

Soar to new heights over dazzling lights

By Jeannie Borbe
Vegas.com

It's one thing to spend an evening strolling or cruising along Las Vegas Boulevard. Experiencing it from above is a completely different story.

One of the ways to fully take in the glitz and glamour of the Las Vegas Strip is a helicopter flight at night.

From the dazzling lights of the city's five-star hotels to the endless beam of the Luxor pyramid, passengers viewing the city from above will appreciate the bright, fluorescent colors the Strip has to offer.

"It's breathtaking," said Mike Tajak, pilot and director of operations for the tour company Heli USA. "They're just overwhelmed by the scenery. I've seen reactions from passengers literally screaming with exuberance... to silence. Everybody [is] totally awed by the view."

Before the helicopter experience, guests have the chance to relax, unwind and sip on a glass of champagne.

After a brief safety orientation video, the adventure over the world-famous Strip begins.

Once they've boarded the helicopter at the launching pad, passengers get a breathtaking aerial glimpse of hotels such as New York – New York, Bellagio, Paris Las Vegas, Venetian, Wynn Las Vegas and the towering 1,149-foot-tall Stratosphere Tower, to name a few.

In addition, the helicopter ride also includes a flight over Fremont Street and historic Downtown Las Vegas.

"We make sure the passengers enjoy their flight, have some time to look around and enjoy the view," Tajak said. "Even though I don't own Las Vegas, I like sharing it with everyone else from around the country or around the world. This is the destination that they see on television, so it's actually a privilege for us to take them up there and show them around town."

While the ride may be more than a thousand feet above the ground, Tajak assured that there is no reason to be afraid.

"I actually know a couple of pilots who are scared of heights," he admitted. "They



Photo Courtesy Heli USA

On the Apollo Night Flight Tour guests can sip on a glass of champagne and enjoy a luxurious A-Star helicopter flight with remarkable views of the Las Vegas Strip, including the 1,149-foot-tall Stratosphere Tower and the Luxor beam at 6, 7 and 8 p.m., daily. Cost is \$114. The tour is not available on major holidays.

can't go next to a 10-foot balcony, but if you get them a thousand feet above the ground, they're fine!"

He continued: "It's a relatively short flight in a sense we're not in the air for an hour. Normally, [passengers] are so overwhelmed by the visual aspect about Las Vegas, they forget about being scared."

The helicopter ride is also the opposite of bumpy and choppy.

"The flight is much smoother than expected," he explained. "The pilots do a good job in making sure the passengers are very comfortable during the flight."

Passengers have the option to purchase a keepsake of their personal helicopter experience, which is filmed by an expert camera person and recorded onto a DVD.

Romance in the sky

Whether it's celebrating a special occasion or simply starting off the evening in style, helicopter rides are popular with couples.

In addition, out-of-towners aren't the only ones enjoying a night flight over the Strip – Las Vegas residents enjoy it just as much. One Las Vegas passenger recently decided to surprise his girlfriend for her birthday.

Before the helicopter ride, he blindfolded her to keep her in suspense. "She had no idea," LeChaunce Shepherd said, smiling.

"When [the helicopter] takes off, it kind of feels like you're going to fall out!" Kim Pearson exclaimed.

"I felt it was an exciting ride," Shepherd

said. "It was nice to see the Strip from a different view. I think you should add this to your list of Vegas must-do's."

"Everything's so small!" she added.

Everyone who takes the helicopter tour is bound to have their favorite views.

"Both of us like the pool at Caesars Palace," he said. "I thought the City Center project was really nice, too."

Taking a helicopter ride above the Las Vegas Strip lets you appreciate the town in a whole new way. Sometimes, the most exciting thing about the Las Vegas nightlife isn't inside a hotel, but thousands of feet above it.

"This is like Christmas twenty-four seven, three hundred sixty-five days a year," Tajak said. "It's just awesome."

Walking on air

The Twilight Tour

Transportation: Helicopter

Highlights: Experience the best of Las Vegas by twilight as you fly over the Hoover Dam at sunset and return to Las Vegas as the lights of the Strip come on. This tour includes transportation from your hotel in a limousine.

Cost: \$220

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Tour length: Approximately 2 hours, hotel to hotel.

Flight time: 45 minutes.

Vegas Nights

Transportation: Helicopter

Highlights: Save time and money by taking this tour, which is the Lights tour without the transportation. This tour includes a complete breathtaking night flight over the Las Vegas Strip and downtown Glitter Gulch.

Cost: \$109

Time: Open daily, 6 p.m., 6:30 p.m.

Tour length: 12 – 15 minutes.

Flight time: 12 – 15 minutes.

Vegas Strip Tour

Transportation: Helicopter

Highlights: Start your fantasy helicopter flight with a champagne toast and then fly over some of Vegas' legendary landmarks, including the New York – New York skyline, the fountains of Bellagio, the Eiffel Tower of Paris, the downtown Glitter Gulch and much more.

Cost: \$83

Time: Open daily, 4:30 p.m. Closed on major holidays.

Tour length: 10 – 12 minutes.

Flight time: 10 – 12 minutes.

For more information on any of these tours, call one of the Vegas experts at 1-866-807-4697.