

The Flamingo is 62 years old, and may seem like a seasoned Hollywood actress, a lady of a certain age who wears a blonde wig, tight girdle and slushes on lipstick and rouge to make herself look younger. The Flamingo succeeds very well, and like the experienced Vegas party girl she is, she can still show her guests a real good time.



Anyone who has seen the Warren Beatty movie, "Bugsy," knows the colorful history of the Flamingo. Opened in 1946, it was the first glitzy hotel on the famed Vegas Strip, and was built with New York mob money. The first manager was gangster Bugsy Siegel, who couldn't control the employees from stealing all the hotel's gambling profits. Today, a bad hotel manager is fired, but Bugsy lost his job when a dozen bullets were fired into his head as he sat in his girlfriend's Beverly Hills mansion.

Vegas hotels are now owned by corporate conglomerates, and the mob era is just a long ago memory. Despite being the most senior hotel on the Strip, the Flamingo is still a good, reasonable, clean place to stay in Vegas. It has one of the most attractive pool areas in town, with waterfalls, water slides and wandering wildlife, including, of course, real live pink flamingos.

The hotel has an excellent location right in the middle of the busy Strip, with major resorts a few steps away in all directions. Caesars Palace and the Mirage are right across Las Vegas Boulevard, with Harrah's, Imperial Palace and the Venetian nearby.

We visit Vegas about once every three months, and have stayed at the Flamingo several times.

The room rates of about \$70 a night are very reasonable by today's inflated hotel pricing standards. We recently traveled to Tampa, St. Petersburg and other Florida cities, and the average hotel price was \$300 per night, even for the cookie-cutter chain hotels at the airports.

The Flamingo is a big property with more than 3,500 rooms, so walking around inside may be a bit of a challenge for older folks. Springtime day temperatures average about 60 to 70, very comfy for strolling and people-watching on the Strip. There are many reasonably-priced restaurants within the hotel, as well as the Vegas tradition of the eat-till-you-burst buffet.

All in all, the Flamingo, now owned by Harrahs, is a good deal for the budget-minded Vegas visitor. Check for deals with your favorite neighborhood or online travel agency, or called the hotel at 702-733-3111 or online at www.harrahs.com.