

5 Crazy nights on the strip

Las Vegas lives up to the hype

By Jenny Sherman | Freelance Reporter



Courtesy Jenny Sherman
Vespa scooters can be rented for \$24 per hour on the Las Vegas strip.

As a Vegas virgin, I knew only through stories what to expect of the great Sin City, but during spring break I found out where the best clubs are and a few of the secrets needed to get in. The drive was tiresome and muggy, and we were happy when gas was \$2.06 a gallon because you can't find it for much less right now in California. It was a long journey, but it was more than worth it.

March 22

We arrived about 9 p.m. on Monday, supposedly the least-active night on the Las Vegas strip, although the buzzing of cars and the sidewalks bustling with trinket-buying and beer-guzzling tourists showed me otherwise. We checked into the Circus Circus Hotel, Resort and Casino, which opened in 1968 at the end of the older side of the strip. The age of the hotel showed through its mismatched furnishings and cheesy circus-themed décor. My friend and I were grateful to have alternative lodging for the remainder of the week after finding that the television didn't work, the food service was terrible, and one had to travel several floors to find a working ice machine.

We cleaned up and headed to the Blue Iguana, a Mexican restaurant that serves margarita pitchers at half price — \$9 — with free chips on the side. There we forgot all about our drive. We took a quick taxi down the strip to Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville, where the blue margaritas are especially good at \$7.50. We then headed to Caesars Palace, where \$5 bought me

a bottle of domestic beer and the entertainment of naked female silhouettes dancing behind a blue screen.

March 23

The next morning, we headed to the Imperial Palace Casino to have a \$10 champagne brunch. After our share of the bubbly, we traveled to our new abode: a gorgeous cookie-cutter house complete with pool and jacuzzi, appropriately located on Wonderful Day Street, 20 minutes from the strip. Senior Allie O'Grady's parents have owned the vacation house for more than a year, and this is her sixth time staying in Las Vegas. I asked her for some Vegas clubbing advice, and she

said club hours and dress code change by the season.

"You should know that stuff before you get there," she said. "There's no tennis shoes, no holes in jeans."

We followed her expertise when we went to Studio 54 at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino. My four girlfriends and I patiently waited more than an hour in a crowded lobby. Luckily, the casino slots and sports bar are a perfect distance from the entrance if you need a break from the endless standing.

Women get in free, but men have to pay \$20 a head, although club regular Matt Lincoln told me if you slip the bouncer \$40, he'll let you skip the

line and go right in.

March 24

We were seven energized girls dressed to the nines, complete with a rented black stretch limousine to taxi us to the strip. At \$50 an hour, the limo is cheaper than any taxi service (and more fun). We headed to New York-New York Hotel and Casino to eat at the popular ESPN Bar and Restaurant, but the 45-minute wait swayed our ravenous hunger next door to Gonzalez y Gonzalez, yet another Mexican restaurant.

The delicious and reasonably priced taco salads and empanadas were quickly followed by yards of margaritas. We each bought the \$18 drinks in plastic containers that, contrary to their name, are about a foot-and-a-half tall. Before exiting the building, we jumped into Coyote Ugly and danced onstage next to a bartender filling the open mouths of dancers with a bright red liquid. We brought our large beverages out to the strip — it is legal to have open beverage containers in the streets of Las Vegas — and took a five-minute tram to the Luxor Resort Hotel and Casino. These free trams run between certain casinos throughout the day and night. Club Ra had a line similar to that of the night before because world-renowned DJ Scribble was spinning. The incredible music provided a soundtrack to a Von Dutch fashion show, where models strutted down the makeshift runway that cut the dance floor in two.

March 25

We all wanted something a little different. I mentioned the Zumanity show, whose bizarre ads plastering the strip portrayed two embraced

bodies in a rubber-like bag.

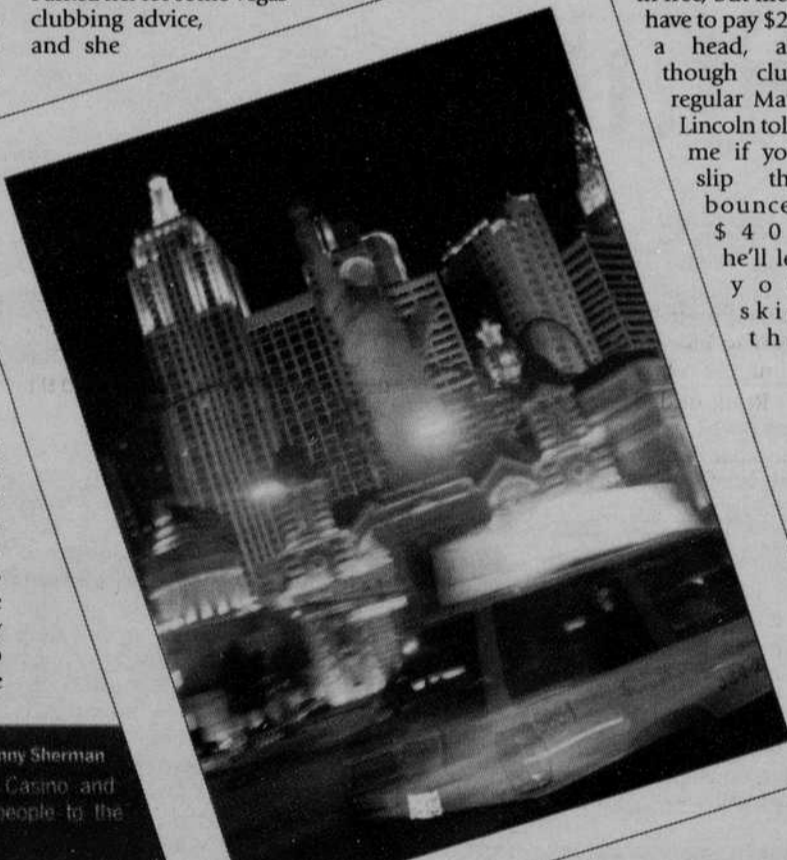
"The Blue Man Group is amazing because the audience is interactive," O'Grady said. I remembered the group only from a telephone commercial years ago.

O'Grady said most shows are at least \$60-\$80, and we all reached in our pockets and shrugged our shoulders. Instead, we opted for a less-expensive indulgence and splurged for the \$100-per-hour Ford Excursion limo, with an inside cabin the size of a small studio. After taking full advantage of our hour by riding up and down the busy Las Vegas Boulevard, we headed to an elegant dinner at the Little Buddha, an Asian restaurant with a low-lit and tranquil atmosphere in the Palms Resort Hotel and Casino. The cuisine at Little Buddha was a bit posh at about \$20 a plate, but the food was delightfully delicate. I had a mixed sushi plate and apple tart for dessert, costing about \$30. While the wine was terribly overpriced, the unique cocktails were delicious at about \$10-\$20. The club, as expected, was brimming with scantily-clad women who sold their lap dances at \$20 a pop, but the curiously strong drinks were enough to entertain a patron.

March 26

My final day brought me to the strip during daylight hours, and I decided to see Las Vegas by scooter. I rode my \$24 per hour Vespa through perpetual strip traffic and saw the Stratosphere Tower, Bellagio water show, street-vending Elvis impersonators and the shoddy center of the city, where the streets are dirty and

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Courtesy Jenny Sherman

The New York-New York Hotel & Casino and spiraling roller coaster welcome people to the Las Vegas strip March 22.

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