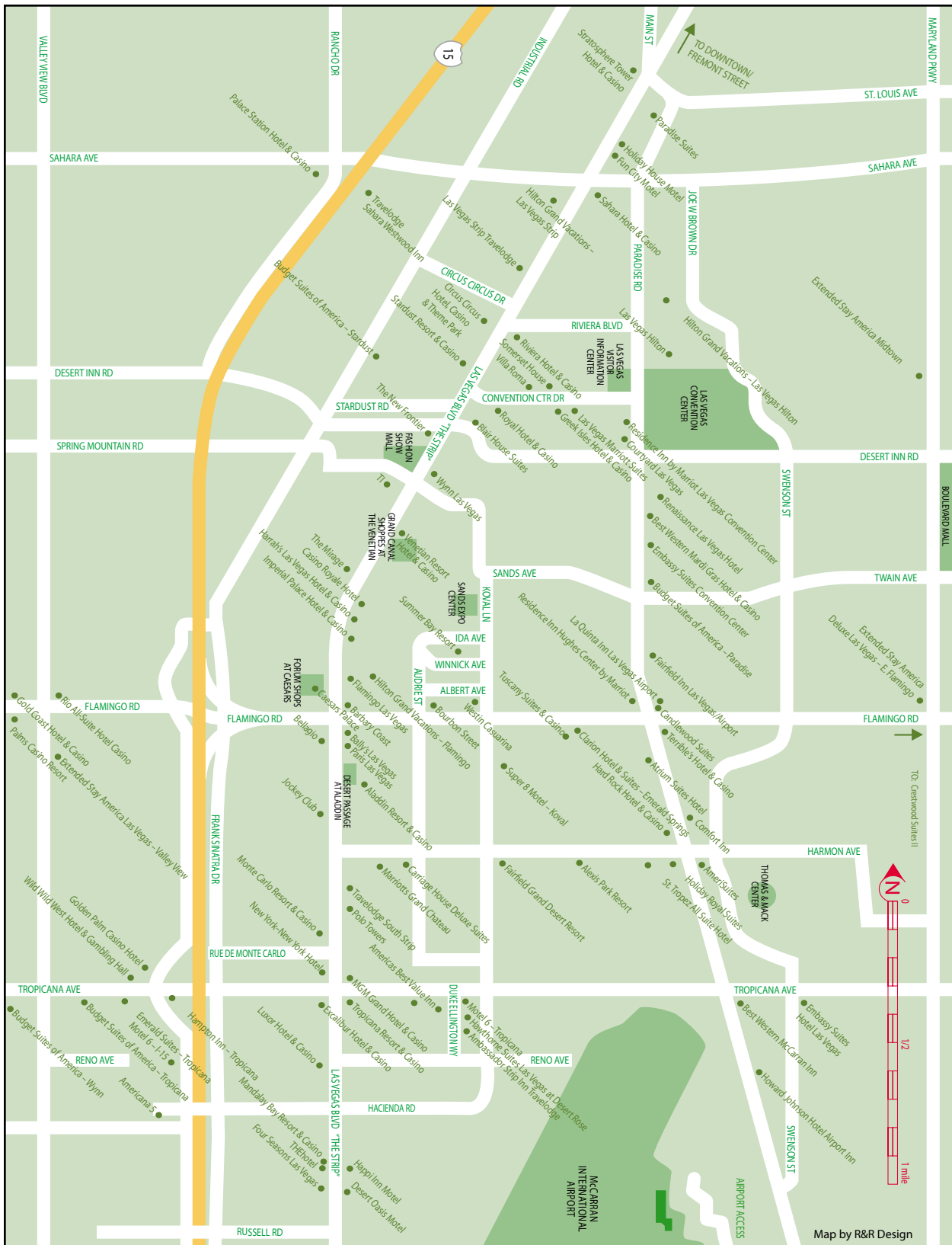
Las Vegas has a curfew for young people under age 18, who must be accompanied by adults on the Strip after 9 p.m. Remember that only adults age 21 and over are allowed in the casinos and nightclubs, and that no-smoking areas are scarce.

Dining

Over the past decade, the explosion of luxury megahotels in Las Vegas has suddenly made the city a Mecca for celebrity chefs. Steve Wynn started the trend in the late 1990s by luring top names to front the restaurants in his Mirage and Bellagio hotels. At his new **Wynn Las Vegas**

Boldface names in this article are listed in the Directory on pp. 183-184 with their telephone numbers and street addresses. For a website link, call up the article in the JCO Online Archive at www.jco-online.com, and click on the boldface name within the text. The article can be accessed at no charge by clicking on its title on the JCO Online home page.

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resort, however, he has turned to rising stars who actually do the cooking. The exceptions are at Alex, where Alessandro Stratta has brought his Mediterranean cuisine from the Mirage, and Daniel Boulud Brasserie, a low-key outpost of the New York chef. Wynn's highly regarded new restaurants include Bartolotta Ristorante di Mare (Italian seafood), Okada (Japanese), SW (steakhouse), Tableau (new American), and Wing Lei (Chinese).

The **Bellagio Hotel** is still home to Julian Serrano's top-rated Picasso, where an inventive French menu shines in a spectacular setting. Also at the Bellagio are Todd English's recently remodeled Olives; Sirio Maccioni's Le Cirque, imported from New York; Michael Mina, run by the San Francisco seafood impresario; and Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Prime Steakhouse.

The **Venetian Resort Hotel Casino** has brought Thomas Keller of French Laundry fame to recreate his bistro-style Bouchon from Napa, Emeril Lagasse of "Bam!" fame to recreate his Delmonico Steakhouse from New Orleans, Wolfgang Puck to recreate his Postrio from Los Angeles, and Piero Selvaggio to recreate his Valentino from Santa Monica, California. Of course, the entire property is a recreation of Venice—certainly nothing that would raise an eyebrow in Las Vegas. What does set these restaurants apart from many others on the Strip is their comprehensive wine lists.

Emeril has also lent his name to the New Orleans Fish House at the **MGM Grand Hotel**. But the big news at this granddaddy of the megahotels is the arrival of three-star chef Joël Robuchon with his Parisian restaurants, Joël Robuchon at the Mansion and L'Atelier. The former features a pricey 16-course tasting menu; the latter is more informal and innovative. Other MGM favorites are Craftsteak, Fiamma Trattoria (Italian), Nobhill

and Seablue (two more Michael Mina imports), and Pearl (Chinese fusion).

Another exalted French chef, Alain Ducasse, has created a buzz with Mix, at the top of THEhotel in the **Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino**. Still, San Francisco's Hubert Keller and his Fleur de Lys are more highly rated. Charlie Palmer's Aureole is probably better known for its skyscraping glass wine tower than for its New York cuisine. The China Grill and Shanghai Lilly are Asian alternatives, and Giorgio Caffé & Ristorante is a top-notch trattoria.

Bradley Ogden is the hot name at **Caesars Palace**, with his new American cuisine, and Puck is also on hand with the Hollywood favorites Chinois and Spago. Also notable are the frenetic, Benihana-style Hyakumi, the Italian-style Il Mulino New York, and the Miami-style Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab.

If you want to venture off the Strip, try **Rosemary's**, a new-American star on the west side; Nobu Matsuhisa's Hard Rock Hotel outlet, **Nobu**; the **Second Street Grill**, at the downtown Fremont Hotel; the San Francisco-inspired **Triple George Grill**; or long-time French favorites **Alizé**, **Pamplemousse**, or **André's** (with the downtown location favored over the **Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino** branch).



Dining al fresco amid the megahotels on the Strip.

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By happy coincidence, wine lovers have an opportunity to experience one of two 2006 Grand Tours sponsored by *Wine Spectator*. Some 200 of the world's top wineries, including Caymus, Dominus, Haut-Brion, Margaux, Mouton Rothschild, and Ornellaia, will each pour one of their best wines on the evening of May 6 at the Venetian. Advance tickets are available for \$200 at www.winespectator.com.

Shows

New York has begun sending Las Vegas not only its chefs, but its Broadway shows. *Avenue Q*, the R-rated Sesame Street takeoff, is playing at Wynn Las Vegas. *Hairspray*, a bubbly '60s retro-fest, has opened at the **Luxor Hotel and Casino**. The best of the jukebox musicals, *Mamma Mia!* is at the Mandalay Bay Resort, and *Menopause: The Musical*, is at the **Las Vegas Hilton**. An off-Broadway production, *Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding*, plays at the **Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino**, and another jukebox revue, *Forever Plaid*, at the **Gold Coast Hotel and Casino**.

If you've never seen a Cirque du Soleil spectacular, you should take in one of the many offerings on the Strip. The original Cirque show, the watery *O*, is still at the Bellagio, and the athletic *Mystère* is at **Treasure Island Las Vegas**. The new *KA* plays at the MGM Grand, and the erotic *Zumanity* at **New York-New York Hotel and Casino**.

Other musical-acrobatic shows include Blue Man Group at the Venetian; *Le Rêve* at Wynn Las Vegas; *Sirens of TI* at Treasure Island; *Splash* at the **Riviera Hotel Casino**; and *V: The Ultimate Variety Show* at the **Aladdin Resort and Casino**. Among the more traditional showgirl revues are *Jubilee* at **Bally's Las Vegas**; *Erocktica* at the Rio; *Fantasy* at the Luxor; *Les Folies Bergere* at the **Tropicana Resort and Casino**; and *X* at the Aladdin.

You can find "tributes" to everyone from Elvis to Liberace around town, but if you're nostalgic for the real thing, try the Temptations and Four Tops at the **Stardust Resort and Casino** (May 11-13 only); the Platters, Coasters, and Drifters at the **Sahara Hotel and Casino**; Blood,



Roller coaster at the Sahara Hotel and Casino.

Sweat & Tears at the **Cannery Casino-Hotel** (May 13); or Tony Orlando (May 5-7) and Frankie Avalon (May 12-14) at the **Suncoast Hotel and Casino**. Celine Dion has taken up long-term residence at Caesars Palace, and Danny Gans at the **Mirage Las Vegas**. Reba McEntire will appear at the Hilton May 3-7, and Ann-Margret at the **Orleans Hotel and Casino** May 11-14.

If you want to see a serious illusionist, look for Lance Burton at the Monte Carlo; for magic with comedy, see Penn & Teller at the Rio, the Amazing Johnathan at the Sahara, Dr. Scott Lewis at the Riviera, or Mac King at **Harrah's Las Vegas Hotel and Casino**; for magic with animals, Dirk Arthur at the Tropicana or Rick Thomas at the Stardust.

Stand-up comedy shows include Rita Rudner at New York-New York, the Second City troupe and George Wallace at the Flamingo, and various improv clubs. Jay Leno will headline at the Mirage on May 12 and 13.

Saying that nightlife abounds in Las Vegas is like saying there is ice in the Arctic Ocean. Every large hotel has a nightclub, with a theme such as Cleopatra's Barge or the VooDoo Lounge.

Attractions

Classical performances can actually be found in Sin City, centered at the new Performing Arts Center of the **University of Nevada-Las Vegas**. The Nevada Conservatory Theatre presents Frederick Knott’s *Wait Until Dark* May 4-7, the Las Vegas Philharmonic plays Gustav Mahler’s monumental Symphony No. 2 (“Resurrection”) May 6 and 7, and the Nevada Ballet Theatre dances *Scheherazade* May 12-14.

Several of the megahotels have established their own art galleries, including the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, with a show on “Rubens and His Age: Masterpieces from the Hermitage Museum”, at the Venetian; the Wynn Collection, specializing in Picasso, at the Wynn Las Vegas; and the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art. You will see a few great pieces of art at each of these showcases, but don’t expect the depth of the world’s best museums. Fine-art lovers may also want to visit the **Las Vegas Art Museum** or the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery at UNLV.

More specialized collections include the **Atomic Testing Museum**; the Auto Collections and Collectibles at the **Imperial Palace Hotel and Casino**; the **Howard W. Cannon Aviation Museum** at the airport; the Casino Legends Hall of Fame and the Las Vegas Historic Museum at the Tropicana; the **Clark County Museum** of historic homes; the Houdini Museum and Madame Tussauds at the Venetian; the **Las Vegas Natural History Museum**; the **Lied Discovery Children’s Museum**; the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History at UNLV; the **Nevada State Museum and Historical Society**; the **Nevada State Railroad Museum**; **Old Las Vegas Mormon State Historic Park**; Pharaoh’s Pavilion at the Luxor; and, last but certainly not least, the **Elvis-a-Rama Museum** and the **Liberace Museum**.

With the closing of the roller coaster atop the Stratosphere Tower, the best climb on the Strip may be the half-scale Eiffel Tower replica at **Paris Las Vegas**. The Bellagio’s majestic fountains, shooting up as high as 245 feet, are accompanied by music and lighting every afternoon and evening. Not to be outdone, the Mirage’s volcano erupts every 15

minutes from 6 p.m. to midnight.

Among the other outdoor and animal experiences are Siegfried and Roy’s White Tiger Habitat and the Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat at the Mirage; the Lion Habitat at the MGM Grand; Shark Reef at the Mandalay Bay; the Fantasy Faire Midway at the **Excalibur Hotel and Casino**; the Adventuredome Theme Park at **Circus Circus Hotel, Casino and Theme Park**; Buffalo Bill’s Thrill Rides at **Buffalo Bill’s Resort and Casino**, south of the city in Primm; the Manhattan Express roller coaster at New York-New York; the Speed World roller coaster and cyber-racetrack at the Sahara; the Richard Petty Driving Experience at the **Las Vegas Motor Speedway**; and the vertical wind tunnel at **Fly-away Indoor Skydiving**. It may not qualify as an adventure, but *Star Trek: The Experience*, billed as “the world’s only totally dedicated Star Trek themed facility”, is at the Hilton.

If you’d like to get away from the bright lights and explore the magnificent surrounding desert, the mandatory trip is to Hoover Dam near Boulder City (open daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m.). On the way, you can visit the **Ethel M Chocolates Factory and Cactus Gardens** and the **Boulder City/Hoover Dam Museum**. Also nearby are the **Lost City Museum of Archaeology** and Valley of Fire State Park in Overton. West of Las Vegas, the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is renowned for its cycling, hiking, and climbing



Desert scenery at Red Rock Canyon.



Nightly extravaganza at Fremont Street Experience.

opportunities. Its **Bonnie Springs and Old Nevada** is a replica of an 1880s mining town, with stables and a petting zoo. Of course, if you'd like to do more traveling, the Grand Canyon and the natural monuments of Utah are a relatively short distance away.

Shopping

Staying at a megahotel means never really having to leave the premises, and that includes shopping. Most of the properties have thematic arcades, including Desert Passage at the Aladdin, the Forum Shops and Appian Way Shops at Caesars Palace, the Rue de la Paix at Paris Las Vegas, Masquerade Village at the Rio, the Grand Canal Shops at the Venetian (complete with a convincing painted sky and gondola rides), and the Wynn Boutique Collection at Wynn Las Vegas. For upscale shopping, however, the Via Bellagio gets the nod from seasoned veterans.

Another field of competition among the hotels is in spas, fitness centers, and salons. Every major property has a spa; some are open to the public, some only to resort guests.

Also on the Strip, the **Fashion Show Mall** is home to Dillard's, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Robinsons-May, and Saks Fifth Avenue. The **Fremont Street Experience** is a pedestrian mall designed to bring visitors into the



Golf near the Strip at Bali Hai Golf Club.

downtown area. There's a street party every night from 7-11 p.m., featuring a light-and-sound show after dark. Neonopolis, Fremont Street's "entertainment and retail destination", features three miles of neon and an antique neon sign collection.

Golf

Nevada's recent population boom and mild climate have generated a profusion of excellent golf courses within driving distance—although many are at least 45 minutes away from downtown. Topping the list in both course architecture and greens fees is the Mirage's **Shadow Creek**, designed by Tom Fazio and Steve Wynn, in North Las Vegas. Also highly rated is Jack Nicklaus's **Reflection Bay** at the Lake Las Vegas Resort in Henderson.

Other good public layouts near the city include **Bali Hai**, the only course on the Strip; **Rio Secco** at the Rio in Henderson; the **Royal Links**, a British open tribute; **Bear's Best**, a Nicklaus tribute to his own courses; and the **TPC at the Canyons** in Summerlin, co-host to the Las Vegas Invitational tour event.

Farther away, the best bets open to the public are **Wolf Creek** at the Paradise Canyon Resort in Mesquite; **Primm Valley**, with its two Fazio courses, in Primm; and **Cascata** in Boulder City.

DIRECTORY

Hotels and Restaurants	Address*	Phone**
Aladdin Resort and Casino	3667 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	785-5555
Alizé	4321 W. Flamingo Road	942-7777
André's	401 S. Sixth St.	385-5016
Bally's Las Vegas	3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	739-4111
Bellagio Hotel	3600 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	693-8255
Buffalo Bill's Resort and Casino	31700 Las Vegas Blvd. S., Primm	386-7867
Caesars Palace	3570 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	731-7731
Cannery Casino-Hotel	2121 E. Craig Road	507-5813
Circus Circus Hotel, Casino and Theme Park	2880 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	734-0410
Excalibur Hotel and Casino	3850 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	597-7777
Gold Coast Hotel and Casino	4000 W. Flamingo Road	367-7111
Harrah's Las Vegas Hotel and Casino	3475 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	369-5000
Imperial Palace Hotel and Casino	3535 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	731-3311
Las Vegas Hilton	3000 Paradise Road	732-5111
Luxor Hotel and Casino	3900 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	262-4400
Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino	3950 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	632-9300
MGM Grand Hotel	3799 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	891-7600
Mirage Las Vegas	3400 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	791-7111
Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino	3770 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	730-7777
New York-New York Hotel and Casino	3790 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	740-6815
Nobu	4455 Paradise Road	693-5090
Orleans Hotel and Casino	4500 W. Tropicana Ave.	365-7111
Pamplemousse	400 E. Sahara Ave.	733-2066
Paris Las Vegas	3655 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	946-7000
Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino	3700 W. Flamingo Road	777-7777
Riviera Hotel Casino	2901 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	734-5110
Rosemary's	8125 W. Sahara Ave.	869-2251
Sahara Hotel and Casino	2535 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	737-2515
Second Street Grill	200 E. Fremont St.	385-6277
Stardust Resort and Casino	3000 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	732-6111
Suncoast Hotel and Casino	9090 Alta Drive	636-7111
Treasure Island Las Vegas	3300 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	796-9999
Triple George Grill	201 N. Third St.	384-2761
Tropicana Resort and Casino	3801 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	739-2222
Venetian Resort Hotel	3355 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	414-1000
Wynn Las Vegas	3131 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	770-9966

*Las Vegas unless otherwise specified.

**Area code 702 unless otherwise specified.

DIRECTORY (cont.)

Attractions and Shopping	Address*	Phone**
Atomic Testing Museum	755 E. Flamingo Road	794-5151
Bonnie Springs and Old Nevada	Red Rock Canyon	875-4191
Boulder City/Hoover Dam Museum	1305 Arizona St., Boulder City	294-1988
Howard W. Cannon Aviation Museum	McCarran International Airport	455-7968
Clark County Museum	1830 S. Boulder Highway	455-7955
Elvis-a-Rama Museum	3401 Industrial Road	309-7200
Ethel M Chocolates Factory and Cactus Gardens	2 Cactus Garden Drive, Henderson	433-2500
Fashion Show Mall	3200 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	369-8382
Flyaway Indoor Skydiving	200 Convention Center Drive	731-4768
Fremont Street Experience	Fremont Street	(800) 249-3559
Las Vegas Art Museum	9600 W. Sahara Ave.	360-8000
Las Vegas Motor Speedway	7000 Las Vegas Blvd. N.	(800) 644-4444
Las Vegas Natural History Museum	900 Las Vegas Blvd. N.	384-3466
Liberace Museum	1775 E. Tropicana Ave.	798-5595
Lied Discovery Children's Museum	833 Las Vegas Blvd. N.	382-3445
Lost City Museum of Archaeology	721 S. Moapa Valley Blvd., Overton	397-2193
Nevada State Museum and Historical Society	700 Twin Lakes Drive	486-5205
Old Las Vegas Mormon State Historic Park	500 E. Washington St.	486-3511
University of Nevada-Las Vegas Performing Arts Center	4505 Maryland Parkway	895-2787
Golf		
Bali Hai Golf Club	5160 Las Vegas Blvd. S.	450-8000
Bear's Best	11111 W. Flamingo Road	804-8500
Cascata Golf Club	1 Cascata Drive, Boulder City	294-2000
Primm Valley Golf Club	31900 S. Las Vegas Blvd., Primm	679-5510
Reflection Bay Golf Club	75 MonteLago Blvd., Henderson	740-4653
Rio Secco Golf Club	2851 Grand Hills Drive, Henderson	777-2400
Royal Links Golf Club	5995 E. Vegas Valley Road	450-8000
Shadow Creek Golf Club	3 Shadow Creek Drive, N. Las Vegas	791-7161
TPC at the Canyons	9851 Canyon Run Drive	256-2000
Wolf Creek Golf Resort	403 Paradise Parkway, Mesquite	346-1670

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