

THE LAS VEGAS STORY, IN NUMBERS



Happy summer of 2016! It has been 85 years since Nevada legalized gaming, and at that time it was the only state in the US with legal gambling. Today there are 43 states, and counting, with casinos. With this article I thought it would be nice to look into the past, as well as some interesting statistics.

Nevada History

In 1861, while Nevada was still a territory, the first prohibition on all forms of gaming was passed into law. In 1869, the Nevada Legislature legalized gaming in spite of the Governor's veto. This law approved numerous games and imposed the first license fee. Between 1869 and 1907, many changes in gaming regulations and license fees were made, with the main concern being where and when gaming could be conducted. The 1907 Legislature redistributed gaming fee revenues so that all fees, except those from slot machines, were retained by the county, while slot machine fees went into the state coffers. The change was short-lived, as the 1909 Legislature prohibited gaming in all forms effective October 1, 1910.

It was not until 1931 that Nevada's modern era of legalized gaming began with the passage of the "Wide Open Gambling" bill signed into law by Governor Fred Balzar. The bill established a schedule of license fees for all games and machines, with the counties assuming the responsibility for the licensing and the collection of fees.

The 1955 Legislature created the State Gaming Control Board ("Board") within the Nevada Tax Commission, whose purpose was



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to inaugurate a policy to eliminate the undesirable elements in Nevada gaming and to provide regulations for the licensing and operation of gaming. The Board was also to establish rules and regulations for all tax reports that were to be submitted to the state by gaming licensees.

In 1959, the Nevada Gaming Commission ("Commission") was created by the passage of the Gaming Control Act ("Act"). The Act laid the foundation for what would become modern gaming regulation. The primary responsibilities of the Commission include acting on the recommendations of the Board in licensing matters and ruling upon work permit appeal cases. The Commission is the final authority on licensing matters, having the ability to approve, restrict, limit, condition, deny, revoke or suspend any gaming license. The above information comes from the Nevada Gaming Control Board/Commission website: www.gamingnv.gov.

Marketing Las Vegas

Last year more than 42,312,216 visitors came to Las Vegas. These figures come from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), and their website at www.lvcva.com. Their mission statement is "To attract visitors by promoting Las Vegas as the world's most desirable destination for leisure and business travel." They are the entity that trademarked and promotes "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

The LVCVA is unlike a typical convention and visitor's bureau in that it is not a membership-based organization. The LVCVA is a governmental agency. It was established by a state law, is funded by a county room tax and is governed by an autonomous board of directors.

In 1955, the State Legislature agreed to finance the Clark County Fair and Recreation

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Board (the precursor to the IVCVA) with moneys acquired from a room tax levied on hotel and motel properties in Clark County. This revenue, paid for by tourists and not by local residents, allowed the Las Vegas Convention Center to be constructed and operate without any tax assessment on Clark County residents, and allowed the IVCVA to begin a program of destination marketing.

State law establishes the number, appointment and terms of the IVCVA board of directors. The 14-member board provides guidance and establishes policies to accomplish the IVCVA mission of attracting an ever-increasing number of visitors to Southern Nevada. They disseminate and market annual visitor statistics, and here are some of my favorite tidbits from the 2015 Las Vegas Visitor Profile Study:

- 16% of respondents indicated they were first-time visitors, down from 19% last year. Does this mean the majority of adults have already been to Las Vegas, or are more of them gambling closer to home?
- 73% of first-time visitors are here primarily for vacation or pleasure, up from 68% last year.
- 10% of visitors are here primarily to gamble; down from 12% last year. The recent trends were to add more non-gambling entities, and this number is a reflection.
- 57% of visitors arrived by ground transportation, and the other 43% by air. This shows that more than 24 million visitors, or 55% of the California population, drove into Las Vegas last year.
- 63% used the Internet to plan their trip, and 58% said the Internet helped influence their choice in accommodations.
- The typical visitor averaged a 4.4-day stay, spent \$292 for food & drink, and an average of \$123 for shopping.

- Amongst those who planned, \$579 was budgeted.
- Last year there were 21,306 conventions, which brought in 5,891,151 attendees. This averages out to about 277 attendees per show, however a few of the larger conventions average more than 100,000 attendees.
- 35% of convention visitors had brought a spouse, family member or friend with them who was not attending a convention.
- There were 149,262 rooms (hotel & motel combined) available, which had an average occupancy rate of 87.7% and an average daily room rate of \$119.94. Of course these rates are much higher during the Super Bowl and New Year's!

Closing Comments

Many visitors may not know that just over an hour away there are 2 other gambling destinations:

- 100 miles to the south is Laughlin, Nevada, which has 9 casinos, and houses 10,200 rooms with an average daily room rate of \$44.48.
- 80 miles to the northeast is Mesquite, Nevada, which has 3 casinos, 1,712 rooms, and an average daily room rate of \$60.65.
- Some of the other nearby destination areas include: Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, Zion National Park, Death Valley, Valley of Fire, Lake Mead, Red Rock Canyon and Mt. Charleston.

The average visitor to Las Vegas was married, employed, and earning more than \$40,000 per year. 100% of the respondents surveyed voiced 100% satisfaction with their trip to Las Vegas, and 89% of those said they were "very satisfied." After 85 years, Las Vegas is still doing something right! If you have never been to Las Vegas, or haven't been here for a while, come on down. There is so much to do, and the statistics don't lie!!!

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