

ANTHONY CURTIS' **Las Vegas** Advisor

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\$5

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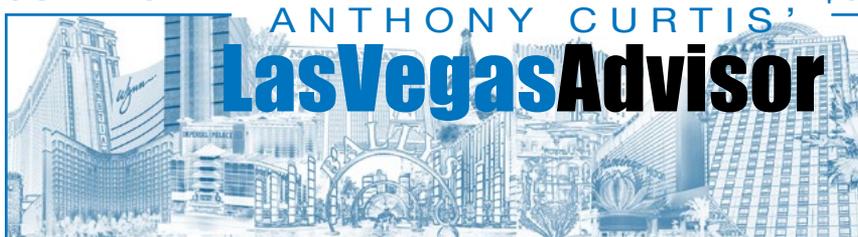
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COUPONOMY

by Anthony Curtis

Slowdown?

It's been about a year now since I ended a COUPONOMY column with the following statement with regard to casino gouging and tightening:

"Right now, the casino bosses are just plain giddy and they'll ride this new normal as long as they can. But eventually, they'll have to revert to the old normal. ... Just as has always been the case, some casino will step out of line and take advantage of the promotional opportunities that accrue to 'doing it the way it used to be.' You know, BP, 'before pandemic.' Then others will be forced to follow. ... Hang in there. It'll happen. It pretty much has to."

It took a year, but we're getting to that point.

How could we not? Inflation is raging, the stock market is dropping, interest rates are rising, gas is \$5+ a gallon, and that's just the start of it. Forget the who's-fault-is-it political squabbling. For the sake of this discussion, it doesn't matter. All that matters is that it's real and it's affecting consumer behavior.

Some evidence of this can be found in the "Statistics" section of this issue's [News](#). Here's a snippet from a report that we didn't include there: "A warning spot on visitation was the average daily traffic between Las Vegas and southern California, which has trended downward with higher gas prices. ... 48,589 vehicles crossed from California into Nevada on I-15 in April, 4.1% below the 50,656 a day in April 2021."

Five-dollar gas will do that (Nevada's \$5.50 per gallon is now second-highest in the nation, behind only California). And fares are rising. Warning spot, indeed.

Don't take my word for it. In comments to the Nevada Gaming Commission (regarding the Circa Sports' expansion into Reno), Circa owner Derek Stevens reminded commissioners that in April, he told CNBC that he was worried about inflation. "Since then, we've started to see its impact on slots, tables, and beverages. We have a growing concern with regard to some of the telltale signs that we watch." One of those signs is daily

Couponomy continued ...

ATM withdrawals: “From April to May, the average withdrawal amount was down the most I’ve ever seen in my career—11%,” he said. He’s also seen “a significant reduction in uncarded play,” meaning non-members of the players club (i.e., not regular customers) are cutting back on visits.

He didn’t say it, but I half-expected Stevens to conclude with a nod to *Apollo 13*, “Vegas, we have a problem.”

Result? We’ve seen some good promotional mail coming out of Circa recently (go there, play some, and get on their list). MGM, Caesars, Station, and Boyd are already muttering about additional cost cutting, but that’s not gonna get it done. If what Stevens says is true for other casinos (and it almost certainly is), they’ll have no choice but to finally jump off the gouge-wagon.

Hang in there. It’ll happen. It pretty much has to. ■

Room Rates

As longtime *LVA* readers know, we do comprehensive room-rate surveys in December and July. To say we experienced some trepidation leading up to this one is an understatement, given that all we’ve heard about for the past year now is how rates are soaring (another new record in May for the reported average daily room rate: \$175.76, 25% higher than May 2019). As it turns out, rates are still somewhat high in comparison to bargain periods in previous years, but our survey results don’t support the hyperbole that’s out there.

Following are this year’s findings. There were 99 casinos in the survey. The listed quotes are base rates and do not include resort fees. Last year, 30 casinos had base rates of \$50 or below. This year, it’s 38. For the second consecutive July, there are no casinos in the “\$20 and under” group, so that category isn’t included. The lowest base rate was \$23 at OYO. Note that these rates were available when we checked, but can change at any time—we can’t guarantee that you’ll get all of the listed prices.

\$30 and under—OYO, Rio, Silver Sevens, Circus Circus, Ellis Island, Excalibur.

\$40 and under—El Cortez, Golden Gate, Harrah’s, LINQ, Luxor, Serene, The STRAT, Tropicana, Wild Wild West.

\$50 and under—Arizona Charlie’s Boulder, Arizona Charlie’s Decatur, Bion’s, Boulder Station, Downtown Grand, the D, Gold Coast, Gold

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Spike, Longhorn, Lucky Club, Main Street Station, NY-NY, Tuscany.

High End—Sahara \$57, Flamingo \$59, Park MGM \$62, Planet Hollywood \$69, Treasure Island \$69, MGM \$71, Palms \$79, Golden Nugget \$79, Resorts World \$89, MGM Signature \$89, Paris \$89, M Resort \$99, Palms Place \$109, Virgin \$112, Mandalay Bay \$117, Caesars Palace \$119, Aria \$125, Vdara \$125, Trump \$135, Nobu \$142, GVR \$149, Circa \$159, Cromwell \$159, Red Rock \$159, Venetian \$159, Nomad \$161, Elara \$172, Bellagio \$179, English \$189.

Sometimes people get on our case for presenting the numbers without resort fees included. These surveys are the only place we do that, because we want to keep the comparisons with previous surveys valid (all other references *LVA* makes to room rates include RFs, as should be done everywhere).

Of course, adding the RFs changes things. OYO has a \$23 base rate, but also a \$37 RF, so the real rate (before taxes) is \$60. Crazy. Four Queens and Binion's don't charge RFs, so their base rate of \$59 is the total rate and comes in \$1 lower than OYO's. Looking at the list with all RFs added in, we get lowest rates at The STRAT \$67, Golden Gate \$63, El Cortez \$62.95, Silver Sevens \$62.63, and Wild Wild West, the lowest at \$51.66. All pretty darned good for a night in Vegas!

*LVA*ers can do better. Using the MRB discounts, it's \$50.40 per night at Silver Sevens and \$50.15 per night at Binion's—both hotels are also highly preferable to Wild Wild West. The MRB discounts also reduce the per-night rates at The STRAT (\$57.40) and at the Plaza (from \$93 to \$76.75). ■

NEWS

Plaza—Downtown's Plaza is adding a circular bar beneath its portico dome and a new casino annex. The Carousel Bar will be a 2,500-square-foot outdoor venue that looks directly onto the Fremont Street Experience. The bar will connect to the new casino area that will be downtown's first completely smoke-free gaming space. It will also be designed to be social-media friendly—e.g., unlicensed music will play so it can be recorded in videos without copyright issues. An outdoor patio for Oscar's Steakhouse will be built on top of the casino expansion, and a Pinkbox Doughnuts outlet is being built near the front entrance of the casino. The additions are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Dream—An official ground-breaking for Dream Las Vegas is scheduled for July 8. The five-acre \$500 million 20-story 531-room property was announced in February 2020, but there were delays due to Dream's problematic location near the airport. The project is now scheduled for completion in the summer of 2024.

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News continued ...

Closed Stations—The North Las Vegas City Council has given approval for Texas Station and Fiesta Rancho to remain “non-operational” for another year. City councilors agreed to suspend the requirement in the NLV business code that gaming licensees are limited to two one-year non-operational periods; this is the third. However, in order to maintain their gaming licenses, the casinos are required to open for one day four times in the next year, which will necessitate the so-called “Trailer Stations”: trailers with a handful of slot machines wheeled on and off the properties once per quarter. Don’t expect any surprise openings, we’re told the casinos have had most of their contents removed. This extension doesn’t apply to Fiesta Henderson, which is currently protected until the end of this year.

Hawaiian Marketplace—Almost all of the restaurants and gift shops that made up the Hawaiian Marketplace and neighboring Cable Center, located across the Strip from CityCenter, have closed. It might have something to do with the recent purchase of the nearby Harmon parcel, but the owner of the property says he’s clearing the way for a “new flagship retail, entertainment, and dining experience.”

Downtown Loop—An expansion of the Las Vegas Loop underground tunnel system to downtown has been approved. The tunnel will be dug below Las Vegas Blvd. all the way to Fremont Street. No timetable has been announced.

Primm—There’s a little bit of casino roulette going on in Primm. After receiving a report that Buffalo Bill’s had reopened, we called to confirm and were told that it did, then closed again. Further, the PBX operator indicated that Primm Valley and Whiskey Pete’s are both open, although we’d heard nothing about Pete’s having returned after the shutdown. So as of now, it appears that two of the Primm trio of casinos are open, with Buffalo Bill’s joining them on select weekends.

Lake Mead—The water level of Lake Mead dropped below 30% for the first time since it rose above it as it was filling up in 1942. The U.S Bureau of Reclamation announced the 29% number in its latest report. The water level is now 1,046 feet in elevation, down 40-plus feet from two years ago,

Room Counts

According to Statista.com, at the end of 2021 Las Vegas had a total of 150,487 hotel rooms. That includes all rooms on the Strip, downtown, locals casinos, and non-casino properties. That’s slightly up from the 2019 pre-pandemic count of 149,422, due mostly to the opening of Resorts World and Circa, which more than made up for rooms lost at hotels that didn’t re-open after the shutdown.

TOP 10 VALUES

We had to think about putting room rates at the top after our July survey, but given the significant improvement over last year, we made the move. See why we paused, along with the results of the survey, in **COUPONOMY**. The Ellis Island complete steak dinner moves to the #2 spot to make room for the

rates. Served 24/7 in the Café, get the \$9.99 price by playing at least \$5 in any slot machine with your club card inserted, then downloading the required discount coupon from an EI kiosk. If you don't want to play, you can get it for \$12.99 (\$3 off the listed price) just by downloading a coupon from the kiosk that's available to everyone with a club card. South Point (#3) remains the best value of the now 13 operating buffets in Las Vegas. Breakfast, which includes unlimited bloody Marys, is the best deal; show a club card to get the \$10.95 price. Budweiser and Michelob Light in the bottle are \$1 at the Stage Door slot house on Flamingo, just east of the Strip (#4); a ¼-pound hot dog and a Bud is \$3. With the average price of a show ticket now more than \$100, The STRAT's *iLuminate* (#5) is easily the best show value in town. Tickets for this high-energy choreographic tour de force can be found for under \$50 (\$43 with our MRB offer), well below the standard for a show of this quality. The hot dogs at South Point (#6) are sold from a cart in the sports book from 11 am until they close down the cart around 5 pm. The value of this deal becomes even clearer now that its nearest competitor has sustained a 333% price increase (see **DINING**). OYO's \$1-minimum blackjack game (#7) runs 24/7 in the pit; naturals pay even money on bets of \$1-\$4. The \$1.20 listed cost is your expected loss for one hour of play at these stakes. The shrimp cocktail at the Fremont (#8) is served in the Lanai Express snack bar all hours except 7 to 11 am daily. Everything on the lunch menu is \$4.99 at Ocean One Bar & Grill in the Miracle Mile Shops at Planet Hollywood (#9), available daily from 11:30 am to 5 pm. The "Gambler's Special" at Downtown Grand (#10) is an insta-comp—play \$50 through a machine and get 50% off a selection of meals, or a good prime rib for \$9.99. The expected loss for the play-through is about 50¢, which is included in the price determination.

1. Room Rates • Wild Wild West et al • \$52 and up
2. Steak Dinner • Ellis Island • 24 hours • \$9.99
3. Buffet • South Point • Daily • \$10.95-\$39.95
4. Beer • Stage Door • 24 hours • \$1
5. *iLuminate* • The STRAT • Tues.-Sun. • \$42-\$64
6. Hot Dog • South Point • Daily • \$1.50
7. \$1 Blackjack • OYO • Daily • \$1.20
8. Shrimp Cocktail • Fremont • Daily • 99¢
9. Lunch • Planet Hollywood • Daily • \$4.99
10. Prime Rib • Downtown Grand • Daily • \$5.50-\$10.50

and could fall another 25 feet by 2024. The reservoir needs to drop another 150 feet, however, before it reaches "dead-pool" status, meaning no more water can be pumped.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

News continued ...

Gas—The average price of a gallon of gas in Nevada has moved into second place nationwide, edging out Hawaii for the dubious distinction. The \$5.49 per gallon statewide is nearly 63¢ above the national average.

Mississippi—As of this month, Silver Slipper Casino in Bay St. Louis is adults only. It joins Treasure Bay Casino in Biloxi and Island View Casino in Gulfport, both of which reopened after the pandemic with a 21-and-over policy.

Statistics—Nevada’s statewide gambling win was up 8.6% in April compared to the same month last year. The \$1.1 billion win marked the 14th consecutive month above \$1 billion, but there are signs of a pullback. The Strip win was up 22.8%, but downtown dropped 11.4%. Other sub-markets were 50/50 in increased or decreased win. One interesting determination was that the NFL draft was disappointing. One analyst indicated that the expected 600,000 visitors turned out to be about half that and that it wasn’t a gambling crowd.

Visitation was up 31.4%, with 3.4 million coming to town. Hotel occupancy hit a post-pandemic high of 84.0%, with 93.2% weekends and 79.4% weekdays.

Airline traffic was up 46.4% over last year, with 4.3 million travelers. The lifting of COVID-test requirements for international travelers entering the U.S. is expected to further stimulate foreign visitation. Korean Air resumes service between Seoul Incheon Airport and Reid International this month. Meanwhile, Harry Reid International was ranked first in the world for post-pandemic “capacity recovery.” ■

Sports Betting Scorecard

A second bill that allows mobile sports betting has qualified for the California ballot in November; the first bill allows in-person wagering only. Efforts to expand sports betting beyond Native American operations in North Carolina have stalled for this year.

Carnival Corp., operator of more than 50 cruise ships, has entered into an agreement with BetMGM to offer onboard sports betting and casino games. Cruise ships have offered gambling for years, which is allowed while the ships are sailing international waters, but this will be a first for sports betting and iGaming.

Sports betting is now legal (though not necessarily active) in all but the following 15 states: Alabama, Alaska, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Vermont.

Follow the progress of sports betting legalization across the country and track developments as they occur via our map at LasVegasAdvisor.com. ■

DINING

Buffet Update

Bellagio has dropped the price of weekday brunch from \$49.99 to \$41.99 and weekend brunch from \$59.99 to \$49.99. That's a big reset, but warranted, based on current quality as pointed out in our May review. Circus Circus has also lowered prices, though just by \$1, for brunch (\$25.99) and dinner (\$27.99). The Palms is now taking phone numbers and texting when you get near the top of the waiting list for the Wednesday lobster buffet. It's an important move that eliminates the need to stand in line for four hours, but the wait time is still the same. Westgate appears to be back on a reliable schedule, serving breakfast (\$20), lunch (\$23), and weekend brunch (\$27), so we're now counting 13 active buffets.

All changes at all buffets are incorporated in the buffet listings at [Las VegasAdvisor.com](https://www.lasvegasadvisor.com). Here's the current list of operating buffets in order of overall pricing, from lowest to highest: South Point, Rampart, Westgate, Main Street Station, Circus Circus, Excalibur, Luxor, MGM Grand, Palms, Cosmopolitan, Bellagio, Wynn, Caesars Palace. ■

Pine Dining

Now here's something different. Starting July 23, Ellis Island will host a summer chef series called Pine Dining, named for its location at the Mt. Charleston Lodge. It marks the return of the Lodge after it was closed down by a fire last summer. The series features local chefs, with proceeds going to local charities. On Saturdays, there'll be "cookout-style" food stations for sampling different dishes and Sundays will feature chef's-table dinners. Access will be by shuttle service only, with pick-up and return in Las Vegas. A lodging option is available if you want to spend the night. Prices for the dinners are \$75 on Saturdays and \$125 on Sundays and it's a true all-star line-up of chefs: James Trees (Esther's Kitchen) July 23/24, Justin Hall (Main Street Provisions) July 30/31, Colin Fukunaga (Fuku Burger) and Dan Coughlin (Le Thai) Aug. 6, and Nicole Brisson (Breeza) Aug. 13/14. For more information go to mtcharlestonlodge.com/pinedining. ■

Two Big Steakhouses

We recently ate at two big-name steakhouses: Edge and Carversteak. The food and service were top notch at both. Of course they were—are any of the big Vegas steakhouses bad? *No*. They're often overpriced, which might label them undesirable to some, but in reality, they're all pretty

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Dining continued ...

fab. They're all pretty similar, too. A true-blue connoisseur might be able to distinguish between one \$70 grass-fed dry-aged ribeye and another, but the rest of us can't. We just know that if we have a comp, we're going and to heck with the price points. If we're paying, though, the primary interest is: "What's it gonna cost me to eat an awesome steak?" And when you go to these places, that's what you want to do, not save a few bucks on the chicken dish. So rather than talk about how good our meals were, let's look at some big-steakhouse financials.

Edge Steakhouse (Westgate)—Steaks start at \$48 for an 8-ounce top sirloin. A 7-ounce filet is \$54 and a 10-ounce is \$64. A 20-ounce bone-in ribeye is \$76. Steaks are a la carte; soups, salads, and appetizers are \$14 (French onion soup) to \$27 (shrimp cocktail). Edge has three-course prix fixe deals for \$95 and \$105 that are a good way to go with the built-in price cap.

Carversteak (Resorts World)—Steaks start at \$50 for an 8-ounce filet. A 16-ounce bone-in ribeye or a 20-ounce Kansas City is \$72. You can go wild here with the A-5 Wagyu thing for \$52 per ounce (4-ounce min.); a 42-ounce C3 tomahawk is \$240. Steaks are a la carte; soups, salads, and appetizers are \$17 (Caesar salad) to \$27 (steak tartare).

At either place, you're looking at about \$100 per person if you frugal it without drinks. Edge is a classic quiet room. Overall fab. Carversteak is a bit hectic, populated by a distinctly younger crowd. Some items were overly salty. Still fab. ■

An Alternative (Clever)

Steaks start at \$37 for an 8-ounce flatiron. Or do they? We'll get back to that. Clever Butchered Meats, Seafood, and Classic Cocktails (yes, that's the name) is a non-casino steakhouse at 3900 Paradise Rd., about a mile south of Westgate. It's run by the same owner as Herbs and Rye (see "Bars & Happy Hours" in [ENTERTAINMENT](#)), both of which are easy choices for a good steak that doesn't break the bank. The "trick" at Clever is to order the happy-hour items, which include several steaks—for example, the 9-ounce filet listed at \$62 is \$50 on the HH deal, the 12-ounce New York strip for \$54 is \$36, and that \$37 flatiron is just \$21.

Here's the cool little secret: Happy hour runs during the entire time the restaurant is open. "Doesn't that mean the real price is \$21 for the steak?" we asked the waitress. She winked and walked away.

There's a bit of a giveback on appetizers and sides, but you can navigate those (the cauliflower au gratin and pork belly mac 'n' cheese are worth the \$15 each). We got stung on a \$21 glass of wine on our last visit (but that was due to lazily not checking the price after the recommenda-

tion). To top it off, this is a cool place with a great locals vibe. It gets busy, but you can usually get a seat and eat at the video poker-less bar. ■

A Second Alternative (Jake's Bar)

OK, you'll be able to tell the difference in quality here, but we have to give Jake's props for holding the \$12 line on its Friday (5-9 pm) 16-ounce T-bone special that comes with a salad, baked potato, and corn on the cob. All we know is we can feed 10 here for the price of one at a big steakhouse. The salad in this meal is worth a special mention. ■



T-bone special at Jake's bar

Strip View Café

The enigmatic Strip View Café is located on the west side at 3225 S. Rainbow. Enigmatic? That's a first for us in a restaurant review, but consider that this is a breakfast/lunch place that doesn't serve bacon & eggs, omelets, or even hash browns. Rather, the menu is all about bagels & lox, eggs Benedict, croissant French toast, frittatas made all kinds of ways, and smoothies. The frittatas come topped with bacon and your choice of four additional items from a selection of 16, including mushrooms, green peas, goat cheese, and sausage. The proprietors describe it as "American food with an Armenian influence," so you'll find items like khachapuri



Frittata at Strip View Café

(cheese-filled pastry), basturma (a type of dried beef), and borscht. Most selections—including creative sandwiches, pastas, and whole pizzas—are \$14.95-\$16.95; it's less for soups, salads, and some breakfast items (e.g., Bircher muesli and waffles). We've eaten here a few times and the bill has ranged from \$30 to \$53 for two. There's also a huge selection of hot/cold coffee and tea drinks (\$2.49-\$5.99) along with

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Dining continued ...

10 different smoothies (\$6.49-\$7.49, with \$1 power boosts). You can dine inside or out, but as to the restaurant's name, let's just say it's a bit ambitious. Hours are 8 am-3 pm (opens 9 am on weekends). ■

Dining Notes

Price Increases—Ring up another price hike for the steak/ham & eggs special at either Arizona Charlie's. After an increase from \$5.99 to \$6.99 in March, it's now \$8.99 with a players club card (\$7.99 for tiers above the introductory level). The price of the hot dog and chips at the Molly's slot houses, a TOP TEN selection earlier this year, has been raised from \$1.50 to \$5 for everyone. The \$1.50 price for players has been discontinued. The price of the Rum Runner hamburger has been raised for a third time this year, up 50¢ to \$8.49.

Steak & Wine—The steakhouses at Boyd casinos are running a Steak & Wine special in July. A three-course dinner for two featuring a 40-ounce tomahawk steak and two glasses of wine is \$140 at The Angry Butcher (Sam's Town), MRKT (Aliante), Cornerstone (Gold Coast), Alder & Birch (Orleans), and Carve (Cannery).

Dicey Discount—Twin Creeks Steakhouse at Silverton has an interesting promotion. Buy the tomahawk steak for \$140 and roll three dice for discounts. If the same number comes up on all three, you get 50%-100% off the price. We said interesting, not valuable: You expect to get the needed three-of-a-kind in less than 3% of rolls (1 in 36), and three 6s for a free dinner once in 216 tries.

Topless Triple—Sapphire Topless Pool & Dayclub is offering a three-course lunch for \$29, Fri.-Sun. from noon to 3 pm. The main-course choices are an Angus burger, club sandwich, Caesars salad with chicken or salmon, or Cobb salad; comes with appetizer and dessert. Parking and pool entry are free (it's OK to keep your top on). Mention our sister website, "[Topless Vegas Online](#)," and get a free cocktail with lunch. ■

Openings/Closings

The heralded Japanese restaurant Wakuda—chef Tetsuya Wakuda is a Michelin two-star recipient—has opened at Palazzo in the space that was formerly Morels. It's boasting a \$500 omakase dinner (let us know how it tastes).

Tacos & Tequila, the Mexican restaurant that had a 10-plus-year run at Luxor, has reopened at Palace Station in the space formerly occupied by Little Tony's near the sports book.

Top Round Roast Beef out of L.A. has opened in The Park at New York-New York in the space that was formerly Bruxie.

The Jonas family's Nellie's Southern Kitchen has opened at MGM Grand.

Zeppola Café has opened in the Grand Canal Shoppes at the Venetian.

An 18-seat seafood bar called Sea Fresh has opened at 3400 S. Jones in the space that was formerly Niu-Gu. According to a new dining section in the *LV Review-Journal* called "On the Side," it offers "hard-to-find" fish, such as abalone, fluke, and coral grouper.

Divine Café at the Springs Preserve has been replaced by the Springs Café. The restaurant was originally Springs Café by Wolfgang Puck (the last three words aren't attached this time).

Rosa Ristorante from Rob Moore, former executive chef at Bellagio's Prime Steakhouse, has opened at 3145 St. Rose Pkwy. in Henderson.

Wow Wow Hawaiian Lemonade has opened at 2390 E. Serene Ave. in Henderson, featuring several flavors of cold-pressed lemonade made with cane sugar and monk fruit. Sounds good.

Majordomo Meat & Fish and Moon Palace fast-food counter, both in celebrity chef David Chang's portfolio, have closed at the Palazzo. Chang still has a presence in Las Vegas with Momofuku and Bang Bar at Cosmopolitan.

Pasta Cucina, Slices Pizzeria, and Viva Salsa have closed permanently at Boulder Station, casualties of the new food court. ■

ENTERTAINMENT

Fireworks on the Fourth

Last year's Fourth of July fireworks extravaganza that emulated the coordinated New Year's Eve effort won't be repeated this year, but the sky above Las Vegas won't be dark. As Anthony Curtis remarked on an [LVA YouTube](#) video: "You really don't need a schedule to watch a fireworks show. Just look up." That works, but here's some more detail about what's planned.

In addition to small displays at parks around the city, fireworks will be launched from Caesars Palace and six Station casinos at 9 pm on the 4th. Last year, the only Station participants were Red Rock and Green Valley Ranch; this year, they're adding Palace, Boulder, Santa Fe, and Sunset Stations. There will also be 9 pm displays at Lake Las Vegas and Boulder City. At 10 pm, the Plaza will host a fireworks show downtown. What sounds like a pretty cool viewing party will take place in the Legacy Club at Circa from 8 to 10 pm. Tickets are \$100 for standing room in the rooftop venue, which includes an open bar. ■

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Elvis Assailed

For a while, it looked as though Las Vegas' famous Elvis weddings might be heading for extinction after Authentic Brands Group (ABG), the licensing company that owns the Elvis Presley brand, issued cease-and-desist letters to several chapels. A rash of negative news coverage has apparently put the brakes on the idea, at least for now. ABG says it's not trying to shut down the Vegas Elvis chapels or impersonators and is attempting to forge partnerships with the chapels. So all's good now? Everyone's acting like it is, but somehow it doesn't sound to us like this is over yet. ■

Bars and Happy Hours

At Virgin Las Vegas, wine by the bottle is half price on Wednesdays starting at 6 pm in Olives and Tuesdays and Wednesdays starting at 5 pm in Night + Market.

Mas Por Favor in Chinatown has a happy hour daily from 3 to 6 pm, with \$4 margaritas, beer, and well drinks and \$4-\$7 appetizers.

Rosa Ristorante (see [DINING](#)) has happy hours daily from 3 to 6 pm, Mon.-Thurs. from 8 to 9 pm, and Fri.-Sat. from 9 to 10 pm, with two beers, wine by the glass, specialty cocktails, and featured pizzas for \$10 each.

The Local, a wine bar in the District at Green Valley Ranch, has a happy hour Mon.-Fri. from 2 to 6 pm (from noon on Fridays), with \$5 beer and \$6 wine. Bottles of wine are 25%-off Mon.-Wed. from 5 to 10 pm.

The just-announced Carousel Bar is being described as a 120-seat "nightspot" positioned beneath the iconic lights of the Plaza portico (see this issue's cover). It will be an outdoor venue, protected from the elements to some degree by the portico, and feature moving carousel horses, spinning martini glasses, an oversized deck of cards, and a rotating ribbon of lights above the bar. No, cars will not be allowed to drive around it (good decision).

Atomic Liquors, the oldest stand-alone bar (not part of a casino or hotel) in Las Vegas celebrated its 70th anniversary last month. Atomic opened as a liquor store and tavern in 1952 and the bar has been featured in several movies, including *The Hangover*. It's located on East Fremont St., a block east of El Cortez.

In a new list called "North America's 50 Best Bars"—as voted by 220 drink experts from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean—Herbs and Rye (Sahara and Valley View) was the only Las Vegas representative. We've written about this bar many times for its excellent restaurant, cocktails, and overall vibe. But don't go if you want to watch sports or play video poker. A sports and gaming bar it ain't.

The Bacon Bar on N. Rancho Dr., a one-time “Bar Rescue” project, has closed.

At Nora’s Cuisine, a bottle of El Portillo Malbec is \$38. At Bonito Michoacan, a house Margarita is \$9 (\$11 upgraded to a Cadillac). In Chill ’M at the Tropicana, a Bud is \$9. At The Silver Stamp bar in the downtown Arts District, a Weissbier is \$8 and a Schwarzbier is \$7. At PKWY Tavern Decatur, a Heineken is \$7.59 and a well tequila is \$6.50. At Crown & Anchor West, a draft Stella Artois is \$7.25 (up 25¢). At Able Baker Brewing Company, a Dawn Breaker beer is \$5.42. At Wiseguy’s Comedy Club, a Corona is \$5.39. At Izakaya Go, a draft Kirin is \$5.36. ■

Entertainment Notes

\$50 Tickets—As part of its first-anniversary celebration, Resorts World is offering two tickets to one of its headliner shows for \$100 (\$112 after fees) through July 15. The choices are Luke Bryan, Journey, Katy Perry, Enrique Iglesias, and David Blaine. Great deal ... if you can get it. When we checked shortly after the announcement, only Katy Perry and David Blaine had tickets remaining. If you want to give it a try, log on to the rulasvegas.com and use code RWLV100.

Hologone—*An Evening with Whitney Houston*, the show at Harrah’s that featured a Whitney hologram, has closed. The producers say the show will embark on a world tour and a return to Las Vegas is anticipated.

Palms Pool—Questions about the disposition of the Palms pool complex under its new owner have been answered. SOAK Pool is open to

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Top 5 Las Vegas Residencies

BestOdds.com recently compiled a list of the top-five-grossing Las Vegas residencies in history, derived from *Billboard* magazine ticket-sales data. There’ve been a lot of residencies in the past 20 years and the list could have been made up of any of numerous big names, but the top five involved only three performers.

Number 5 on the list was Elton John and his “Million Dollar Piano” residency at Caesars Palace (2011-2018), which grossed \$131.2 million. Number 4 was Britney Spears’ “A Piece of Me” (2013-2017) at Planet Hollywood, grossing \$137.7 million. It’s Elton again at number 3, with his earlier “Red Piano” at Caesars Palace (2004-2009), grossing \$166.4 million. The number 2 and number 1 spots were as most would probably have guessed: Celine Dion’s two residencies at Caesars Palace (all of the Caesars residencies were performed in the Colosseum). “Celine,” which ran from 2011 to 2019, earned \$292.2 million, while appropriately, the original “A New Day” (2003-2007), which launched all the residencies that followed, took in \$385.1 million

Entertainment continued ...

non-hotel guests Mon.-Thurs. for \$15 and Fri.-Sun. for \$20. Locals get free admission Mon.-Thurs. and there's a \$15 charge on weekends (prices subject to change on holidays and for special events).

Bellagio Display—The Bellagio Conservatory and Botanical Gardens' summer display is called "Jungle of Dreams" and features 28 animal sculptures, including a 20-foot-tall lion and its 9-foot-tall cub, four towering giraffes, a 120,000-flower-petal zebra, a boa constrictor, monkeys, flamingos, and parrots. The soundtrack consists of singing birds, chirping crickets, roaring lions, and whispering winds. It runs through September 10.

Elephant Parade—In partnership with Elephant Parade, the world's largest art exhibition of decorated elephant statues that raises awareness for elephant conservation, Resorts World has debuted 26 statues in its District area. The Parade consists of life-sized baby elephant statues and will remain at RW through Labor Day weekend, at which time the statues will be auctioned off as a fundraiser.

Vintage Vegas—To celebrate the 75th year of the Las Vegas News Bureau, which has archived tens of thousands of photos that have helped promote the city, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has posted 75 of the best of them. They can be viewed online at lvcva.com/who-we-are/75th-anniversary/. You'll recognize many of them.

Rent a Tesla—EVOve Rentals has opened at Resorts World as the first in Las Vegas to rent out electric cars. The Tesla Models 3, S, Y, and X start at \$199 per day; upgrades to fully self-driving cars are also available.

Raiders Tix—If you're contemplating catching a Raiders game this year, get ready to open your wallet. According to ticketing company Logitix, the resale price of Las Vegas Raiders' tickets is the highest in the National Football League. On average, a Raiders ticket on the secondary market is \$595, \$208 more than the second-highest ticket price for the Miami Dolphins at \$387.

Big-Time Soccer—The inaugural Soccer Champions Tour is coming to Las Vegas for two games at Allegiant Stadium. Juventus will play Deportivo Guadalajara on July 22 and Real Madrid will play Barcelona in a series known as *El Clasico* on July 23. Tickets start at \$250 and are reportedly going fast.

NBA 2024?—According to a media report out of Seattle, that city and Las Vegas are "earmarked" for expansion by the NBA. The unconfirmed report states that the expansion is scheduled to occur shortly after the league's current media-rights deal expires in 2024.

Tour de Vegas—A two-day Tour de France mini-event, dubbed L'Étape (the Stage) Las Vegas, is scheduled for May 2023. The mini-Tour "is designed to impart a Tour de France-level bicycling experience" to the general public. About 25 L'Étape events are staged in Europe, South Amer-

ica, Asia, Africa, and Oceania every year. Three routes will be offered for the two-day event: 75-, 50-, and 25-mile options, with additional kid and family rides staged throughout the weekend. The L'Étape route will reportedly run from the Las Vegas Ballpark to Red Rock Canyon. ■

GAMBLING

WSOP in Progress

The 2022 World Series of Poker is underway at Bally's and Paris, the first time the world's most prestigious poker tournament has been held on the Strip. Despite the natural aversion to change, the consensus seems to be that the new location is an improvement over the Rio, where the event had been held for the past 15 years. There've been hiccups with inexperienced dealers and some high-profile COVID cancellations among players (most notably, Phil Hellmuth, who has played a truncated schedule), but overall, the response has been favorable.

Attendance has been strong. Expectations were high for the \$500-buy-in Housewarming event and it didn't disappoint, attracting a field of 20,081, the fourth-largest in WSOP history (the record is 28,371 in a \$500-buy-in event in 2019). Henrieto Acain won it for \$701K. The \$1,500-buy-in Millionaire Maker drew 7,961 players, almost 50% above last year's 5,326. Yuliyen Kolev won it for \$1.1 million. The \$50,000-buy-in Poker Players Championship (PPC), in progress as we go to press, had 112 entrants, up 78% over last year's 63. And 56 players ponied up \$250,000 for the Super High Roller No-Limit Hold 'em event, won by Alex Foxen for \$4.5 million.

Phil Ivey has been a big story at the halfway point. He just missed winning his 11th gold bracelet—which would have moved him into second overall behind Hellmuth's 16—when he finished second in a short-field high-buy-in (\$100,000) event. Ivey has also banked 3rd- and 7th-place finishes. Other notable results include Brian Hastings winning his 6th bracelet, Adam Friedman winning his 5th, and John Monnette, Jeremy Ausmus, and David Peters each winning their 4th. Daniel Zack is the only double winner so far; he has three bracelets total. The Main Event runs July 3-16. ■

More Big Poker

The World Poker Tour and Wynn Las Vegas have announced a tournament that they claim will set the record for the largest guaranteed prize pool in live tournament poker history. The 2022 WPT World Championship

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Gambling continued ...

at the Wynn will feature a \$10,400-buy-in No-Limit Hold 'em Main Event with a guaranteed \$15 million in prize money. It won't exceed the WSOP pools, but the hook is the guarantee and the potential for an overlay. The championship event will be the climax of the WPT World Championship that will run Dec. 1-20. ■

Bingo Month

Two big bingo events are scheduled in July. South Point is hosting what it's calling the richest bingo event in Las Vegas history July 17-23, with two \$1 million pools. The \$445 buy-in includes one 9-on pack, food coupons, and a dauber with special add-ons available.

The Plaza's Super Bingo tournament runs July 31-Aug. 1, with \$160,000 in prize money. Bingo-only entry is \$160 and it's just \$80 for Nevada residents; the four-night bingo-hotel package is \$300 (no resort fee). All players receive one 6-on paper pack for both days, two daubers, free drinks via an open bar at all sessions, two box lunches, and \$10 in slot free-play. ■

Gambling Notes

Jackpots—A Wheel of Fortune progressive was hit for \$1.3 million at the Golden Gate. An Ultimate Texas Hold 'Em player at Harrah's made a royal flush to win the Mega Progressive Jackpot for \$918,000.

Bookie Star Power—Circa Sports continues to up its profile, recently adding two big names from the world of bookmaking. Joining the company are Richie Baccellieri and Nick Bogdanovich. Baccellieri was the sports book director at multiple companies, including Caesars Palace. Bogdanovich was the longtime director at William Hill. Both are highly respected on both sides of the counter.

SP Bonus—South Point is offering a progressive bonus throughout July that must hit before it reaches \$25,000. When it does, all active players with their club card inserted will win an additional \$25 in free-play and the jackpot will reset at \$10K. If you see the meter close to \$25K, it's a good time to play. There may be a separate must-hit-at-\$2,500 promo running concurrently, but we haven't been able to confirm that.

Gambling Phil—Long rumored to be a huge gambler with poor results, golf's Phil Mickelson addressed the subject in an interview with *Sports Illustrated*. While he didn't quote numbers (the unauthorized biography, *Phil*, estimates he lost close to \$40 million between 2010 and 2014), Mickelson said his gambling "got to a point of being reckless and embarrassing," before he decided to curb it through therapy. ■

Video Poker Lost and Found

We were surprised by the good video poker schedules at the Plaza's Sand Dollar Downtown, given the terrible schedules at the original Sand Dollar ([LVA 3/19](#)). Our surprise was justified. Less than a month after opening, almost all of the schedules listed last month have been devalued, including all at the quarter level. There's still 9/6 Bonus Poker Deluxe (99.64%) from 50¢ to \$5.

According to the online database vpFREE2, the best game in the new high-limit room at Red Rock Resort is 8/5 Bonus Poker (99.17%) from 25¢ to \$100.

Also from vpFREE2, The Pass in Henderson has devalued its already anemic video poker inventory by removing all 8/5 BP. The best games now are 9/6 DDB (98.98%) at 50¢ and \$1 and 7/5 BP (98.01%) from 25¢ to \$1, and only on multi-hand machines.

At Binion's and Four Queens, earn 100 points and get \$10 in free-play. That's \$800 coin-in on most schedules at both casinos (a 1.25% bonus). Note that some games at Four Queens, including 10/7 Double Bonus (100.17%), require more coin-in. The promo runs thru July 31.

Town Center Lounge II (2992 W. Cheyenne) has a play \$50-get-\$20 sign-up bonus.

The Molly's lose-\$20-get-\$20 promo runs on Wednesdays and Sundays in July.

Check out Bob Dancer's Tuesday blog and his Thursday "Gambling With an Edge" podcast with Richard Munchkin, both at [LasVegasAdvisor.com](#). ■

VEGAS WEATHER

JULY

Mean 87° **Avg. Max. 107°** **Avg. Min. 67°** Pools: Open

Dry, sauna-like heat. Sun worshipers enjoy 85% sunny days.

Attire: The skimpier the better. If it's not mandatory, don't wear it!

AUGUST

Mean 85° **Avg. Max. 104°** **Avg. Min. 66°** Pools: Open

A very hot and wet month. Desert electrical storms are spectacular but can cause dangerous floods on and around the strip.

Attire: Summer cool, bathing suits.

SEPTEMBER

Mean 76° **Avg. Max. 96°** **Avg. Min. 57°** Pools: Open

Warm sunny days, mild evenings. It doesn't get any better than this.

Attire: No need for jackets or sweaters.

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