

# Las Vegas & Nevada

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Raku (p81)
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- ➔ Bouchon (p80)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Encore (p77)
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- ➔ Tahoma Meadows B&B Cottages (p107)

## Why Go?

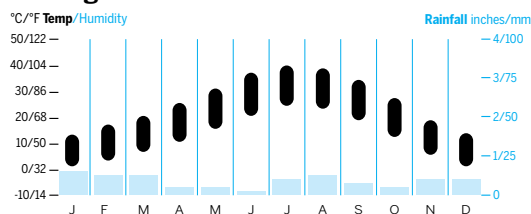
From ski boots to stilettos, Nevada is a paradox, a place of contrasts and contradictions, which could make packing tricky. Vast, empty and the driest state in the nation, it's only recently coming into its own as an outdoors destination. Three-quarters of the population surrounds the desert star of Las Vegas, a glittering world unto itself.

In this libertarian state, freedom rules. Rural brothels coexist with Mormon churches, slot machines and Basque cowboy culture. The ghost of the Wild West persists in old silver-mining towns, while Vegas polishes its own brand of modern-day lawlessness.

Seeking thrills? Start on the Vegas Strip, but don't hesitate to step into Nevada's wide wilderness. The cobalt lakes and snowy mountains around Reno and Tahoe are a world away from the Great Basin expanses and the lonely curves of Highway 50, where fighter jets pierce the sky...or was that alien spacecraft?

## When to Go

### Las Vegas



**Apr–May** Southern Nevada is balmy by day and pleasantly cool at night.

**Dec** Sin City deals in excess, yet it's never more buck wild than at Christmas.

**Jun–Aug** While temps soar, low season in Las Vegas means great hotel deals.

## Vegas Planning

Planning a Vegas trip can be strangely counterintuitive, because Vegas refuses to play by the rules of most cities. First off: though parking is widely free, it's not time or cost-effective to rent a car unless you'll be doing a lot of day trips. Stick to taxis, walking and the good bus/monorail system while exploring the city. Dinner reservations are often necessary; note that many high-end restaurants, bars and nightclubs enforce a dress code.

### DON'T MISS

Even if late nights, gambling and neon aren't your style, cut loose and cruise Las Vegas' infamous **Strip** for at least a day or two: chill out poolside at a 4-star resort, hit the clubs, and splurge on steak and martinis in Rat Pack style. While you're there, don't miss a **Cirque du Soleil show**.

In a state known for lovably bizarre small towns, the prize for the most unique is a toss-up between **Virginia City**, where the gold rush and the Wild West live on, or spirited **Elko**, with its Basque restaurants and cowboy poetry festival.

For incomparable outdoor bliss, **Lake Tahoe** offers fairy-tale ski slopes come winter and pristine beaches in summer. If untamed wilderness strikes your fancy, you'll want to get lost in the vast **Great Basin National Park** or brave the eerily deserted **US Highway 50**, nicknamed the 'Loneliest Road in America.'

Finally, the hottest place in Nevada is also home to one of the Southwest's most unique annual events: the **Burning Man** festival, where iconoclasts, rebels, artists, soul-seekers and the irrepressibly curious celebrate and create in the shimmering heat of the Black Rock Desert.

## Tips for Drivers

- ➔ Most drivers speed across Nevada on interstate highways I-80 or I-15.
- ➔ It takes less than two hours to drive 125 miles from Primm, on the California state line, to Mesquite near the Utah border via I-15; the best overnight stop along this route is Las Vegas.
- ➔ When driving across the state on I-80, Winnemucca and Elko are the most interesting places to pull off for a night's sleep.
- ➔ Note that US Hwy 95 may be the quickest route between Las Vegas and Reno, but it's still a full day's drive without much to see or do along the way.
- ➔ For road conditions, call ☎ 877-687-6237 or visit [www.nvroads.com](http://www.nvroads.com).

### TIME ZONE

Nevada is in the Pacific Time Zone (eight hours behind GMT). The exception is West Wendover, which is on Mountain Time.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population** 2.8 million
- ➔ **Area** 109,800 sq miles
- ➔ **Sales tax** 6.85%
- ➔ **Las Vegas to Grand Canyon, AZ** 275 miles, 4½ hours
- ➔ **Highest point** Boundary Peak (13,147ft)
- ➔ **Lowest point** Colorado River at California border (481ft)

## You Have Company

Las Vegas has more hotel rooms than anywhere in the world.

## Resources

- ➔ **Nevada Commission on Tourism** (☎ 800-638-2328; [www.travelnevada.com](http://www.travelnevada.com))
- ➔ **Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority** ([www.visitlasvegas.com](http://www.visitlasvegas.com))
- ➔ **VEGAS.com** ([www.vegas.com](http://www.vegas.com))
- ➔ **Nevada Division of State Parks** (☎ 775-684-2770; [www.parks.nv.gov](http://www.parks.nv.gov))