

## Gaming: 80 Years & Counting

It all began on March 19, 1931 when Governor Fred Balzar signed a bill that legalized gaming in Nevada. Since that day, Nevada, and especially Las Vegas, has become recognized worldwide as a premier gaming destination. From traditional card and dice games, to slot machines and race and sports book betting, the casino industry has flourished and evolved into an international phenomenon. Now, more than 80 years later, Nevada celebrates the very industry that has supported economic growth in the state.

Las Vegas has come a long way from its first legalized gaming establishment, Northern Club on Fremont Street, in 1931. Owned by Mayme Stocker and her family, the Northern Club and others like it on the infamous Block 16 in downtown Las Vegas pumped \$69,000 into the state coffers during their first two years of operation. Today, gaming revenue in Clark County alone totals more than \$8.8 billion per year.

In the early 1940s, Thomas Hull selected a plot along the two-lane highway that led to Los Angeles as the site for the El Rancho. His themed resort - the first in Las Vegas - would become the first hotel along what is now known as The Strip. Five years later, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel would open his lavish Flamingo Hotel, ushering in the era of celebrity glitz in Las Vegas. Some of the world-famous entertainers who became synonymous with Las Vegas included The Rat Pack, Elvis and Liberace.

Further development occurred in the late 1960s when business, aviation and movie mogul Howard Hughes introduced corporate financing to the Las Vegas resort landscape. In 1989, Steve Wynn opened The Mirage, the first of many mega-resorts now lining the Las Vegas Strip. Today, gaming is still the centrepiece of Las Vegas, one of the world's most desirable destinations.

### Gaming Today

As if the resorts and casinos weren't seductive enough, Las Vegas is putting a new spin on gaming, making it sexier and more exciting than ever before. The latest trend is the emergence of intimate, themed casinos within a casino.

Playboy Enterprises, Inc., the Palms Casino Resort and N9NE Group opened Las Vegas' first **Playboy Club** atop the new Fantasy Tower at The Palms. The club and casino showcase the iconic Playboy bunnies dealing high-limit table games, as well as a Diamond Bar built out of 10,000 diamond-shaped crystals.

While slot machines are the runaway favourite among gamblers in Las Vegas, table games have seen new additions and a tremendous resurgence in the popularity of

poker. Some of the newer games, such as three-card poker, and timeless favourites like pai gow continue to draw people to the tables. The increased exposure and popularity of poker, specifically Texas Hold 'Em, has prompted many casinos to re-open poker rooms that had been shuttered for a number of years. Las Vegas is featured regularly as the site of televised celebrity poker showdowns as well as professional poker tournaments.

### **Casino Gaming Lessons**

For first-timers or for those who just want to brush up on their skills, many casinos in Las Vegas still offer complimentary gaming lessons. Rediscover classic Las Vegas at any of the famous casinos Downtown. The Golden Nugget offers free, daily gaming lessons for a variety of table games including Craps, Three-Card Poker, Pai Gow, Texas Hold 'Em, Roulette and Blackjack.

On the Strip, The Venetian and The Palazzo offer complimentary gaming lessons for Blackjack, Roulette and Craps. The Venetian also offers one-on-one and group poker lessons for no-limit and limit Texas Hold 'Em. All gaming lessons are available 24 hours based on availability. The Sahara Hotel and Casino features a vast program of player education including an in-room television channel dedicated to gaming education. The 24/7 video tutorial teaches the basics of every major casino game including Craps, Blackjack, Roulette, Slots, Keno and Poker. Complimentary live gaming lessons are also available.

Off-Strip, the Gold Coast offers Craps lessons every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the casino pit. Its sister property, Suncoast, offers instructional handouts on table games. Dealers provide personal instruction and assistance on the floor even during live games.

### **Gaming Milestones**

**1931** Nevada Governor Fred Balzar signs a bill legalizing gaming in Nevada

**1955** Nevada Gaming Control Board is established

**Mid-1950s** Gaming revenue tops \$100 million

**1964** Nevada Electronic introduces first electronic slot machine

**2003** Non-gaming revenue surpasses gaming revenue in Clark County

**2005** Nevada gaming revenue tops \$11.6 billion

**2006** Nevada celebrates 75 years of gaming

### **Fast Facts:**

- In 2009, Clark County's casinos (Clark County includes Las Vegas, Laughlin, Mesquite, Primm and Jean) took in \$8.8 billion in gross gaming revenue. Las Vegas Strip casinos accounted for \$5.6 billion.
- In 2009, the average gambling budget per trip was approximately \$482 per visitor.
- The average visitor gambled 3.2 hours per day.
- Eighty-three percent of visitors said they gambled during their stay.

- Slot machines reign in the casinos – 70 percent of visitors hit the slots during their stay. Blackjack came in a distant second at 11 percent with video poker rounding out the top three with 7 percent.
- The state-wide Megabucks games experienced a first in September 2005 when a player hit the progressive jackpot for the second time. The 92-year-old winner took home \$4.6 million in 1989 and then hit the jackpot again last year for \$21 million.
- Nevada's casino and gaming areas are off-limits to people younger than 21. When Bellagio opened on the Las Vegas Strip in October 1998, the hotel barred patrons from the premises who were under 18 years of age unless they were registered guests of the hotel; this policy was a first, although it is not strictly enforced today.
- Race and sports betting tops \$2 billion per year. Some Las Vegas casinos treat gamblers to plush seating, free drinks and buffets in the race and sports book complexes where live racing and athletic events are viewed on giant, satellite-fed screens.

For more information, please visit [www.VisitLasVegas.com](http://www.VisitLasVegas.com).

# # #

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Kristy Meudell, Public Relations Manager

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Australia/ New Zealand

Email [kristy@marketingspirit.com.au](mailto:kristy@marketingspirit.com.au)

Phone +61 (2) 9331 2266