

It's absolutely true. Las Vegas is the easiest vacation spot anywhere to plan a budget visit. The reason, of course, is that the business of Sin City is gambling. Vegas expects people to come and lose. To entice gamblers, Vegas hotels offer great bargains of rooms, food, entertainment and in many other ways.

Budget-minded visitors, especially modest gamblers or non-gamblers can take advantage of those benefits. For instance, while an upscale resort hotel in New York, Paris, London, San Francisco or Singapore charges \$500 a night and up for a basic room, the most luxurious Vegas resorts offer a suite for \$150, and throw in free buffets, show tickets and much more.



For example, if you're looking for a budget Vegas vacation of three nights, start with package (air and hotel included) deals you'll find on the internet, newspapers or listed with your neighborhood travel agency. If you confine your visiting schedule to Sundays through Thursdays during a non-holiday week, you'll find the best bargains.

Prices vary according to the location of your selected Vegas hotel, time of year, days of week and many other factors. The older, traditional hotels on Fremont Street in downtown Vegas offer three-night package deals for \$300, including airfare, from many U.S. cities. Newer resorts on the famed Las Vegas Strip offer similar deals for \$600.

Before committing yourself to a purchase, keep surfing the internet for special last-minute bargains, many offered through online travel agencies, including Travelocity, Expedia, Sherman and other familiar sites. Another way to find a budget vacation in Vegas is to check frequently with your union, school, university, church or social club for group trip plans. Groups can get

great Vegas package bargains; for instance, for every ten or 15 members, one gets to go free, and the discount can be shared.

Another way to make your Vegas vacation a budget bargain is to take advantage of that Sin City tradition, the eat-till-you-burst buffet. No one gets up early in Vegas, so at about 10 am, on the first morning, we eat a modest coffee shop breakfast of juice and cereal, or coffee and scone. Then, at 2 pm, we hit the buffet and eat a full meal, including soup, salad, main dish, drink and dessert, and take as many extra helpings as we want. Depending on hotel and location, the price can range from \$8 to \$25 per person.

Don't tell anyone, but we also stuff buffet table fresh fruits and cookies into our jackets to serve as the next day's breakfast. We don't feel guilty about it, because we eat relatively modestly. Maybe two helpings and two desserts, while many others waddle past us with their plates piled up four or five times. Our evening meal is usually at the sandwich shop.

When we check in, the front desk clerk always gives us a folder with all kinds of free and discount tickets in it. Additionally, in-room tourist magazines are full of similar kinds of tickets. When you're in Vegas, be sure to study those tickets closely. They offer discounts and free stuff for restaurants, Broadway-style shows, retail shops, excursions and many other Vegas goodies.

Additionally, if you decide by noon of each day that you want to see a first-rate show that night, ask your hotel clerk where the nearby TKTS or other half-price ticket booths are. All unsold tickets for that night's performances are available at bargain prices.

Finally, there are just a few of the many features in Las Vegas that are absolutely free. Try the Fremont Street Experience at night. It's an enormous digital video canopy 50 feet above the street that displays continuously fantastic sight and sound shows. There's a two-level live lion habitat at the MGM Grand, and visitors can get almost close enough to touch the big cats as they stroll overhead along the clear plastic runways.

Outside the Mirage, there's a nightly eruption of a volcano that spews up more than two stories. At the Bellagio, there are nightly displays of ten-story-high spouting dancing fountains. And also after dark, there's a life-sized sailing ship pirate battle at Treasure Island. No, they're not the evil Somali nor Long John Silver type, but beautiful showgirls in skimpy costumes.

And all are absolutely free. You couldn't find better bargains at any other vacation location in the world.