

# Classic Las Vegas

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Everyone is used to coming to Las Vegas and checking out the newest hotspots – multimillion dollar resorts, state-of-the-art casinos and the trendiest new restaurants.

But what about those yearning for the Sin City of yesteryear? A town full of classic and understated elegance, effortless cool and a lot less over-the-top glitz and flash (except for Liberace, of course).

It's still there, you just need to know where to look. We took to the bustling streets of Las Vegas to ask locals and tourists alike where they go when they want a slice of the old school (and we've added a few suggestions of our own, too). Here's what we came up with:

## Dining

Dining is one area where there are still more than a few choices for classic Vegas restaurants.

As steakhouses go, for that vintage Sin City feel, head to Circus Circus. It's been open since 1982, which might not seem like long in any other city, but in Vegas, it's a lifetime. Plus, the dark wood, elegant lighting and cleanly-dressed tables bring back memories (or create new ones) of a Vegas where giant volcanoes and dancing fountains weren't even a glimmer in anyone's eye.

On top of that, the food is phenomenal – it's consistently lauded with awards for being among the best in the city.

For Vegas that stretches a little farther back – say about 10 years – there's the Bootlegger Bistro. Although the restaurant has moved locations since its opening in 1972, just about everything that made it great has stayed the same – including the booths.

This one was consistently mentioned in our informal survey, although Dennis Mantel who moved to Vegas eight years ago from Houston, put it most colorfully: "Got to be Bootlegger. It's classy without any of these fancy nickel [sized] portions and, 'oh, look at our waterfall,'" Mantel said.

We're not sure, but we take that to mean he likes the live music, lounge-vibe entertainment of Bootlegger.

## Shows

Sadly, a lot of the classic Vegas entertainment acts have passed on to that big casino lounge in the sky, but there are still some places to see what entertained Sin City's crowds before French circuses and blue-painted men came on the scene.

The most logical place to catch some old Rat Pack action is at a show that reveres it. "The Rat Pack is Back" at the Plaza is almost exactly what it sounds like – a skilled group of Rat Pack tribute artists take the stage nightly to give the audience a little taste of what it was like when Frank, Dean, Sammy and Joey ruled the town.

The show is a non-stop celebration of everything great about classic Vegas shows – loud, fun and full of some jaw-dropping entertainment (some of the renditions will make you look twice at the performers). Plus, there's an option for dinner in the showroom, which makes it one of the few places in town where guests can still grab dinner and a show without moving locations.

If a bunch of men singing on a stage – Rat Pack tribute or no – doesn't scream classic Sin City to you, then you'll probably appreciate our second suggestion more. We're talking about showgirls. And not just any showgirls, but the showgirls from "Jubilee!" at Bally's. The show, which opened in 1981, is a sequined, dancing, musical celebration of all the glitz that helped transform Vegas into what it is today.

Barb Fontana from Pasadena, Calif., said "Jubilee!" is one of her favorite shows to take people who have never been to Las Vegas to.

"There's a nice feeling to 'Jubilee!' It makes you think of a different time and it's nice they keep it around," she said.

## Bars

If all that old school entertainment makes you want to indulge in a little old school drinking, there are two places we always come back to for that – the Peppermill and Dino's.

Sure, Peppermill also serves food, but for more than 30 years, grabbing a drink in the glitzy fire-pit lounge area has been almost a rite of passage for people trying to discover their inner Vegas. It's



Courtesy of Jubilee!

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not the most subdued place in the world, but it represents the roots of Vegas' current lounge scene. Or, as Timothy Yancy, a Las Vegas native, said, "If they'd taken a different turn somewhere, everything would look like [the Peppermill]."

Plus, Peppermill's Vegas cache runs deep – it's been featured in movies like "Casino" and "Showgirls," as well as countless TV shows.

There aren't many drinking joints that can rival Peppermill's history in town, but if we had to pick one, it'd be Dino's. Dino's has been on the scene since the 1960s and doesn't seem to have ever wavered in its pursuit of being a place to drink with your friends and goad them into doing something fun – like sing karaoke. And though Dino's still has its crowd of regulars, don't be intimidated – stop by there enough and you're sure to become one.

## Lodging

Yes, we know, everyone wants to stay in the newest and most technologically-advanced hotel rooms, but there are those who just want a place to lay their heads without their drapes, television and fax machine all being controlled by a remote. For those, there's the Golden Gate.

Located downtown, the Golden Gate opened in 1906 (as the Hotel Nevada) and has been plucking

along ever since. The shrimp cocktail the casino is famous for is still around and the historical sign and several of the fixtures have been preserved.

## Other

There are a few things that, although they don't fit neatly into one of our categories, are nothing if not reminders of Vegas past, so instead of leaving them out, we figured we'd put them here.

Among all the things Vegas is synonymous with, none shines so bright as neon – literally. And although many of the signs have been torn down (you catch those at their resting place, the Neon Boneyard), some have been resurrected and put on display around downtown as a Neon Museum. Keep an eye out for Aladdin's Lamp and the Hacienda horse and rider, as well as others.

And if that's not enough flash for you, make some time for the Liberace Museum. Opened by Liberace in 1979, it's a celebration of all things ornate, beautiful and glitzy – which is a perfect description for Liberace and Sin City.

So, while something new opens up in Las Vegas almost every week, there are plenty of places that have stood the test of time. And in a town that blows up buildings when we need more space, that's got to say something.