



Senior Contributor Susan R, San Diego CA: With good planning and careful spending, any senior can have a good time in Vegas for several days on a modest budget. We've done it several times. Example:

It's tough for seniors living east of Denver to get an airline round-trip ticket to Vegas for less than \$200 these days. That could take a big chunk out of the \$500 budget. However, if you scan the internet daily, including official airline sites, you may find bargains and promotions. Best are air-hotel Vegas package deals. The most economical are for mid-week trips. Let's assume you nailed the combo hotel and flight deal for \$200 per person. That leaves \$300 to spend. When you check in, be sure to look for deals. They may include a free buffet. Hit a hotel's buffet at 11 am for lunch. If you have to pay, the breakfast prices are still in effect at about \$15, thus saving \$5 or more a meal.

After enjoying hours at the pool and/or casino, do a buffet or sitdown dinner. Restaurant prices vary wildly in Vegas now, because of all the expensive eateries in the posh resort hotels. So, you can have dinner for as low as \$10 in a cheapo non-Strip café, or \$100 at a fancy restaurant. You may discover that the cheapo place actually serves better meals.

Set a daily gambling limit per person of \$50 at the slot or video poker machines only. Stay away from table play, where minimums may be as high at \$10 per bet. If you lose early, it's stroll or swim for the rest of the day. If you win, get braver and try higher denomination slots.

Let's assume you lose \$100, but it can have advantages. There are benefits just for playing. Some Vegas hotels give three-night free stays to frequent players, plus other goodies like free buffets and cash back. It all depends on how long you play during each visit, and how often you return.

So, let's add up a hypothetical budget per person three-night for your Vegas vacation: \$200 air/hotel deal, two \$5 breakfasts, two \$15 lunches, two \$30 dinners, \$100 gambling loss budget. The \$455 total leaves you \$100 for other expenses. Snacks, souvenirs, and maybe some entertainment. Not enough to go wild, but you won't have to pay for soft drinks, beer and booze; it's free while you're gambling.

There are enjoyable music lounges in many hotels. They're free, though you're expected to buy at least one drink. The big production show tickets are now \$100 or more, which would bust your remaining budget. There's excellent entertainment in the smaller venues, including Elvis, Madonna and Rat Pack imitators. There are also improv comedy, mini-musicals and many other small theater shows you can see for as little as \$10.

You can do the great Vegas adventure for \$500, and that's not even considering the possibility of a big Sin City jackpot win. OK, ready, set, go for good luck!