

Planning Your Trip to Las Vegas

In the pages that follow, you'll find everything you need to know to handle the practical details of planning your trip: airlines and area airports, a calendar of events, a list of conventions you may want to avoid, resources for those with special needs, and much more.

We also suggest that you check out chapter 8, "Las Vegas After Dark," before you leave home; if you want to see the most popular shows, it's a good idea to call ahead and order tickets well in advance to avoid disappointment. (Ditto if you want to dine in one of the city's top restaurants; head to chapter 4, "Where to Dine," for full reviews and contact information.)

1 Visitor Information

For advance information, call or write the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority**, 3150 Paradise Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89109 (☎ 877/VISIT-LV or 702/892-0711; www.visitlasvegas.com). They can send you a comprehensive packet containing brochures, a map, a show guide, an events calendar, and an attractions list; help you find a hotel (and even make reservations); and tell you whether a major convention is scheduled during the time you'd like to visit. Or stop by when you're in town. They're open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Another excellent information source is the **Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce**, 3720 Howard Hughes Pkwy., #100, Las Vegas, NV 89109 (☎ 702/735-1616; www.lvchamber.com). Ask them to send you their *Visitor Guide*, which contains extensive information about accommodations, attractions, excursions, children's activities, and more. They can answer all your Vegas questions. They're open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm.

Tips **Getting Cash**

Don't worry about running short on cash while in Las Vegas. ATMs practically carpet the city; no one wants you to find yourself without cash you could lose in a slot machine! Beware of withdrawal charges, though, which can often run as high as \$3 (the highest charges are usually for commercial machines in convenience stores and hotel lobbies).

For information on all of Nevada, including Las Vegas, contact the **Nevada Commission on Tourism** (☎ 800/638-2328; www.travelnevada.com). They'll send you a comprehensive information packet on Nevada.

2 When to Go

Most of a Las Vegas vacation is spent indoors; you can have a good time here year-round. The most pleasant seasons are spring and fall, especially if you want to experience the great outdoors.

Weekdays are slightly less crowded than weekends. Holidays are always a mob scene and come accompanied by high hotel prices. Hotel prices also skyrocket when big conventions and special events are taking place. The slowest times of year are June and July, the week before Christmas, and the week after New Year's.

If a major convention is to be held during your trip, you might want to change your date. Check the box below for convention dates, and contact the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority** (☎ 877/VISIT-LV or 702/892-7575; www.visitlasvegas.com), as convention schedules often change.

THE WEATHER

First of all, Vegas isn't always hot, but when it is hot, it's *really* hot. Still, the dry desert heat is not unbearable. The unfortunate exception is most of the hotel pool areas—they are surrounded by massive hotels covered in mirrored glass, which acts as a giant magnifying glass, focusing the sun's rays on the people below. Generally the humidity averages a low 22%, and there's almost always a breeze. Also, barring the hottest summer days, there's relief at night when temperatures often drop by at least 20°F (11°C).

Moments **New Year's Eve in Las Vegas**

Over the past couple years, more and more people have been choosing Las Vegas as their party destination for New Year's Eve. Although not quite a rival, in terms of sheer numbers, for New York City's Times Square, the Strip has become a major destination for New Year's Eve revelers.

From experience, we can tell you that a lot of people (we mean a *lot*) come here on December 31. Traffic is a nightmare, parking is next to impossible, and it feels like every square inch of the place is occupied by a human being. Las Vegas doesn't really need a reason to throw a party, but when an event like this comes along, they do it up right. A major portion of the Strip is closed down, sending the masses and their substantial quantities of alcohol into the street. Each year's celebration is a little different but usually includes a street-side performance by a major celebrity, confetti, the obligatory countdown, and fireworks.

Las Vegas's Average Temperatures (°F/°C) & Precipitation

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg. Temp. (°F)	47	52	58	66	75	86	91	89	81	69	55	47
Avg. Temp. (°C)	8	11	14	19	24	30	33	32	27	21	13	8
Avg. High Temp. (°F)	57	63	69	78	88	99	104	102	94	81	66	57
Avg. High Temp. (°C)	14	17	21	26	31	37	40	39	34	27	19	14
Avg. Low Temp. (°F)	37	41	47	54	63	72	78	77	69	57	44	37
Avg. Low Temp. (°C)	3	5	8	12	17	22	26	25	21	14	7	3
Avg. Precip. (in.)	0.59	0.69	0.59	0.15	0.24	0.08	0.44	0.45	0.31	0.24	0.31	0.40
Avg. Precip. (cm)	1.5	1.8	1.5	0.4	0.6	0.2	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.8	1.0

But this is the desert, and it's not boiling all year-round. Las Vegas can get quite cold, especially in the winter, nighttime temperatures can drop to 30°F (−1°C) and lower. The winter breeze can also become a cold, biting, strong wind of up to 40 mph or more. And so there are entire portions of the year when you won't be using that hotel swimming pool at all (even if you want to—be aware that most of the hotels close huge chunks of those fabulous swimming pool areas for “the season,” which can be as long as from Labor Day to Memorial Day). If you aren't traveling at the height of summer, bring a wrap. Also, remember your sunscreen and hat—even if it's not all that hot, you can burn very easily and very fast.

Major Convention Dates for 2008

Listed below are Las Vegas's major annual conventions with projected attendance figures for 2008; believe us, you probably want to avoid the biggies. Because convention schedules frequently change, contact the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority** (☎ 877/VISIT-LV or 702/892-7575; www.visitlasvegas.com) to double-check the latest info before you commit to your travel dates.

Event	Dates	Expected Attendance
Consumer Electronics Show	Jan 8–11	185,000
World of Concrete Exposition	Jan 23–26	80,000
World Market Center	Jan 29–Feb 2	65,000
Associated Surplus Dealers	Feb 25–Mar 1	62,000
National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)	Apr 16–19	110,000
Associated Surplus Dealers	Aug 12–16	60,000
Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA)	Oct 30–Nov 2	120,000

3 Money-Saving Package Deals

Before you start your search for the lowest airfare, you may want to consider booking your flight as part of a travel package. Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as car rentals, airport transfers, and sometimes even activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices. Las Vegas is a very popular package destination, so it pays to shop around to get the best deal.

One good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800/654-6559; www.deltavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/301-3800; www.covacations.com), **Southwest Airlines** (☎ 800/435-9792; www.southwest.com), and **United Vacations** (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Site59, and Lastminute.com—also do a brisk business in packages.

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in the national travel magazines such as *Budget Travel Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*.

Before you invest in a package deal, always ask about the **cancelation policy** and **accommodations choices**, and look for **hidden expenses**, such as taxes.

4 Getting There

BY PLANE

Given the shambles the airline industry is in, writing this section makes us wince. Be aware that the future of some of the following airlines was in varying degrees of doubt as we went to press.

The following airlines have regularly scheduled flights into Las Vegas (some of these are regional carriers, so they may not all fly from your point of origin): **AeroMexico** (☎ 800/237-6639; www.aeromexico.com); **Air Canada** (☎ 800/776-3000; www.aircanada.ca); **Alaska Airlines** (☎ 800/426-0333; www.alaskaair.com); **Allegiant Air** (☎ 877/202-6444; www.allegiantair.com); **Aloha Air** (☎ 800/367-5250; www.alohaairlines.com); **American/American Eagle** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com); **American Trans Air** (☎ 800/435-9282; www.ata.com); **Continental** (☎ 800/525-0280; www.continental.com); **Delta/Skywest** (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com); **Frontier Airlines** (☎ 800/432-1359; www.flyfrontier.com); **Harmony Airways** (☎ 866/248-6789; www.hmyairways.com); **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com); **Japan Airlines** (☎ 800/525-3663; www.jal.co.jp/en); **JetBlue** (☎ 800/538-2583; www.jetblue.com); **Mexicana Airlines** (☎ 800/531-7921; www.mexicana.com); **Midwest Airlines** (☎ 800/452-2022; www.midwestairlines.com); **Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com); **Philippine Airlines** (☎ 800/435-9725; www.philippineairlines.com); **Southwest Airlines** (☎ 800/435-9792; www.southwest.com); **Spirit Airlines** (☎ 800/772-7117; www.spiritair.com); **Ted Airlines** (☎ 800/225-5833; www.flyted.com); **United Air Lines** (☎ 800/241-6522; www.united.com); **US Airways** (☎ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com); and **Virgin Atlantic Airways** (☎ 800/862-8621; www.virgin-atlantic.com).

You can also search the **Internet** for cheap fares. The most popular online travel agencies are **Travelocity.com** (www.travelocity.co.uk); **Expedia.com** (www.expedia.co.uk and www.expedia.ca); and

Orbitz.com. In the U.K., go to **Travelsupermarket** (© 0845/345-5708; www.travelsupermarket.com), a flight search engine that offers flight comparisons for the budget airlines whose seats often end up in bucket-shop sales. Other websites for booking airline tickets online include **Cheapflights.com**, **SmarterTravel.com**, **Priceline.com**, and **Opodo** (www.opodo.co.uk). Meta search sites (which find and then direct you to airline and hotel websites for booking) include **Sidestep.com** and **Kayak.com**—the latter includes fares for budget carriers, such as JetBlue and Spirit, as well as the major airlines.

BY CAR

The main highway connecting Las Vegas with the rest of the country is I-15; it links Montana, Idaho, and Utah with Southern California. The drive from Los Angeles is popular and, thanks to the narrow two-lane highway, can get very crowded on Friday and Sunday afternoons as weekend gamblers make their way to and from Las Vegas. An expansion project is widening most of that stretch of road to three lanes in each direction, but until that project is complete, expect construction delays and often dangerous road conditions.

From the east, take I-70 or I-80 west to Kingman, Arizona, and then U.S. 93 north to Downtown Las Vegas (Fremont St.). From the south, take I-10 west to Phoenix and then U.S. 93 north to Las Vegas. From San Francisco, take I-80 east to Reno and then U.S. 95 south to Las Vegas. If you're driving to Las Vegas, be sure to read the driving precautions in "Getting Around" in chapter 2.

Vegas is 286 miles from Phoenix, 759 miles from Denver, 421 miles from Salt Lake City, 269 miles from Los Angeles, and 586 miles from San Francisco.

BY TRAIN

Amtrak (© 800/USA-RAIL; www.amtrak.com) does not currently offer direct rail service, although plans have been in the works to restore the rails between Los Angeles and Las Vegas for years. At press time, Amtrak wouldn't confirm a date, but various reports have indicated that eventually they will restore service using the **Talgo**. This European-designed "Casino Train" will complete the trip from Los Angeles in about 5½ hours, with a wholesale seat price of \$99 round-trip. We've been hearing these reports for so long now, they just make us roll our eyes, but if and when this ever happens, you will have to fight us for a seat. In the meantime, you can take the train to Los Angeles or Barstow, and Amtrak will get you to Las Vegas by bus.